

BRIEFLY

Clinton arrives in France: President Clinton arrived in France on Thursday for the annual summit of the world's seven leading industrialised nations vowing to put terrorism at the top of the agenda after a truck bombing killed 19 American servicemen in Saudi Arabia. Accompanied by his wife Hillary who plans a separate goodwill tour of Eastern Europe after the G-7 meeting Clinton received a low-key welcome at Lyon's airport after a 7 and half hour flight from Washington.

Fire at US treasury Dpt bldg: A fire broke out Wednesday through the US Treasury Department building located next to the White House in central Washington, AFP reports from Washington.

Some 200 employees were evacuated from the building and no injuries were reported, said treasury spokesman Chris Peacock, adding that workers had been given Thursday off. The cause of the blaze, which apparently started on the roof of the building where repair work was being done, was not immediately known.

Perry to visit Saudi Arabia: US Defence Secretary William Perry will visit Saudi Arabia on Saturday for meetings with Saudi leaders and US military officials about the bomb blast that killed 19 Americans there, the Pentagon said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Washington.

Defence officials said Perry also planned to meet with US troops stationed at a Saudi air base near Dhahran where the fuel truck bomb blew up on Tuesday.

Polling begins in Uganda: Ugandans started voting at 7:00 am (0400 GMT) yesterday for a "no-party" parliament, AFP reports from Kampala.

Kampala was calm as radio stations reported voters lining up at polling booths throughout this East African country. The government declared the day a public holiday.

5 militants killed in Tajikistan: Tajik rebels killed five militants in a raid on a key town on the only road linking the Central Asian state's government-held west with the isolated east, an Interior Ministry source said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Dushanbe.

Up to 70 rebels staged the 12-hour raid which ended on Tuesday morning, attacking a police station with grenade launchers and small arms before melting away into surrounding hills, the source said.



The June 26 photo released by the US Department of Defense shows evidence from the Tuesday's explosion of a fuel truck outside the King Abdul Aziz Air Base near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. So far, 19 people have been found dead and hundreds injured in the explosion. The building housed US service members. — AFP/UNB photo

Noted Irish journalist shot dead: Ireland's leading crime reporter Veronica Guerin was shot dead in her car on Wednesday by gunmen suspected of being agents of the Dublin underworld she exposed, Reuter reports from Dublin.

"Someone, somewhere decided to take her life and almost certainly did so to prevent information coming into the public arena. Prime Minister John Bruton told parliament. Two men on a motorbike drove up beside her at traffic lights on the outskirts of Dublin and fired up to six shots into the 33-year-old woman who died almost immediately.

1500 bodies exhumed in Liberia: Health workers cleaning up the Liberian capital after weeks of militia warfare have exhumed nearly 1,500 bodies from makeshift graves around the city, officials said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Monrovia.

Liberia's chief pathologist Isaac Moses, who directed the work, said the bodies had been found around the greystone compound in the city's Mamba Point district where some 20,000 people took shelter from the fighting on Bushord Island, and in the Sinkor district where the fighting began.

WWI US veteran gets 'silver star': A 97-year-old American World War One veteran finally received his 'silver star' for gallantry — almost eight decades after the battle in which he earned it, officials said Wednesday, Reuter reports from Sacramento.

Otto "Dutch" Bischoff was cited for "great coolness and courage" during the battle of the Argonne in France in 1918. But through a military oversight he was never awarded the medal he was entitled to.

Pak troops rocket Indian posts in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, June 27: Pakistani troops fired rockets and artillery shells on Indian posts in Kashmir but there were no reports of casualties in the overnight attack in the northern state, army sources said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

Long distance artillery shells also pounded Indian military positions in the Siachen glacier of the Himalayas where soldiers of the two South Asian rivals are positioned at altitudes of 20,000 feet (6,060 metres) they said.

The overnight artillery barrage in the icy wasteland was the largest since 1987 when Indian soldiers repulsed a battalion-sized Pakistani assault in the Siachen, the army sources said.

An army spokesman said Indian troops deployed at the heavily-militarised borders in

48 witnesses of Rwandan genocide killed: UN

KIGALI, June 27: Killings of Rwandan witnesses to the 1994 genocide are on the increase, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Between January and May 48 people who escaped the ethnic massacres which killed around 500,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus potential witnesses in war crimes tribunals being set up to try the guilty — were killed.

The murders have "increased markedly during the months of April and May. This trend appeared to continue during the month of June," the UN body said.

Eight people were killed Monday in a village outside Kigali, Rwanda radio said. UN observers have gone to the area to investigate the murders, which was the first such case of a killing in the Kigali region.

Pak SC restores local govt bodies in Punjab

ISLAMABAD, June 27: The Pakistani Supreme Court on Wednesday restored about 29,000 local government bodies in the country's key province of Punjab, which had been dissolved in 1993, court officials said, reports AFP.

