

BRIEFLY



Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (R) shakes hand with Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda (L), as they meet for talks in the Bosnian Presidency building in Sarajevo on Tuesday. Ikeda currently tours several Eastern European countries. — AFP/UNB photo

Benazir to visit ROK from July 22: Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will make an official visit to South Korea from July 22-24, a spokesman said on Tuesday. AFP reports from Seoul.

Benazir will hold talks with President Kim Young-Sam on bilateral ties and economic cooperation, Kim's spokesman said. Pakistani officials accompanying Benazir plan to hold a business forum to promote investment in Pakistan, he said.

30 killed as tram derails in Ukraine: A tram ran off the rails, smashed into a concrete barrier and overturned in an eastern Ukrainian city on Tuesday, killing 30 people and injuring about 50, police said. Reuter reports from Kiev.

A police spokesman in the region said the accident occurred at about 6 p.m. during rush hour, in the industrial city of Dniprodzerzhinsk as the tram was traveling down a steep slope. Tram no. 2 was going down a hill when the steering mechanism failed. It left the rails, hit the barrier and flipped over," the spokesman said by telephone. "Thirty people have been killed and about 50 injured."

12 die in Mexico prison riot: Twelve prisoners died and five were wounded on Tuesday in the northwestern city of Los Mochis as two gangs of inmates battled for control of the main prison, authorities said, Reuter reports from Mexico City.

A government statement from Los Mochis in Sinaloa State, some 780 miles (1,250 kms) northwest of Mexico City, said the turf war began when a prisoner, Hipolito Rios Borjorquez, allegedly murdered another inmate, Pedro Vega Arellano. The dead man's cronies sought revenge and fighting broke out. The battle "originated in a dispute for the control that some inmates have over the rest of the prisoners," Francisco Frias, Secretary General of Government in Sinaloa, said in a statement. He did not say what weapons were used.

American jailed for 7 yrs in Seoul: An American civilian employee of the US military was sentenced to seven years in prison Wednesday for helping a South Korean woman who later died of injuries, AP reports from Seoul.

Henry C. McKimsey, 36, an electrician, assigned to the 8th US Army based in Seoul, was convicted by a Seoul criminal court of beating his live-in girlfriend in January during a fight reportedly started by her demand that they separate. The woman, Kang Woon-Kyong, 39, died several hours later of a cerebral hemorrhage, police said. Severe bruises were found in her face, chest and neck.

2 Russians held in US: Two Russian immigrants have been arrested on charges they mounted the biggest-ever scam to steal cellular phone numbers, secret service officials said Tuesday, AFP says from New York.

Abraham Romy and his companion Irina Bashkovich are accused of stealing and then reselling more than 80,000 cellular phone numbers and their secret codes, secret service spokesman Brian Gimlett said. "It's the largest seizure of compromised cellular telephone numbers in the US," he said, adding the thievery had been going on for at least a year.

15 missing as ship capsizes in China: A total of 15 people were missing after a ship capsized on the Yangtze river in southwest China, the China News Service reported on Wednesday, Reuter says from Beijing.

The Longhuaji 15, which was privately owned, was carrying 43 people when it collided with another vessel on Tuesday as it tried to anchor at the port of Yaque in southwestern Sichuan province's Fengdu county, it said. Of the passengers, 28 were rescued but the others were still missing, the agency said.

Lankan PM in Madras: The Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, arrived in Madras yesterday morning from Colombo enroute to Puttappathi on a day's pilgrimage, FTI reports from Madras.

She was accompanied by her son and opposition leader, Anura Bandaranaike. Immediately she left for the pilgrim town in Andhra Pradesh by an Indian Air Force Avro aircraft.

Quake jolts China's Tibet region: A strong earthquake measuring 6.0 on the Richter Scale jolted China's southwestern Tibet region yesterday, the Xinhua News Agency said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

It did not say whether there were any casualties.

The earthquake jolted Xaitongmin county in Tibet's Xigaze prefecture at 2.44 p.m. (06:44 GMT) yesterday, Xinhua quoted the state seismological bureau as saying.

Blast in Dhahran US offers \$2m reward for information

WASHINGTON, July 3: The United States on Tuesday offered a 2 million dollar reward for information leading to the truck-bombers who killed 19 Americans in Saudi Arabia, and warned the perpetrators to "sleep with one eye open," reports Reuter.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns announced the US reward at a briefing, noting it would supplement the 3 million dollar reward already offered by the Saudi government.

"There will be no rest for those who shed American blood and the cowards who committed this act had better sleep with one eye open," Burns said at a briefing. "We will find them. We're not going to get away with it."

He said information about the US reward would be available through US embassies and consulates, on the internet and through "wanted" posters and matchbooks that were still being developed.

