

BRIEFLY



Bosnian Serb strongman Radovan Karadzic speaks at a session of the Bosnian Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in Pale on Monday. Leaders of his Karadzic's nationalist party yesterday backed his candidacy in the Bosnia elections set September 14. Karadzic, indicted by the UN War Crimes Tribunal, is barred under the Dayton peace accord from holding public office or running in the elections.

—AFP/UNB photo

China develops missile troops: China's missile troops have developed all-weather combat capabilities, the Xinhua news agency said yesterday. Reuter reports from Beijing.

Since China set up its missile troops 30 years ago, they have built a dozen bases with deployments of various different missiles using various launching methods, Xinhua quoted sources from the special forces of the people's Liberation Army as saying.

Floods claim 10 in China: At least 10 people have died after torrential rains swept across China's eastern Zhejiang province, and the army has been sent in to rescue tens of thousands of villagers trapped by floods, state media said yesterday. Reuter reports from Beijing.

Heavy rains also hit central Jiangxi province, causing the water level of the Yangtze river to rise to 33.18 metres (109 ft) or 4.68 metres (15 ft) above the danger level, the Xinhua news agency said. The rains, which started early on Sunday, were most severe in countries around Zhejiang's scenic city of Hangzhou, where rising flood waters have stranded 51,000 people, the China Daily said.

Car bomb blast kills 1 in France: A Corsican nationalist was killed and two other nationalist leaders seriously injured when a powerful car bomb exploded in the city of Bastia on Monday, police said, Reuter reports from Ajaccio.

Nationalist militant Pierre Lorenzi died in hospital a few hours after the blasts, which marked a sharp escalation in violence on the Mediterranean resort island. Those seriously wounded were Charles Pieri, deputy head of the Cuncolta Nazionalista, legal facade of the outlawed Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) — historic wing, and fellow nationalist Dominique Rennuci.

12 Arizona rebels held in US: Twelve members of a right-wing Arizona militia group were arrested on Monday and charged with plotting to blow up government offices in the Phoenix area, officials said, Reuter reports from Phoenix.

The US attorney for Arizona, Janet Napolitano told a news conference the men were suspected of plotting to bomb the Phoenix police headquarters, and buildings in the city housing the FBI, the internal revenue service and the immigration and naturalisation service. She said the 12 were arrested on Monday and more arrests were expected.

Mild quake shakes New Delhi: A mild earthquake shook the New Delhi area Tuesday morning, and no damage or injuries were reported, AP reports from New Delhi.

The tremor, with 3.3 magnitude, occurred at 5:04 a.m. (10:34 gmt) and lasted three seconds, United News of India reported. India's Seismological Office said the epicenter was about 30 kilometers (19 miles) from the capital.

Four bus mishaps claim 20 in India: A bus skidded off the road and fell into a gorge in Kashmir, killing 14 people and injuring 42, a news report said Tuesday, AP reports from New Delhi.

The bus was on its way from Udhampur to Batote in the northern state of Jammu-Kashmir when the accident occurred Monday night, Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Playwright Steve Tesich dead: Steve Tesich, the Yugoslav-born playwright and Academy Award winning screenwriter, has died of a heart attack in Nova Scotia, where he was vacationing with his family, said Sam Cohn, a long-time friend, who was also his agent, AP reports from New York.

Tesich was 53 and had homes in Manhattan and Conifer, Colorado.

Costa Rican cabinet to resign: Costa Rican President Jose Maria Figueres in a surprise move on Monday said he had asked his entire cabinet to resign, Reuter reports from Costa Rica.

"I have asked for the resignation of the cabinet, to take place from midnight yesterday," figures told a news conference.

"I am not looking at a total change of the cabinet, but it is necessary to make some changes in order to keep progressing," he said.

9 villagers killed in Sierra Leone: At least nine civilians were killed over the weekend in simultaneous attacks on six villages in East Sierra Leone that led thousands to flee their homes, local journalists reported Monday, AFP says from Abidjan.

The nine died in Yorjuma, Gbeika and Lembema in eastern province during raids attributed to rebel of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the journalists said. The rebels also abducted scores of civilians to carry looted goods and set fire to houses, they said.

Quake shakes Japanese island: A moderate earthquake measuring 3.6 on the Richter scale shook Awajishima, a small island near the western Japanese city of Kobe, the Meteorological Agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 10:56 am (01:56GMT), was located 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) under the seabed of Osaka Bay, the agency said.