Ruling on a petition filed by councillors affected by the dissolution, the court ordered restoration of the local government bodies with immediate effect.

They will continue to function until the expiry of their original tenure in February 1997, it said.

The decision is likely to add to the difficulties of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, already under attack from the opposition and religious parties over her government's economic policies.

Main opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, president of the Pakistan Muslim League Party (PML), hailed the restoration as a "historic verdict."

The local councils and other municipal bodies in Punjab were dissolved by former caretaker prime minister Moeen Qureshi who supervised the snap polls in October 1993, which were won by Benazir's party.

The council were mostly dominated by the PML, which is expected to gain politically from the court decision.

Search for killer hyenas on in UP

NEW DELHI, June 27: More than 350 policemen and marksmen have launched a search for hyenas which Indian authorities said were believed to have killed more than 30 children, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The news agency said 18 teams, each composed of 20 policemen and a marksman, were scouring a rural region in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

The children have been killed over the past two months by what villagers variously described as a hyena, were wolf or deranged criminals looking for kidneys.

Senior police official V K Nair told PTI in Allahabad city that the children, most below the age of seven, were believed to have been killed by hyenas. But villagers, some of whom described the murderer as a man-like beast who drove a white van, looked like a pig and could fly, apparently were all not convinced.

DPRK for early resumption of talks with Japan

TOKYO, June 27: North Korea today repeated its call for an early resumption of talks on normalising diplomatic relations with Japan, reports AFP.

"It is self-evident that the governments of the two countries should sit at the negotiation table again," said the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored here.

Normalisation talks, launched in 1990, were suspended in 1992 after Tokyo angered Pyongyang by raising the issue of a Japanese woman allegedly abducted by North Korea to train spies.

Pakistan frees 200 Jamaat men

ISLAMABAD, June 27: The Pakistani authorities have released around 200 Islamic activists arrested during anti-government demonstrations this week, but another 118 remain in jail, officials said today, reports AFP.

Several hundred activists of the right wing Jamaat-i-Islami were rounded up Monday as police in Rawalpindi prevented a planned march on nearby Islamabad in protest at new taxes.

At least two activists of the fundamentalist party were killed in clashes with police, and around 100 injured in a day of disturbances.

A senior official at Rawalpindi's Adiyala Jail told AFP that the 118 people still in detention included 17 who were taken in ahead of an anti-budjet strike observed on Sunday at the call of main opposition leader Nawaz Sharif.

Gowda meets rebel Kashmiri leaders to restore peace

NEW DELHI, June 27: India's new Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda met with Muslim separatist leaders from Kashmir for talks aimed at restoring peace in the strife-torn Himalayan province, officials and newspapers said today, reports AFP.

The closed-door talks on Wednesday between Gowda, who heads his 27-day-old United Front coalition government, and a forum of Muslim rebels was the first such meeting between an Indian premier and Kashmiri separatists since 1989.

Officials said the two sides met for the talks in the residence of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who was prime minister when Muslim separatism turned violent in the Kashmir Valley in 1989.

Witnesses said the former

separatists, members of the forum for permanent resolution of Jammu and Kashmir, met with the prime minister two times on Wednesday but could not give details of the talks.

Sources in the prime minister's office told AFP that the two sides were likely to meet again later this month for further talks.

The forum opened talks without pre-conditions when the previous government invited its leaders for a dialogue with the then home minister Shankarrao Pharyan before the April-May parliamentary elections.

The forum is a moderate Kashmiri organisation of former separatists which supports New Delhi's plans to conduct elections in the Himalayan Valley, administered directly by the federal gov-

ernment since 1990.

Prime Minister Gowda's spokesman said he was not in a position to comment on Wednesday's two meetings. "These people could have come and met (Gowda) but I have no information" the official said.

The respected Hindu Daily said the forum delegates agreed to participate in the elections to Kashmir's Legislative Assembly, an exercise the six-party centre-left United Front government has vowed to conduct later this year.

The meeting is also the first since staggered general elections to Kashmir's six parliamentary seats ended on May 30 without any serious disruption.

The All-Party Hurriyat Conference vehemently opposed elections in Kashmir.



US Secretary of State Warren Christopher (C) answers journalists questions Wednesday near the building that housed US military personnel where a massive bomb blast killed 19 and injured over 200 US citizens Tuesday in Dhahran. Christopher and his Saudi counterpart Prince Saud Al-Faisal (L) paid a short visit to the military base. — AFP/UNB photo

US military support for KSA to continue despite attacks

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia, June 27: The United States vowed that it would not be deterred from military support for Saudi Arabia despite the most deadly guerrilla attack against US interests in the Middle East for 13 years, reports Reuter.

