

BRIEFLY



A police officer shows a family of Vietnamese boat people, to a Vietnam Airlines aircraft at the Singapore Changi Airport during a repatriation on Thursday. The remaining 99 Vietnamese boat people in Singapore flew home laden with cash in the most orderly repatriation programme carried out by any asylum country in southeast Asia. — AFP/UNB photo

Netanyahu to address US House: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will address a joint meeting of the US Congress on July 10. House of Representatives officials said on Thursday. Reuter reports from Washington.

Netanyahu will speak to members of the Senate and House during his first US visit since his narrow May 29 election victory over Shimon Peres. The Israeli leader is expected to arrive in Washington on July 9.

Peres spoke to Congress last December 12, shortly after he took office following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin and President Chaim Herzog are the other Israeli leaders who have addressed Congress.

UN to extend Croatia mission: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali recommended Thursday that the UN peacekeeping mission in eastern Croatia be extended to January 15 to oversee the rebuilding of the last part of the country to return to government control. AP reports from United Nations.

The region, known as Eastern Slavonia, was seized by rebel Serbs five years ago. Last November, Serbs and Croats agreed to a UN-supervised transition to return Eastern Slavonia to control by the Croat government in Zagreb. Boutros-Ghali's recommendation was contained in a report to the Security Council. The current mandate of the 5,000-member force expires July 30.

9 killed in Madras truck mishap: Nine persons were killed and 39 others injured when a mini truck carrying a marriage party capsized at Thorapakkam in Chengalpattu-Mgr district Thursday evening. PTI reports from Madras.

While three persons died on the spot, others succumbed to injuries at the government Royapettah Hospital and the government General Hospital in Madras.

37 more executed in China: China has executed a further 37 criminals as part of a nationwide cleanup that began at the end of April, press reports said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

Twenty-one murderers, robbers and kidnappers were executed in Nanchang city, in the southeastern province of Jiangxi, on June 10, the Jiangxi legal news reported. On June 27, 16 criminals were executed for murder and theft in the booming southern city of Guangzhou, the Yangcheng evening news said.

Pak blast toll rises to 5: Five people were killed and 35 injured in Thursday's bomb explosion in Rawalpindi, hospital sources said today, after the death toll rose with one victim dying in hospital, AFP reports from Islamabad.

Several more of the injured are in a critical condition, the sources said. The attack occurred Thursday at a small hotel situated where the capital Islamabad meets neighbouring Rawalpindi.

19 die as train-bus collide in Peru: A train and a bus collided on Thursday in Peru's central highlands, and at least 19 people were killed, authorities said. Reuter reports from Lima.

The bus was dragged about 200 feet (60 metres), officials said. Thirty-five passengers were injured, some seriously. The accident happened early in the morning near the mining town of La Oroya, 116 miles (185 km) east of Lima, police and medical officials said.

Diana visits AIDS clinic: Princess Diana held hands with billionaire's daughter Aileen Getty as the two visited Britain's largest AIDS clinic Thursday. AP reports from London.

Diana and Getty were brought together earlier this year by the disease. Diana, the estranged wife of Prince Charles, is Patron of the National AIDS Trust, while Getty, the 36-year-old daughter of oil baron J. Paul Getty Jr., developed AIDS six years ago. Diana grasped the hand of her friend as they listened to doctors at central London's Mortimer Market Center explain the latest figures on the spread of AIDS-related illnesses. Diana officially opened the centre in December 1994.

Accord to end N-testing impossible by deadline

GENEVA, June 28: With crucial negotiations to end nuclear testing deadlocked, the chief mediator said he would draft his best attempt at a compromise for negotiators to take home with them after the conference ends Friday, reports AP.

The United Nations had set the Friday deadline to draft a treaty banning test explosions that could be approved when the U.N. General Assembly meets in September.

After 30 months of negotiations among the 61-nation Conference of Disarmament, objections from just a few nations are blocking an accord.

Jaap Ramaker, who is mediating the conference, said he would draft a treaty for departing delegates to "take home to their capitals to consider."