Blast at China firecracker factory: 40 killed

BEIJING, July 2: An explosion at a firecracker factory in China's southwestern Sichuan province killed at least 40 people and injured 47, the Wenhui Bao newspaper said today, reports Reuter.

The blast at the Yongxing firecracker factory, about 60 km (7 miles) from this Sichuan provincial capital Chengdu, levelled 10 factory buildings and shook the ground for kilometers around early on Saturday, the newspaper said.

About 40 of the more than 100 workers at the plant were killed, it said, but it was unable to give an exact death toll.

Different reaction awaits for India if it goes for N-testing: US

NEW DELHI, July 2: India will face a very different kind of world reaction if it conducts another nuclear test, US ambassador Frank Wisner warned in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Wisner told reporters in the southern city of Madras on Monday that New Delhi would find itself isolated if it tested a nuclear weapon, the Times of India reported.

"I think there would be a very different kind of world reaction when somebody tests (a nuclear weapon) when the world is trying to stop tests," the ambassador said. "I don't think that is going to happen."

India exploded a nuclear bomb in 1974, but says that it does not have a nuclear weapon and that its nuclear policy is geared only towards research.

Di never wanted a divorce

LONDON, July 2: Britain's Princess Diana was on Tuesday quoted as saying she "never wanted a divorce" from her to the throne Prince Charles, reports Reuter.

The top setting Sun tabloid said the Princess made the admission on her 35th birthday on Monday after her regular work out at a fashionable London gym.

News reports have suggested that Queen Elizabeth is irritated by the slow pace of divorce negotiations and has told Charles to finalise a settlement worth at least 30 million dollars.

Speculation has mounted that an announcement on the end of the royal couple's 15-year marriage is due within the next few days.

As Diana left the exclusive Harbour Club, she said: "I never wanted a divorce. No one seems to understand that. I am anxious to get all this over with. I would like all the details to be kept private and try to reach a conclusion in a civilised manner."

The princess was speaking to reporters after a photographer wished her a happy birthday.

"This is one hell of a week for me. I am totally raw inside," she said.

Israeli army calls for easing closure

JERUSALEM, July 2: Israeli army officials have called for an easing of the four-month-old closure of the Palestinian territories, a military source said today, reports AFP.

The army asked defence minister Yitzhak Mordechai to double the number of Palestinian workers permitted into Israel to work, in order to ease the crippling effect of the closure on the Palestinian economy.

The new rightwing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is to discuss the army proposal this week, Israel Radio reported.

Israel has slightly lifted the closure since Netanyahu was elected premier on May 29 to allow 27,000 Palestinians into the Jewish state each day. But Palestinian officials say the real figure is much lower.

An advisor to Netanyahu, Gideon Ezra, on Monday recommended lifting the closure of the territories imposed in February at the start of a wave of Islamic militant bombings in Israel.

Yeltsin urges Russians to choose freedom, not communism

MOSCOW, July 2: After a series of missed meetings and no-show campaign appearances, a weary Boris Yeltsin has addressed voters for the first time in a week as Russian officials tried to dispel concerns about the president's health, reports AP.

Yeltsin urged Russians on Monday to choose freedom not Communism — in Wednesday's presidential runoff between himself and Communist challenger Gennady Zyuganov, Monday was the last day of campaigning before the vote.

"We have one Russia, one future, one path to normal life, a tired but firm-speaking Yeltsin said in a televised appeal. "Vote for the new Russia! Only together we shall win!"

"You will vote not only for Yeltsin or Zyuganov," the president said. "You will vote for yourself, your family, the future of your children."

Yeltsin's campaign has been

LTTE kills 4 soldiers in fighting Tigers call for ceasefire, resumption of talks

COLOMBO, July 2: Tamil Tiger guerrillas, hard-pressed militarily, called for a ceasefire on Tuesday and the resumption of talks with the government to end the 13-year-old civil war, reports AP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and respects the views expressed that an early ceasefire and de-escalation of the war is necessary," said Lawrence Thilakar, a rebel spokesman.

The rebels' statement, faxed to news agencies in Colombo from their London office, followed a two-day international conference in the Australian capital, Canberra, on the conflict in Sri Lanka.

The conference, "Peace with justice", ended last Thursday, with a statement calling for negotiations under

international facilitation and observation.