Nineteen Americans were killed and nearly 400 people were wounded when a fuel truck exploded on Tuesday at a US military complex in Khobar near the Saudi Arabian oil city of Dhahran.

"This will not deter the United States in any way from carrying out the mission that we have come for here," US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said during a stopover on Wednesday to view the blast site and talk to survivors.

"We're going forward to try to strive for peace and try to ensure that aggression will not

take place in the region," said Christopher, who added the brief visit to "Middle East and European tour."

President Bill Clinton arrived in Lyon, France on Tuesday, saying he was weighing whether to visit the kingdom. He has pledged to make a fight against international terrorism his first priority at a summit of the world's richest industrialised nations beginning on Thursday.

Saudi Deputy Defence Minister Prince Abdul-Rahman expressed hope on Wednesday that authorities would soon arrest and punish the "criminals" behind the attack which he said would not harm close military cooperation with the United States.

The explosion late on Tuesday evening tore off the entire face of a residential block and gouged a 30 foot (10 metre)

deep by 80 foot (25 metre) wide crater in the ground outside.

Those who died were part of the United States' "Southern Watch" operation policing the no-fly zone in Iraq imposed after Baghdad's forces crushed a rebellion in southern Iraq in 1991, following their expulsion from Kuwait.

It was the worst attack against US interests in the Middle East since 1983 when 241 US marines and sailors were killed in Beirut.

Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, who toured the scene with Christopher, promised to bring the bombers to "swift justice."

Riyadh has offered a 10 million-rial (2.67 million) reward for help in securing arrests.

Saudi and US officials said they had little idea who was behind the attack.



Spanish Queen Sofia (2-L) shakes hands with Chinese President Jiang Zemin (R) during the official farewell ceremony early Wednesday at El Pardo palace, after Zemin finished his two-day official visit to Madrid. Zemin will continue his visit Thursday with a private visit to Barcelona. — AFP/UNB photo

Saudis welcome foreign help, but not influence

NICOSIA, June 27: Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has feared a backlash from home ever since he invited the Americans to protect his desert kingdom during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis, reports AFP.

Still, his choice seemed a shrewd one until recently. The Americans extinguished the immediate danger from Saddam Hussein's Iraq and remained to ward off future threats.

But two major bomb attacks against US military targets in the past seven months have made it clear that the American presence remains a highly sensitive issue.

Tuesday's bombing, which killed 19 Americans and wounded at least 270 people, underscored the enormously difficult dilemma facing the elderly King Fahd and his half-brother and designated suc-

cessor Crown Prince Abdullah. Saudi Arabia needs help from abroad, including US military muscle, to ensure its prosperity and security. Yet some Muslim fundamentalists oppose any Western influence in the country that is home to Islam's holiest shrines.

Saudi Arabia earns its wealth from selling oil to the rest of the world — it produces 8 million barrels a day. Its industries depend on foreign workers ranging from Bangladeshi labourers to Arab businessmen and Western computer specialists who account for about one-third of the country's 17 million residents.

The country's leading role in the Muslim world is based on the sacred religious sites in Makkah and Medina that draw millions of visiting pilgrims

annually. And its security is guaranteed by the United States, France and Britain, which now have thousands of troops stationed in the kingdom.

For years the ruling Al-Saud family has successfully managed this contradiction, drawing on the outside world for its needs, yet sealing itself off from foreign influences.

Western workers, for example, are segregated from most Saudis, living in comfortable compounds that largely resemble their lives back home.

While many Saudis appear willing to accept the need for foreign workers in the kingdom, the permanent deployment of Western troops on Saudi soil has enraged some Muslim militants.

The identities of the mil-

UN court begins hearing against Karadzic, Mladic

THE HAGUE, June 27: A UN court began hearing evidence here today against Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic who are both charged with "genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity," reports AFP.

The hearing, which began at 10 am (0800 GMT) before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is not a trial as such because Karadzic and Mladic have refused to travel to The Hague and the court does not plan to try them in their absence.

Karadzic, the president of the Republika Srpska — the Serb entity in post-war Bosnia — and Mladic, the Bosnian Serb armed forces chief, head the list of alleged war-criminals whom the court wants to put on trial.

Dozens of witnesses are due to give evidence during the

seven-day hearing. They include Tom Karremans, the commander of the Dutch battalion which was at Srebrenica enclave when it fell to the Serbs in July 1995 and Drazen Erdemovic, a former Bosnian Serb soldier who claims he was forced by his superiors to murder 70 Muslims from Srebrenica.

Two lists of charges have been drawn up for each of the two accused. The first concerns the war in Bosnia from a general angle and covers persecution for political and religious motives, detention in prison camps, murder, rape and torture of thousands of people, bombing of civilian targets, and the seizing of UN soldiers as hostages.