It is the "best possible of-

fer," said Ramaker, the Dutch head of the negotiating panel.

Negotiators would see when they return to Geneva on July 29 whether they can approve the text and send it to New York for signature in September, Ramaker said.

At the center of the storm is India, which claims that advanced countries can use computers to devise new nuclear weapons.

Ambassador Arundhati Ghose said she was disappointed that other key countries failed to listen to India's concerns. She refused to accept that negotiations were over, saying she still hoped for concessions.

India was unwavering in its original demand that the treaty commit the nuclear powers to getting rid of their arsenals.

'Bombers to hit again as US forces in KSA propping up monarchy'

LONDON, June 28: The bombers who have attacked two US installations in Saudi Arabia will strike again because they believe American forces are in the country illegally to prop up the Saudi monarchy, a leading dissident said Thursday, reports AP.

Mohammed al-Masari said the bombers have a strong case intellectually, and he challenged the Saudi government to conduct a poll or hold an internationally supervised vote on whether the Saudi people support the US military presence.

"You will see which percentage support the Americans. You will be shocked," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

A member of a leading Saudi family and a professor of Physics at King Saud University, al-Masari, 49, was arrested by Saudi police in May

1993 and fled to Yemen and then Britain after his release six months later. He said he was tortured by Saudi authorities.

Britain turned down his request for asylum and wanted to expel him to the Caribbean island of Dominica, saying his presence jeopardised billions of pounds (dollars) of business, mainly arms sales, to Saudi Arabia. But in March, a judge blocked his expulsion and the government allowed him to remain for four years.

Al-Masari said he wants American troops to leave Saudi Arabia but regards the bombings as the wrong way to achieve the goal.

He said he still believes his nonviolent campaign — to get rid of the ruling house of Al-Saud and to ask the Americans "politely but firmly to go" — is better than terrorist attacks.

Another report from Dhahran says, US officials acknowledge they have no leads on who was behind the massive truck bombing of a US military complex here, and say they doubt several anonymous claims of responsibility.

Saudi Arabia, a close American ally, has said little about the Tuesday's attack but posted a 2.7 million dollars reward for information leading to the arrests of suspects.

US President Bill Clinton, in France at a conference of the world's richest nations, vowed Thursday to bring to justice those responsible for the second lethal bombing of a US military target in Saudi Arabia in seven months.

Suspicion for the bombing, which killed 19 Americans, was focused on Muslim militants opposed to the 5,000 US troops in Saudi Arabia — but no proof has yet turned up.

Reuter adds: US military personnel at the bombed complex in Saudi Arabia were moved to safe areas today after a telephoned warning of another bomb, the US Air Force said.

Air force spokesman captain Scott Vadnais told Reuters: The base did receive a threat this morning at a quarter to five (0145 GMT), it was a bomb threat that later turned out to be a hoax. It was investigated by the appropriate Saudi authorities and determined to be a hoax.

Meanwhile, the US Senate condemned on Thursday night the truck bombing in Saudi Arabia two days earlier that killed 19 US servicemen, and urged all reasonable means to punish the bombers.

It approved a resolution condemning the bombing by voice vote.

Israeli govt to pose challenge to ME peace process

LONDON, June 28: British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said in a newspaper article published here today that the newly elected Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu will pose a serious challenge to the Middle East peace process, reports AP.

The language of the new government is strong. No deal on the Golan or Jerusalem, no discussion of Palestinian statehood, the expansion of settlements," he wrote in an article for the Guardian on Britain's role in the Middle East.

"If this remains Israel's position then negotiations would be extremely difficult," said Rifkind, who is to visit Saudi Arabia and Jordan next week.

Philippines govt rebels agree to work for political settlement

MANILA, June 28: The Philippines government and communist guerillas have agreed to work toward a political settlement within 12 months, to end one of Southeast Asia's longest running insurgencies, Manila's chief negotiator said today, reports AP.