The government has ruled out international mediation, saying that the conflict is an internal matter. It has toughened its stance, saying the rebels must give up their weapons before any negotiations, and vowing to "lame them" if they did not.

The guerillas scuttled the last peace talks and a truce in April 1995 saying the government was not sincere in its efforts to end the war peacefully.

The rebels also called on the government to withdraw its troops from regions recently captured by the military, "to create the necessary conducive conditions" for negotiations to commence.

The guerillas have suffered several defeats during the last nine months with the military capturing their longtime capi-

tal of northern Jaffna city, and forcing the rebels to withdraw to jungle towns.

The rebels are fighting for a homeland in the north and east for minority Tamils. They accuse the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and military, of widespread discrimination in education and jobs. More than 42,000 people have been killed in the fighting since the war began in 1983.

AFP adds: Tamil Tiger guerillas carried out a fresh attack against security forces in northeastern Sri Lanka today, killing four soldiers for the loss of two of their own men, officials said.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the army patrol in Toppur in the district of Trincomalee early today.



File photo dated July 1 of crowds cheering Yasser Arafat as he returns to Gaza City after 27 years of exile. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will be celebrating July 1 the second anniversary of his triumphant return.

— AFP/UNB photo

PPP regains control of Kashmiri legislature

ISLAMABAD, July 2: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's party regained control of the Kashmiri legislature, sweeping elections marred by violence in the restless province, reports AP.

The victory Sunday gives the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) control of the provincial assembly for the first time since 1990, during Benazir's first term. Successive federal governments in Islamabad have aimed to strengthen ties with Kashmir's rulers to contain a simmering independence movement.

Four people died in fierce clashes between workers of rival political parties on election day, police said. The gunfights

suspended voting temporarily in several districts, according to news reports.

Leaders of Kashmir's ruling Muslim Conference boycotted voting in 12 districts, accusing Benazir's party of vote rigging.

Final results from 34 of the 40 districts in Kashmir showed Benazir's party won 20 districts and the incumbent Muslim conference won seven, the chief election commissioner said Monday.

Smaller parties and independent candidates took another seven districts.

The remaining seats in the 40-seat provincial Parliament are from districts in remote corners of Kashmir, in the foothills of the Himalayas. The

final tally from those districts was expected by Tuesday, but early returns put Benazir's party ahead in most, the commissioner said.

The pro-independence party, the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, boycotted the election, calling it a sham.

The flashpoint of two previous wars between India and Pakistan, Kashmir was divided between the countries shortly after British rule over the Asian subcontinent ended in 1947.

The Front hopes to reunite Kashmir and establish an independent homeland. It spearheaded an armed uprising in Indian Kashmir in 1989.



Firemen attempt to extinguish the fire which resulted from a car-bomb explosion in downtown Bastia on Monday. Two leaders of the Cuncolta Nazionalista, the legal branch of the independentist organization FLNC-Canal Historique, Charles Pieri and Pierre-Louis Lorenzi, were seriously wounded. Sixteen others were also wounded.

—AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Adults only

NEW DELHI: India's first adult television show including sex education, adult jokes, talks shows and music videos was launched on Monday, reports Reuter.

The satellite channel, Plus 21, will be on air everyday from 10 pm to 2 am and is being produced by global internet, a little known company based in northern town of Chandigarh.

No one knows the identity of the promoters but an executive was quoted as saying it was jointly owned by an Indian and three people based in Britain, the United States and Japan.

According to those who were offered a preview, the channel will be aimed at "mature Indian" and would not show pornography unlike adult channels in Europe and the United States.

For mostly conservative India where discussing sex is still confined to the bedroom, the channel is expected to evoke strong feelings.

"I will treat it with a lot of caution. I will see what others do," said Rakesh Dutta, a leading cable television operator in south Delhi.

Film and programme makers have faced legal problems in India for showing nudity, violence and offending religion.

Western films showing sex scenes are often heavily censored in India before they are released. Video parlours keeping hard sex films are often raided while "playboy" and "penthouse" magazines are still banned.

"In this situation, the channel will certainly evoke a lot of interest," said Dutta.

Bid to simplify German spelling

VIENNA: Linguists and officials from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and five other countries where German is spoken produced a programme Monday or simplifying German spelling which could cost hundreds of millions of marks, publishers say, reports AFP.

