

BRIEFLY

Suu Kyi marks 51st birthday: Myanmar's pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, marked her 51st birthday yesterday amid reports of fresh detentions of her supporters, reports AFP from Bangkok.

Suu Kyi and others at her family compound in Yangon began the day with offerings to Buddhist monks and nuns, in aide reached by telephone at her home in Yangon said. Well-wishers were expected to pay their respects in the garden of her home during the afternoon, the aide said.

Search on for ROK's sailors:

Rescuers continued to search Wednesday for the remains of 26 sailors believed to have drowned when their cargo ship sank off South Korea's southern coast Saturday, reports AFP from Seoul.

Maritime police said the sailors — one Greek, one Egyptian and the rest Filipinos — were presumed dead after nearly four days in open seas. No remains have been recovered yet. On Sunday, rescue ships had found several life jackets and an empty lifeboat from the Cyprus-registered ship Anna Spiratou. It sank after colliding with a Greek-flagged freighter, which safely reached the South Korean port of Pusan, about 300 kilometres southeast of Seoul. The sunk ship was en route from the Russian port of Nakhodka to Taichung in Taiwan with a cargo of steel bars.

UN envoy leaves Bahrain: UN envoy

Roll Ekeus left Bahrain for Iraq yesterday in a bid to defuse a stand-off with Baghdad which is preventing his inspectors from searching suspected weapons sites, UN officials said. AFP reports from Manama.

Ekeus, Chairman of the UN special commission, left here on a special UN flight with his staff and Nikita Smidovich, a Russian ballistic weapons expert whose team was denied access to sites last week. Iraq must allow the inspection team to visit and inspect, immediately and unconditionally, all the sites, all the installations and all the equipment that we deem necessary, Ekeus said late Tuesday after arriving here from New York.

25 more executed in China: Twenty-five people were executed in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou for crimes ranging from looting to murder, it was reported yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The criminals were executed Tuesday in different parts of Guangzhou, the China-backed Wen Wei Po said. They included Hu Zhongheng and Li Genshen who kidnapped a woman and repeatedly raped her, and Chen Ping who broke into a house and chopped a woman and repeatedly raped her, and Chen Ping who broke into a house and chopped to death two people as they slept before stealing 600 yuan (75 US dollars).

Chopper collision kills 6 in US:

Two army helicopters collided in mid air during a demonstration in Kentucky Tuesday, killing six people and injuring at least 16 others an army spokesman said. AFP reports from Washington.

The collision between two UH-60 helicopters occurred at a training range at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Army Major Jeffrey Phillips said. At approximately 2:15 pm local time (1815 GMT) two HU-60L helicopter were involved in a mid air collision at Fort Campbell while conducting an air assault demonstration at training range five-four Phillips said.

Christopher meets Cypriot president: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher met Tuesday with Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides and reaffirmed US support for a "bizonal, bicomunal, federated Cyprus," AP reports from Washington.

The breakfast meeting followed the announcement on Monday by President Clinton that he will send an emissary to Cyprus next month to explore the possibilities of a negotiated settlement on the island. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Clerides and Christopher had a "very good and very long" review of the situation in Cyprus.

Colombian security chief resigns:

The head of Colombia's secret police has resigned amid allegations his agency was trailing the US ambassador and tapping his phones. AP reports from Bogota.

Marco Túlio Gutiérrez, a close ally of President Ernesto Samper, stepped down Tuesday after just five months on the job. A presidential spokesman said he did so "for personal reasons." The timing comes amid complaints from US Ambassador Myles Frechet about Colombian agents following him, most recently on a May 30-31 trip to Medellin, and about phone bugging at the embassy.

New eruption on NZ volcano: A sudden explosion of black ash and hot gas shattered a brief lull in volcanic activity on Mount Ruapehu late Wednesday. AP reports from Wellington.

Volcanologists at the scene said its crater erupted dramatically and shot dark billowing clouds into the sky for a third successive day. The outpouring of debris and renewed earth tremors followed a morning of relative calm.

3 sentenced to death in China:

Three men were sentenced to death and six other people were given prison terms for forcing teen-age girls into prostitution, an official newspaper reported Monday. AP reports from Beijing.

The Supreme People's Court in the capital confirmed a lower court's decision to give the death sentence to Wang Guoqiang and Lei Zhiyong, both unemployed workers from southwest China's Hunan province. The Xinhua Daily Telegraph said. Wang and Lei were to be executed immediately for recruiting five young girls two years ago and selling them for 70,000 yuan (8,500 dls) to a health club in coastal China's Zhejiang province ostensibly as massage attendants, the report said.

UN demands unrestricted access to suspected Iraqi weapons sites

MANAMA, Bahrain, June 19: The chief UN weapons inspector said Tuesday on his way to Baghdad that he will impress on Iraqi leaders that they must provide immediate, unrestricted access to suspected weapons sites, reports AP.

Rolf Ekeus, a Swedish diplomat, was due to fly to the Iraqi capital Wednesday morning in a trip prompted by Baghdad's refusal to let a team of UN weapons inspectors visit several sites last week.

He stressed after arriving in Bahrain, the UN Special Commission's regional headquarters, that his mission was not to negotiate with Iraq.

Ekeus said he would then

report to the council on the results of this trip and the policy adopted by the Iraqi authorities.

But he also said he hoped his discussions in Baghdad will include "political talks in the form of a forward-looking dialogue, and I hope we'll be able to do it successfully."

Ekeus said he had not yet decided whether he would ask some of the inspectors to accompany him to Baghdad so that they can carry out site inspections during his trip if the Iraqis allow it.

Team leader Nikita Smidovich, a Russian, said the Iraqis completely denied access to three sites.

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The remarks could be the first volley in a character war, with both camps dialing up reporters and feeding fax machines to prove how low each side can stoop.

After months of raising doubts about Clinton's character, Republicans hoped to make inroads this week from a scathing report on the White House's handling of Whitewater matters, a second trial of Clinton supporters in Arkansas and mounting interest in the collection of FBI files on Republicans.

"Let's face it," said Dole spokeswoman Christina Martin. "On the issue of truth, if the Clinton administration practices what it preaches they wouldn't be having such a bad week."

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politics of Pinocchio politics," reports AP.

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Clinton, Dole camps trade shots on character issue

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