The government panel has imposed on itself to complete the peace process by June 1997. Howard Dee told a news conference here on his return from the Netherlands where his side held talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Kuwaiti emir rejects ban on coeducation

KUWAIT, June 28: The emir has vetoed a bill sponsored by Muslim fundamentalist lawmakers that would ban coeducation in this Gulf Arab state, reports AP.

Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah's veto was reported Thursday by the independent Al-Qabas newspaper and confirmed by a cabinet minister.

Although the bill initially passed unopposed May 28, the parliament was not expected to try to override the emir's veto and was expected to endorse a compromise bill to be proposed by the government.

Because he took long to fetch cigarettes

CAIRO, June 28: An Egyptian mechanic soaked his 9-year-old apprentice with petrol and set him alight because he took too long to fetch a packet of cigarettes, official newspapers reported today, says Reuter.

The Al-Akhabir and Al-Gomhuria dailies said Hisham Aramadan was rushed to hospital with severe burns after Raftat Mohammed Hariri, who owns a car workshop in the village of Bilgais, set him on fire. Police have arrested Hariri.

Earlier this month, another mechanic pumped his 10-year-old apprentice full of air until his intestines burst to punish him for stupidity.

Major powers urged to arrest two most-wanted suspects Court indicts 8 Serbs for organised rape of Muslim women

THE HAGUE, June 28: The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal has indicted eight Bosnian Serbs for the organised mass rape of Muslim women and opened hearings aimed at pressuring the major powers to arrest the panel's two most-wanted suspects, reports AP.

The rape indictment, announced Thursday, was the tribunal's first dealing with the offense as a war crime. It details horrific sexual abuse and enslavement of women and girls — some as young as 12 years old — by their Serb captors in the southeast Bosnian town of Foca from April 1992 until February 1993.

"Several women were held in houses and apartments, which were run in the manner of brothels, by groups of mainly

(Serb) paramilitary units," according to a tribunal statement.

The tribunal also indicted nine Bosnian Croats for atrocities against Muslims in central Bosnia. None of those indicted are in custody.

The tribunal's announcement coincided with the first day of a hearing of evidence against Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Gen. Ratko Mladic — both indicted twice for genocide and crimes against humanity.

The two reject the tribunal's authority, and their refusal to surrender for trial prompted the UN court to go public with evidence to shame the international community into taking steps to arrest

them. The prosecution submits it would be inconceivable that the accused, Karadzic and Mladic, did not give their approval in the massive (Serb) criminal operation of ethnic cleansing. Swedish prosecutor Eric Dastberg said in his opening statement.

Prosecutors claim Karadzic and Mladic are guilty of complicity in the atrocities allegedly carried out by rebel Serbs in the 43-month Bosnian war — the worst genocide in Europe since World War II.

Although atrocities have been blamed on all sides, international observers say the bulk have been carried out by rebel Serbs.



French President Jacques Chirac (R) chats with US president Bill Clinton Thursday while delivering statements to the media on mutual interests in combating terrorism. The two leaders are in Lyon attending the G-7 Summit. — AFP/UNB photo

Russia begins withdrawing troops from Chechnya

GROZNY, Russia, June 28: Russia began withdrawing its troops from Chechnya on Friday, with troops from the 245th motorised rifle regiment leaving the breadway region for their permanent base in Moscow, reports AP.

The withdrawal began three days after President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree ordering the pullout to begin. However, its continuation is conditional on success in peace efforts.

Russia has previously announced withdrawals, which later turned out to be regular troop rotations. Friday's ceremonial departure, however, appeared to mark the beginning of a real withdrawal as the troops of the 245th are not scheduled to be replaced.

Yeltsin, who is fighting a

bitter battle to defeat his Communist challenger in a presidential runoff on Wednesday, desperately needs to show progress in ending the 18-month-old war, which has been a major political liability.

The ITAR-Tass news agency said the troops loaded up their equipment in blistering heat onto train cars bound for Moscow. The 245th will leave behind 19 prisoners of war, which the Chechens are still holding in hopes of exchanging them for separatist captives.

The regiment arrived in Chechnya in January 1995, about a month after Russian troops marched into the region to suppress its independence drive.