The group signed a declaration of intent to simplify German spelling for the first time since 1901, after more than 10 years of heart-searching by linguists and politicians.

The declaration was signed by Austria, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Romania and Switzerland, which are either German-speaking or have German-speaking minorities.

But the German magazine Focus said the reforms could cause millions in new school textbooks.

It quoted Rritz Von Bernuth of the Association of German Educational Publishers as saying the re-editing of 3,000 fundamental texts in the new spelling could cost publishers some 300 million marks (200 million dollars).

The reforms follow more than 10 years of discussion by linguists and political officials from Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

Part of their intention was to Germanify words of foreign origin. But some words will remain untouched. They include "philosophie" (Philosophy). The linguists Shrank from a change to "flososofie." Likewise "restaurant" will not become "restorant" as originally proposed.

The reforms will begin to take effect on August 1, 1998, and will be fully implemented, after transition period, by July 31, 2005, after which it will be obligatory in teaching and administration.

Threat for more attacks continues Bombers to be arrested, punished: King Fahd

RIYADH, July 2: King Fahd of Saudi Arabia said on Monday bombers who killed 19 Americans and wounded about 400 people in an attack last week would be arrested and punished, reports Reuter.

The king speaking at the weekly cabinet meeting thanked citizens for condemning the Tuesday night attack in which a truck bomb devastated a military complex in Al-Khobar in eastern Saudi Arabia.

He expressed confidence, "that the criminals will be arrested, put on trial and the rule of God will be implemented."

Saudi Arabia as Muslim conservative country which implements the strict Sharia

Islamic law, publicly beheaded four Saudi nationals in May for an attack in Riyadh in November against a US run military training centre in which five Americans and two Indians were killed.

Another report from Washington adds: Letters threatening violence against unspecified civilian targets were sent to the private, unlisted fax machines of several Saudi officials over the weekend, ABC to World News Tonight" reported on Monday.

ABC quoted unnamed intelligence sources as saying the calls came from the fax machines of King Fahd's private secretary.

Junta blames int'l bodies for meddling in internal affairs of Myanmar

RANGON, July 2: A top Myanmar general has accused international social and religious organisations of interfering in the country's internal affairs, official media reported today, reports Reuter.

Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, secretary one of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and head of military intelligence, made the comments at a refresher course for local Red Cross Society executives, state-run media said.

"Under the facade of 'international'.... so-called international religious and social organisations are assisting the group opposing the state, interfering in internal affairs," he said.

Khin Nyunt did not identify any international organisations and did not say which group was opposing the state.

But the government has regularly attacked the National League for Democracy (NLD) headed by Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi for trying to destabilise the country.

Khin Nyunt said the Red Cross Society needed to cooperate with international organisations that have "pure goodwill" to protect it from being used by "unscrupulous organisations."

"All are aware of the destructive acts to hamper national development and jeopardise peace and stability with the assistance of external elements," he said.

"People from all walks of life who are enjoying the fruits of development are disgusted with destructive acts jeopardising the stability of the state and have expressed their desire to ostracise and crush the axe-handles traitors," he said.

Yeltsin might be indulging his supposed weakness for alcohol — and on Monday demanded a published medical review of Yeltsin's health.

"For the fourth day we haven't seen Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin," he said before Yeltsin's television appearance. "Why are they isolating him, why are they all keeping silent?"

"I don't think he should hide and talk only to his aides, especially at such a time," he said.

The 52-year-old Communist Party leader also met with foreign diplomats who are concerned about his possible victory and insisted that his positions were often distorted.

And the attacks on Yeltsin just kept on coming.

"You'll choose not only between Yeltsin and Zyuganov," the Communist leader said in broadcast spots Monday, mocking the president, "but between a powerful and strong Russia and (Yeltsin's) colonial administration."

Zyuganov has capitalised on widespread discontent with Yeltsin's painful economic reforms, the Soviet collapse, the war in Chechnya and rampant crime and corruption. Much of his campaign also has focused on Yeltsin's erratic behaviour and reported fondness for drink.

That helped Zyuganov gain a solid lead in the early stage of the race before Yeltsin bounced back with a buoyant campaign that portrayed an alert, vibrant president.

All polls show Yeltsin as the favourite on Wednesday, but the president's campaign managers still fear a low turnout against loyal Communist voters will benefit Zyuganov.

"You can't stay home on July 3rd," Yeltsin said Monday. "If you don't vote, you're also making a choice."