The other concerns the "direct responsibility" of Karadzic and Mladic in the killings which followed the fall of Srebrenica.

Off the Record

Roc the saviour

NEW BERN, North Carolina: When a dog spotted a fire sparked by lightning in the attic of his owners' house, he barked. But that didn't work. They ignored him. So Roc, a mix of Chesapeake Bay retriever and rottweiler, rang the doorbell. At 4 am, that got their attention, reports AP.

Rosevelt and Linda Matthews and their two teen-age children lost everything but their lives in the Tuesday fire. Roc won their eternal gratitude.

The dog was never trained by the family to ring doorbells, though he did it once before to get their attention.

"We didn't know the house was on fire until we answered the door," said Linda Matthews, who a year ago bought the dog to appease her son.

Roc is living with a neighbour now, oblivious to his hero status. He will once again take up residence with the Matthews family as soon as they find a new home.

"My son said, 'Sit Roc down at the table and feed him steak every day,'" Mrs. Matthews said.

Right way to humiliate child abusers

WELLINGTON, A directory that lists names and details of convicted child abusers went on sale in New Zealand on Thursday, and its publisher plans to produce versions for Australia, the United States, Canada, Britain and Ireland, reports AP.

The 1996 Pedophile and Sex Offender Index' names 618 New Zealanders convicted of sex crimes against children during the past five years.

The 191-page book lists the name, age, hometown of each offender along with the term they spent in prison or the amount they were fined.

Publisher Alister Taylor said research for editions for other countries is under way. An Australian edition is expected to complete within two months.

"We have increasing amounts of information about offenders going from country to country and repeatedly offending," said Taylor.

"There is an incredible international interest at political level in controlling such sex offending."

Author of the book, journalist Deborah, said the New Zealand edition contains only "about a quarter" of the number of sex offenders convicted over the past five years.

Stuntmen were about to reach Elvis

QUINCY, Massachusetts: Four "Flying Elvis Presleys" trying to skydive into a parking lot to entertain a nightclub crowd were blown off course, crashing onto a yacht club, a nearby street and into Boston Harbour, reports AP.

Two were hospitalised Wednesday, one of them in critical condition with head injuries.

The four stuntmen, wearing Elvis Presley costumes of fringed white jumpsuits, slicked-back hair and sunglasses, were supposed to fly over the crowd of 1,600 people celebrating the opening of a nightclub on the harbour.

A landing area was cordoned off in the club's parking lot in North Quincy and spotters were ready to help them.

But the wind blew one into a yacht club in the nearby Dorchester section of Boston. Another fell onto a nearby street, and two splashed into Boston Harbour.

"Everyone was laughing" because they thought the skydivers landed in the water, said Phil Cocco, a club spokesman.

Syria main base for ME terrorism: Netanyahu

JERUSALEM, June 27: Israel's new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has launched his strongest attack on Syria since taking office, accusing it of being a main base for Middle East terrorism, reports Reuter.

A bombing that killed 19 Americans at a US military complex in Saudi Arabia and an Arab guerrilla attack that killed three Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank served as the backdrop for Netanyahu's verbal assault on Damascus.

"We have to recognise that there is an increasing use of terror as a tactic of political warfare in the Middle East," said Netanyahu, who won Israel's May 29 election, in a television interview for international news agencies on Wednesday.

"What we have to do is to unite those forces that are being attacked to answer in a coordinated fashion on the international scene. There are political and economic means that we can bring to bear

against the terrorists and those who stand behind them."

Although the right-wing Netanyahu did not link Syria to Tuesday's bombing near the Saudi Arabian oil city of Dhahran, he said it hosted Islamic and other Arab groups opposed to peace.

"There are several regional centres of terrorism — Iran is one of them. But Syria, increasingly in a radius of 360 degrees, operates terror," he told Israel radio, saying he might seek international economic measures against Damascus.

Netanyahu's definition of terror includes attacks on Israeli soldiers in the West Bank and South Lebanon where Arab fighters say they wage a legitimate struggle against an occupier.

"We do not intend, on one hand, to allow peace talks — which we are interested in having and which we want to make progress — and on the other hand to absorb an indirect war of terror via Syria's emissaries," he said.

The jitters in the kingdom have been magnified by reports of Fahd's declining health.

Fahd, an overweight diabetic in his 70s, suffered a stroke in late November, according to diplomats.

The king resumed his duties February 22 after a three-month absence, defying skeptics who said the ailing monarch would never return to rule Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporters.

His illness sent anxiety through petroleum markets and raised speculation about the political future of the desert kingdom, the linchpin of Western policy in the Gulf.

When Fahd leaves the scene, the transition to Crown Prince Abdullah is expected to go smoothly, but his choices will be as difficult as Fahd's.