11 more killed in Karachi violence

KARACHI, July 3: Eleven people, including a policeman and five activists of the ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), have been killed in clashes with the police here in the past three days, police officials said today, reports AFP.

Three MQM members and policeman died Tuesday in gunbattles in the industrial district of Korangi, they said.

Another two MQM members were killed on Monday while resisting arrest, the officials said.

Four other people died on Monday and Tuesday but were car thieves who died in an exchange of fire with police and did not belong to MQM, they said.

Police added a fireman was killed in a shooting early today by unidentified assailants.

The MQM has frequently accused police and paramilitary rangers deployed in Karachi of killing its activists in custody.

The authorities have denied the charge, saying the killings have taken place in encounters between "criminal elements" from the MQM and the police.

Benazir stresses neutral role in dealing with Afghan factions

ISLAMABAD, July 3: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto stressed Tuesday that Pakistan would remain "strictly neutral" in dealing with Afghanistan's factions, officials said, reports AFP.

Responding to a message from recently appointed Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Benazir said Pakistan was willing to play any role that could contribute to peace and stability in its war-ravaged neighbour.

In his message, delivered by special envoy Ghairat Baheer, Hekmatyar thanked Benazir for sending a delegation to Kabul to attend his oath taking ceremony on June 26.

NZ rejects China's demand to ban Dalai Lama's visit

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 3: New Zealand is ignoring a Chinese demand to ban a planned visit by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, reports AP.

Chinese ambassador Huang Guifang has said China's relations with New Zealand could be harmed if the visit goes ahead in September.

However, Foreign Minister Don McKinnon said Wednesday he's not concerned about the warning.

Huang said Tuesday the visit "can by no means be acceptable to us" and that it will also be unacceptable for New Zealand officials to meet the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama met McKinnon and Prime Minister Jim Bolger when he previously visited New Zealand in 1992.

At the time, Bolger emphasized the Dalai Lama's position as a world religious leader and said politics was not discussed.

"Obviously the ambassador is acting under instruction, I've met the Dalai Lama before and the sky didn't fall in," McKinnon said of Huang's warning.

Infighting erupts within Gowda's coalition govt

NEW DELHI, July 3: Infighting has already erupted within Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's coalition government just a month after he came to power promising a better deal for India's lower castes, reports AP.

At least three regional politicians named federal ministers in Gowda's complex 13-party alliance are unhappy about not being given senior positions.

And an influential member of the coalition, Maneka Gandhi, daughter-in-law of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, began openly criticising Gowda on Tuesday for clearing a power project that she says will damage the environment.

The project, by the US company Cogentrix Energy Inc. in Karnataka State, will burn coal. And Gandhi said Gowda cleared it without the required approval of the Environment Ministry.

Many observers had predicted that Gowda's government wouldn't survive long because of the many diverse components of his 13-party alliance of socialists, communists and activists from the many lower-caste parties.

But few expected the differences to surface so soon, only a month after figurehead President Shankar Dayal Sharma named Gowda prime minister.

Gowda's government is the third to rule since a parliamentary election in May ousted the centrist Congress Party, which had ruled India for most of the five decades since it gained independence from Britain.

The Congress Party finished second in the election, and the right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which came in first, tried to form a government.

But it failed to win enough support to shore up its lack of a majority, and many criticised it for whipping up tension between the nation's Hindu majority and Muslim minority.

Gowda has tried to hold his coalition together by focusing attention on widespread problems such as the poverty that leaves many villagers without drinking water, health care and public education.

Newspapers said Tuesday that Gowda was planning to expand his Cabinet again to satisfy sulking members.

When Gowda expanded his Cabinet on Friday, new minister R. L. Jalappa walked out of the presidential palace in a huff, without waiting for a ceremonial photograph with the president, because he was only named a junior minister.

Another appointee, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, didn't even bother to show up for the swearing in, for the same reason.



Beth Beisel leads a small crowd of anti-death penalty protesters in front of the US Supreme Court building on Tuesday in Washington. The protest, organised by Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR), marks the 20th anniversary of the 1976 Supreme Court decision Greg vs. Georgia which reinstated the death penalty in the US. — AFP/UNB photo

Bosnia calls for arrest of war crimes suspects Russia challenges IFOR's right to arrest Karadzic

MOSCOW, July 3: Russia on Tuesday challenged the right of the NATO-led IFOR peace force in Bosnia to arrest the Bosnian Serb Leader Radovan Karadzic, wanted on suspicion of war crimes and crimes against humanity, reports AFP.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman was quoted by Interfax agency as saying "The instructions of the Hague international tribunal on former Yugoslavia cannot serve as a legal basis for the actions of IFOR, in particular the forcible detention of someone."