Meanwhile, the fate of the next round of peace talks between Kremlin negotiators and separatist commanders was uncertain.

Russian negotiators and the rebel military leader blamed each other Thursday for the postponement of talks aimed at bringing peace to Chechnya.

On Friday, the Interfax news agency quoted an unnamed rebel commander as saying the Chechens were not satisfied with the composition of the Russian negotiating team, but that a decision on whether to continue talks would be taken Friday.

Sergei Slipchenko, a spokesman for the Russian commission on Chechnya war negotiations, said Thursday the rebels backed out of the round of talks in Nazran, just outside Chechnya, because they were not satisfied with security precautions.

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Netanyahu's top advisers meet with Arafat

JERUSALEM, June 28: Two senior advisers to prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for the first time since the right-wing came to power in Israel, Israeli media reported today, reports AP.

Israeli public radio and newspapers said Dore Gold, Netanyahu's top foreign policy adviser, and member of parliament Gideon Ezra met late Thursday with Arafat at the Palestinian president's home in Gaza City.

Ezra is a former deputy chief of Israel's domestic intelligence agency, Shin Beth. A spokesman for Netanyahu declined to confirm or deny the reported meeting, which would be the first direct contact between the Netanyahu government and Arafat.

Since Netanyahu came to office on June 18 there have been contacts between Gold and Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, but the conservative Israeli leader has refused to

commit himself to meeting personally with the Palestinian president.

There was also no immediate confirmation from the Palestinian side.

Israeli radio said Gold and Ezra were met at the Erez Crossing into the Gaza Strip by Palestinian preventive security chief Mohammad Dahlan, who drove them to Arafat's residence.

Israeli radio said Arafat had asked that the meeting be kept secret.

AP adds: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's top policy advisers met secretly overnight with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at the PLO chief's home in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources close to Arafat said Friday.

The secret session was reminiscent of the early days of dialogue between the two sides begun under the Labour-led government that ultimately reached the self-rule agreements with Arafat's PLO.

Chandrika seeks help to rebuild Jaffna

COLOMBO, June 28: President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Thursday met with representatives of 30 foreign countries and international relief agencies to seek help to rebuild war-torn northern Sri Lanka, reports AP.

Sri Lanka has appealed for 274 million dollars in international aid for the region that has borne the brunt of the 12-year civil war in which more than 42,000 people have been killed.

Although the government did not give details of Thursday's meeting in Colombo, some western diplomats said a few countries had already promised aid for the war-ravaged Jaffna Peninsula, where most of the country's Tamil minority lives.

Among the countries represented by their ambassadors at the meeting were the U.S.A., Britain, Japan and Germany.

Organisations included the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The three-year reconstruction plan to rebuild the peninsula, based on a joint United Nations and World Bank study, was completed by a government committee last month. The plan details the reconstruction of hospitals, roads, telecommunications, ports, houses, schools and power stations.

Kumaratunga agreed to a request for diplomats to be taken to the peninsula to assess for themselves the situation in the area, a diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The military captured the guerrilla capital of Jaffna City in December.

G-7 leaders pledge anew to battle terrorism

LYON, France, June 28: Leaders of the seven richest democracies have pledged solidarity to fight terrorism by all legal means after a truck bomb killed 19 Americans in Saudi Arabia, reports AP.

"We are all united in condemning the dreadful bombing that has taken place," French President Jacques Chirac, host of this year's economic summit, said Thursday. "We changed our agenda" to deal with "this appalling event."

The leaders of the United States, France, Britain, Japan, Germany, Canada and Italy scheduled a follow-up meeting of their top security officials for next month in Paris.

The truck bomb explosion Tuesday at an apartment building at a military base in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, overshadowed the economic summit — and changed its agenda.

President Clinton, who had sought the quick action statement by the countries, said the joint statement showed, "We understand that an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us and that none of us is invulnerable."

Among areas of expanded

cooperation the leaders cited: A pledge to "better equip our law enforcement authorities to work together to combat terrorism."

