

International



King Hussein of Jordan sits with his wife Queen Noor before receiving his Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from New York University Monday. Hussein received the award for his efforts on behalf of peace in the Middle East. — AFP/UNB photo

US considering sanctions against Myanmar junta

WASHINGTON, June 11: The US State Department said it considered sanctions to be "an option" in its attempts to end the harassment of opposition leaders in Myanmar, reports AFP.

"We continue to be concerned by the harassment" of the opposition, most notably by chief leader Aung San Suu Kyi, said department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

He said "sanctions are an option" and described the ruling junta's decision to ban the opposition "from meeting" as a blatant restriction of individual freedoms under the UN charter.

Burns added that the two envoys sent the region on a fact finding mission should return within two weeks to deliver a report to the White House.

The envoys are William Brown, a retired ambassador and Stanley Roth, director of the US Institute for Peace, a government funded think tank to the region this weekend.

Gowda moves motion of confidence

NEW DELHI, June 11: Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda today moved a motion of confidence in his centre-left government before the lower house of parliament, reports Reuter.

Deve Gowda was expected to win the vote, likely to be held later today or on Wednesday after debate.

Deve Gowda's United Front alliance backed by the former ruling Congress Party, has some 332 votes in the 545 seat lower house, the Lok Sabha.

Earlier house Speaker PA Sangma allotted seven hours for debate on the confidence motion.

The leader of the right wing Hindu nationalists Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Atal Bihari Vajpayee, stepped down as prime minister in late May when it became clear his party would not survive a confidence vote.

Azad Kashmir govt stripes PM of his admn power

ISLAMABAD, June 11: The government of Pakistani-controlled Azad (free) Kashmir has stripped the prime minister of his administrative and financial powers until further notice, Pakistan's official news agency APP reported, says Reuter.

The agency said late on Monday night that the chief secretary, or top civil servant, of Azad Kashmir would take over these powers from Prime Minister Sardar Abdul Qayyum.

APP gave no reason for the action against Qayyum, who is nearing the end of his five-year term.

General elections are scheduled in Azad Kashmir on June 30 to elect a new legislative assembly.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party is seen as mounting the main challenge to Qayyum's Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference Party, which is backed by Pakistan's main opposition Pakistan Muslim League Party.

India seeks extradition of Amir Bhai

NEW DELHI, June 11: India will request the extradition of a key suspect in the country's worst bribery scandal who was arrested in Hong Kong after a six-month international hunt, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said today, reports AFP.

"We will send a request for Amir Bhai's extradition soon," said CBI spokesman S.M. Khan a day after the arrest.

Amir Bhai, who lived in the Middle East, is allegedly the mastermind behind the 21-million-dollar corruption scandal which has brought down several top politicians in India.

He allegedly channelled most of the bribe money to leaders of several political parties in India on behalf of another man accused in the scandal, New Delhi based businessman Surendra Jain.

Amir Bhai is also accused of paying money to drug pushers and Kashmiri militants through illegal channels.

LTTE raids village, kills 17 civilians Lankan troops launch fresh offensive against Tigers

COLOMBO, June 11: Sri Lankan troops launched an offensive to capture one of the few remaining areas still under military control in the northern Jaffna Peninsula, the Defence Ministry said today, reports Reuter.

The offensive was launched at dawn on Monday to capture a stretch of land about 13 kilometres (eight miles) long between Kilaly and Elephant Pass, a statement by the ministry said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels fired at advancing troops, killing two soldiers and one officer and wounding 12 more, the statement said.

It said the offensive would enable troops to link the giant Palaly Air Force Base at the northern end of the peninsula with the strategic Elephant Pass camp at the southern tip.

about 25 miles (40 km) south-east of Jaffna Town.

"This implies that security forces vehicles can move between Elephant Pass and Palaly enabling easier supply systems to troops based at Elephant Pass and Vettalaikerni (south of Elephant Pass)," the statement added.

The government last month said security forces had brought the entire peninsula, 320 km (200 miles) north of Colombo, under control in a series of military offensives which ended in April. But the military says pockets of rebel resistance still remain.

Earlier report says, Tamil Tiger guerrillas hacked to death 14 people, wounded several others and burned down houses in a remote village in north central Sri Lanka, defence sources said today.

The guerrillas attacked the

village of Aruvakalu, bordering the Wilpattu Wildlife Park, 180 km (115 miles) north of the capital Colombo, shortly after midnight on Monday, they said.

The sources told Reuters that Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for independence in the Indian Ocean island's north and east, used swords and axes to kill the people, most of whom were asleep.

AFP adds: Tamil Tiger guerrillas raided a village in north-west Sri Lanka today and killed at least 17 civilians and wounded several others, official sources here said.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the pre-dawn attack against the Sinhalese village of Aruvakalu in the district of Puttalam, officials said.



Russian soldiers of the 205th Army division, recently visited by President Yeltsin, cast their votes Monday for the up-coming Russian presidential election during a pre-term voting at their block-post where they are guarding oil wells in the nearby Terski mountains. — AFP/UNB photo

Christopher urges Arabs not to harm peace Peres vows retaliation against Hezbollah attack

JERUSALEM, June 11: Prime Minister Shimon Peres has vowed retaliation against Hezbollah guerrillas for the ambush killing of five Israeli soldiers, but it may have to wait for Israel's new government to take office, reports AP.

The attack — the worst clash in the area since a US-brokered ceasefire stopped a virtual war two months ago — comes at a delicate time of transition following the May 29 election.

Peres was not expected to order a major military strike in his last days in office, while his successor, hard-line opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, will not assume power until later this month.

The Cabinet has authorised Peres to use the army in retaliation, Israel radio reported Monday. But the report said several Cabinet ministers ar-

gued that it would be improper for the outgoing government to order military action.

The Hezbollah ambush near the villages of Dabsh and Ali Taher in a border enclave occupied by Israel, also wounded eight soldiers, three of them seriously.

The 20-minute exchange of fire marked the deadliest violence since Israel's air and artillery barrage against southern Lebanon in April, a response to Hezbollah rocketing of northern Israel. At least 165 people, mostly Lebanese civilians, died in the 16-day operation.

Israeli military sources said Monday that Hezbollah guerrillas mounted the ambush from a civilian area and fled back to it, violating the April agreement, which bars Hezbollah from launching attacks from populated areas.

But Deputy Defence

Minister Ori Orr said Hezbollah did not break its earlier promises when it killed the soldiers Monday.

Regardless, Orr said, Israel should act against the guerrillas.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said it was too early to say if the attack represented a ceasefire violation.

Reuter adds, Secretary of State Warren Christopher urged Arab leaders on Monday not to take any action at a planned summit that could "close doors" with Israel's new hardline government and harm the peace process.

"I think it's particularly important that they not close any doors at the present time, that they not take any action that would derail the peace process," Christopher told reporters before talks with his Australian counterpart.

Gowda to unearth facts about \$ 38 m urea scam

NEW DELHI, June 11: Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda said today he would "unearth" all the facts about a 38-million-dollar fertilizer scandal in which former premier P V Narasimha Rao's son is allegedly involved, reports AFP.

"There is no question of hiding any facts," Deve Gowda said in the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of parliament, during a debate on a vote of confidence he has to win Wednesday to remain in office.

"I assure you I will unearth all the facts," he said.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is to interrogate Rao's son, P V Prabhakar Rao, here today over his alleged role in a shady fertilizer deal between a Turkish firm and the state-run National Fertilisers Ltd.

CBI officials said "the picture was becoming clearer" after another key suspect, Prakash Chandra Yadav, son of a former cabinet minister was interrogated on Monday.

"Let us not draw conclusions as the CBI inquiry is going on," Deve Gowda told the House where his government survives with the backing of former premier Rao's Congress (I) Party. "I have not meddled with the investigations."

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) earlier demand "full facts of the scandal" to be placed before the members of parliament.

"We want to know what the government is doing on the scandal," said BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who was prime minister for about a fortnight until he resigned after failing to muster a majority in parliament.

Gowda said his coalition government would not "suppress any details of the scandal" but the opposition should wait for the CBI investigation to be completed.

The consignment was to be delivered by March this year but it never reached India.

Attempt to sway polls Bosnian govt forcing Muslim refugees to leave Sarajevo

TUZLA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, June 11: Bosnia's ruling party has forced thousands of Muslim refugees to move to Sarajevo in an attempt to sway upcoming elections, opposition parties say, reports AP.