Clinton indicated that such efforts as the recent US sharing of bomb-detection equipment with Israel would be high on the list.

In their joint communique, the leaders said: "We proclaim our common resolve to unite our efforts and our determination to fight terrorism by all legal means."

"Special attention should be paid to the threat of utilisation of nuclear, biological and chemical materials, as well as toxic substances, for terrorist purposes," the statement added.

US spokesman Mike McCurry said Clinton would present specific proposals at Friday's session of the economic conference. The United States is seeking agreement on tougher extradition guidelines, more sharing of national intelligence on possible terrorist activity and efforts to make it harder for suspected terrorists to cross national borders.

Off the Record

Dinosaur eggs of about 100m years found

SHENYANG: A nest of 16 fossilised dinosaur eggs, about 100 million years old, have been found in Yueliang village, Xi'erjiazui township, Changtu county, northeast China's Liaoning province, reports Xinhua.

The eggs were discovered when workers from a construction company in Anshan city were driving a pile 16 meters below the surface for the construction of a bridge on an express way from Tieling to Siping.

Some of the eggs were broken and all of the eggs have shells. But five or six eggs were later stolen.

Ning Tian, head of a construction team, sent the rest to the Liaoning provincial Institute of Cultural relics.

Geologists expressed the belief that the eggs were dated from some 100 million years ago.

The eggs were smaller than most dinosaur eggs, about the size of a goose egg. Most of them are oval and one has a flat shape.

Dong Zhiming, a dinosaur researcher with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said, "such small dinosaur eggs are really very rare. I think probably they were laid by some new species of dinosaurs. But I don't know what species."



Chief of Hezb-i-Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (R), takes the oath from an unidentified Afghan as the new Prime Minister of Afghanistan Wednesday. — AFP/UNB photo

Peace prospects in Afghanistan remain remote despite return of Hekmatyar

KABUL, June 28: The return of former opposition leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to the government has shuffled the cards in Afghanistan's bloody civil war, but prospects for peace remain remote, analysts said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Hekmatyar was sworn in as prime minister on Wednesday night after a day of carnage in Kabul as the rebel Taliban militia pounded the city with about 300 rockets and artillery shells.

He promised to work for peace and a negotiated solution to the civil war that has wracked Afghanistan since Mujahideen guerrillas toppled a pro-communist government in April 1992.

At least 62 civilians were killed and nearly 150 wounded

in Wednesday's barrage, timed to coincide with Hekmatyar's arrival in the Afghan capital after 30 months of armed opposition.

Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, militarily weakened by the Taliban, mended its fences with the government last month, scrapping its alliance with other opposition factions, including one led by northern leader general Abdul Rashid Dostum.

Kabul residents said they hoped the deal between Hekmatyar and his former foe, President Burhanuddin Rabbani, heralded a wider reconciliation among warring Afghan factions.

"We want Hekmatyar to resume his job as prime minister and persuade the Taliban and

Dostum to join forces with the government," said Obaidullah, a towel vendor at a market near Kabul's Pul-i-Khishit Mosque.

Others in the battered city seemed sceptical that Hekmatyar's switch of sides would make much difference. "Nothing will change," said Fazal Rahman, 53, a driver. "These same leaders have made promises before and have sworn they wouldn't fight. None of them are going to improve."

A few rockets whistled into the city on Thursday, but witnesses said frontlines were relatively quiet after Wednesday's relentless barrage which halted UN relief operations and kept most people sheltering at home.

At his oath-taking cere-

mony, Hekmatyar appealed to the Taliban to stop fighting and join an intra-Afghan dialogue, saying that no military solution in Afghanistan was possible.

"I have come to Kabul to be with its people and share their sorrow and pain," said Hekmatyar, whose abortive revolt with Dostum in January 1994 wreaked havoc in the Afghan capital.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Aledin Boroujerdi, who played a key role in reconciling Hekmatyar and Rabbani, was among officials representing eight countries at the ceremony.

The representatives of Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia welcomed Hekmatyar's return and called for peace talks.