The opposition on Monday accused Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic's party of Democratic action, known locally as SDA, of moving refugees from Tuzla "to create a suitable mass of people to vote for them," said municipal council president Ivo Divkovic.

"The SDA is doing all this in total silence," Divkovic told reporters. "It looks spontaneous, but it is well organised."

Refugees, especially tens of thousands of Bosnia's Muslims, are an embittered voting segment and likely would vote for Izetbegovic's party, which is predominantly Muslim. Party officials were not available for comment late Monday.

The two social democratic parties which jointly govern Tuzla charged that the SDA

was violating refugee rights envisioned by the Dayton peace accord by moving the Muslim refugees into Sarajevo homes abandoned by Serbs.

Under the US-brokered peace accord, refugee homes, owners must be given until September to return to their homes.

Sarajevo authorities placing Muslim refugees into Serb homes in the capital say they are housing displaced people, but they have not said they are transferring Muslim refugees from Tuzla.

About 50,000 Serbs fled Sarajevo neighbourhoods such as Vogosca and Iljazi before the Muslim-Croat Federation took over the areas in March under the Dayton agreement.

Many of those Serbs have moved into former Muslim homes in northeastern and eastern Bosnia, including Srebrenica itself. About 10,000 Serbs stayed behind in the five Sarajevo districts that passed to the federation.

BRIEFLY

Benazir leaves for Turkey: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto left for Turkey yesterday to attend the United Nations conference on world cities in Istanbul, officials in Islamabad said. Reuter reports from Islamabad.

More US aid for Kazakhstan: Kazakhstan is to receive some 40 million dollars in additional aid from the US to fund its nuclear disarmament programme, Interfax News Agency said in a report from Almaty monitored in London Monday by the BBC. AFP says from London.

China's move to curb nepotism: China's civil servants will not be allowed to work in the same office as their spouses or other relatives under new rules issued to curb nepotism and other forms of corruption, an official report said Tuesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Ex aide to Kim Young jailed: A former personal aide to South Korean President Kim Young Sam was sentenced to five years in jail yesterday for taking bribes from businessmen a court official said. Reuter reports from Seoul.

China landslides death toll now 100: The official death toll following massive landslides at a gold mine in southern China has reached 100 with 77 injured, with a further 138 people still missing, Xinhua News Agency reported yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Floods kill 40 in Ethiopia in May: Floods caused by heavy rains since the end of May have claimed at least 40 lives in eastern Ethiopia and made 50,000 homeless according to local sources, it was learnt Monday, AFP reports from Addis Ababa.

Uprising in Brazilian jail: Fifteen inmates escaped and others held a group of hostages on Monday after staging an uprising that left at least one person dead, a television news report said, AP says from Sao Paulo.

Floods claim 5 in Morocco: Five people were killed, two injured and more than 40 houses destroyed by flooding and torrential rains in Morocco's northern provinces during the last 48 hours, the official Map News Agency said on Monday, Reuter reports from Rabat.

Arms control accord Balkan leaders meet to overcome final obstacle

OSLO, June 11: The parties to the conflict in former Yugoslavia met today in an effort to overcome a final obstacle preventing the signing of an important arms control accord, reports Reuter.

The accord has been drawn up in Vienna over the past six months under mediation by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but a dispute over the wording of the preamble to the document had yet to be resolved, Norwegian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ingvard Havnen said.

Nearly 6 lakh women die during childbirth a year, says UNICEF

PARIS, June 11: Third World women are dying in the throes of childbirth in numbers far higher than previously estimated, a new UNICEF study shows, reports AP.

Nearly 600,000 women a year die giving birth — roughly 1,600 a day, 20 per cent more than earlier estimates — according to a graphic report released Tuesday in Paris by UNICEF.

Millions more are needlessly, painfully and often permanently injured for want of basic obstetric care, a doctor who knows how to perform a caesarean section or a few hundred dollars' worth of hospital improvements, the report contends.

"Many of the deaths and much of the suffering, to the world's shame, are preventable," said Carol Bellamy, UNICEF's executive director. "It is no exaggeration to say that this is one of the most neglected tragedies of our times."

Traditionally, UNICEF's annual Progress of Nations report focuses on the plight of the world's children. This year, it shifted the spotlight to their mothers.

"It is time to amplify the screams," said Peter Adamson, the report's author. "These are the deaths of the ill, or of the very old, or of the very young, but of healthy women in the prime of their lives upon whom both young

and old may depend."

"They die, these hundreds of thousands of women whose lives come to an end in their teens and 20s and 30s, in ways that set them apart from the normal run of human experience violently pumping blood onto the floor of a bus or a bullock cart of blood-soaked stretcher as their families and friends search in vain for help," he said.

More than 140,000 women a year die from such hemorrhaging, the report says. Another 100,000 die of sepsis, the poisoning of the bloodstream by infection from an unhealed uterus or pieces of placenta that are not expelled

and begin to fester.

An estimated 75,000 others die from self-inflicted abortions and about 75,000 die from pregnancy-related brain and kidney damage. Forty thousand die of obstructed labour, described by Adamson as "days of futile contractions repeatedly grinding down the skull of an already asphyxiated baby onto the soft tissues of a pelvis that is just too small."

For every woman who dies, about 30 more suffer injuries and disabilities such as rupture of the uterus, pelvic inflammatory disease and loss of urine control, said the report, compiled with help from Johns Hopkins University in the United States and the World Health Organisation.

"This means that at least 15 million women a year sustain the kind of damage in pregnancy and childbirth that will have a profound effect on their lives," Adamson said.

Of those, some 80,000 suffer the miseries of fistula, a complication of abnormally prolonged labour that damages the tissues of the birth canal and leads to incontinence. Many afflicted women are tossed out of their homes by their husbands and end up living as outcasts, the report said.

One in 13 women, in sub-Saharan Africa, and one in 35 women in southern Asia, die of complications from pregnancy

Pakistan to abolish death penalty for women

ISLAMABAD, June 11: The Pakistan government has decided to abolish the death penalty for women and replace it with life imprisonment, official sources said, reports AFP.

The decision, taken during a meeting Monday of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's cabinet, is "expected to be a significant step toward a more humane society."

The minister, quoted by the official agency APP, said that women were seldom involved in heinous crimes such as against innocent people.

Yeltsin alleges Communists plan to stir up unrest

MOSCOW, June 11: Boris Yeltsin's campaign is pressing to discredit the communists with further allegations they plan to stir up unrest around the upcoming election and try to seize power, reports AP.

The president, meanwhile, said for the second day running he can win a majority of the votes on Sunday. "There will be no second round," he proclaimed on arrival Monday at Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia.

He showed his confidence at a rock concert welcoming him to the city, hopping on stage to dance with the musicians and with young women in mini-skirts. Yeltsin enthusiastically jumped up and down, punching his fists in the air and clapping his hands under his lifted knees.

Polls and political analysts say Yeltsin and Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov are likely to face each other in a



The daughter (L) of former Judge and practising lawyer Nizam Ahmad turns towards the body of her father, after embarking her brother's body in an ambulance at the hospital, in Karachi, Monday. Nizam Ahmad and his lawyer son Naddem Ahmad were shot dead by unidentified pillion motorcycle riders in front of their residence after their return from the court. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

A gift to British nation

LONDON: A Briton who made his fortune as a California real estate developer Monday bequeathed his \$110 million collection of gold and silver to the British nation, reports AP.

Up till now Arthur Gilbert's collection was housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where he is a trustee. He is based in the city.

"This is a remarkable act of generosity. It's one of the most important collections of gold and silver in the world," Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine said after announcing the deal.

Multi-millionaire Gilbert's collection includes gold and silverware, gold boxes and micro-mosaics and ornaments covered in tiny mosaic patterns. It was collected by Gilbert over the past 27 years.

Hope she will find a way soon

BEIJING: An eight-year-old Chinese girl who weighs only 3.5 kg (7.7 lbs) and is just 66 cm (26 inches) tall wants to find a way to grow, the Xinhua News Agency said on Monday.

Zhao Lujun, the only child of a farmer in Tanghe county in central Henan province has undergone health examinations in Beijing and Shanghai but her growth is considered normal, Xinhua said.

More than 100 organisations and individuals throughout China have written to her, offering economic supports to help her to find a way to grow.