A Russian contingent is serving with IFOR in Bosnia.

Karadzic has left his post and he will not take part in the Bosnian elections, but that does not prevent him from being leader of one of the biggest Bosnian Serb parties," spokesman Vadim Lukov added, according to the report.

Karadzic has confirmed in writing that he has transferred his powers as president of the Republika Srpska, the Serb entity in Bosnia, to his vice-president, Biljana Plavsic.

However the United States considers this gesture inadequate and has called on Karadzic to resign completely.

The new leadership of the Serb Democratic Party, meeting at the Bosnian Serb headquarters in Pale near Sarajevo, called on Karadzic on Monday to stand in election scheduled for September in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

AP adds, Bosnia said Tuesday that suspected war criminals must be arrested and extradited if the country is to hold free and fair elections.

In a letter to the Security Council, Bosnian Ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey demanded that the council impose sanctions against nations that refuse to cooperate with the international war crimes tribunal in the Hague.

He also asked the council to call on NATO-led troops to apprehend suspected war criminals.

The letter came after Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, who has been indicted for war crimes, handed over his duties as president to a hard-line deputy.

"The removal of war criminals from positions of nominal political power is not enough," Sacirbey wrote. "Apprehension and extradition... are absolutely necessary for free and fair democratic elections, reintegration, reconciliation and peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina."



Filipinos soldiers block some 10,000 anti-Muslim demonstrators from reaching President Fidel Ramos after they invaded a military air force base in protest of Ramos provisional peace settlement with Muslim guerrillas of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) on Tuesday. Ramos is on a two-day tour in this southern Philippines region to canvass support for the peace accord with the MNLF. — AFP/UNB photo

Charles, Di agree to divorce

LONDON, July 3: The Prince and Princess of Wales have reached agreement on their divorce and Buckingham Palace will announce the fact in two weeks, the Daily Mirror reported today, says AFP.

The tabloid said Princess Diana would obtain 15 million pounds (22.5 million dollars) for "as a sort of Goodwill Ambassador for Britain abroad, the paper said."

The paper said the Princess would receive details of the deal from her husband's lawyers on Thursday or Friday, and the divorce could become effective six weeks after the official announcement.

The Mirror added that the announcement could have been made earlier but was being held back so as not to clash with South African President Nelson Mandela state visit to Britain from July 9 to 12.

Off the Record

\$32,000 for road safety for frogs

MELBOURNE: Local authorities here are spending 40,000 Australian dollars (32,000 US) on road safety for frogs, an official said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Urban Land Authority in this eastern city is building a 30-meter (yard) overpass to cut the death toll among frogs as they hopped across a road to an adjacent lake.

Among those being killed were the growling grassfrog, Australia's biggest, which preys on fellow frogs, and the pobblebrook or banjo frog which makes noise like the instrument and the spade-footed toad.

The amphibians make the trip from a frog habitat at La Trobe University, but the authority said that too many have been killed since the road was built to access a new housing estate six months ago.

The concrete overpass has been landscaped with pebbles and vegetation to lure them to a safe crossing.

"There have been enough deaths for us to build this specially designed underpass. A lot of scientific research has gone into it," the official said.

Believe it or not

SAO PAULO, Brazil, July 3: Disembodied voices speaking in unknown tongues, People who vanished into thin air. Telephones that dialed themselves, reports AP.

It was enough to make work disconcerting at the Sao Paulo city Council building.

Councilor Paulo Roberto Faria Lima didn't believe the ghost stories. But he changed his mind after his own uncomfortably close encounter, and decided to do something about it.

It was about two months ago, he recalled. He had stayed late with his wife to update his computer files.

"At 12:30 am we wanted to leave but couldn't open the doors. It was weird because it can only be locked from the inside," Faria Lima said Tuesday in a phone interview.

"Then we started hearing voices speaking in an unidentifiable tongue and heard furniture moving around. I phoned security and a guard came up and opened the door with no problem. He told me that we were the only ones in the 12-story building."

Many who have spent time in the 27-year old building have weird tales to tell.

Elevator operator Aristides de Paula says he will never forget the day when "three people walked into the elevator and only two got out. One simply disappeared."

It is not clear, however, whether the two people riding the elevator noticed anything out of the ordinary.

Nude-model show

SEOUL: Controversy has erupted over South Korea's first nude-model show, prompting police to consult legal experts on whether or not to press obscenity charges, newspapers said on Sunday, reports AFP.

A dozen female models appeared naked Friday night at a Seoul hotel for a show commemorating the inauguration of the nation's first-ever Association of Nude Models.

The show triggered public criticism and debate over how much sex and nudity should be allowed in public performances.

But unlike previous cases, police faced difficulties in pressing obscenity charges against directors of the show, which was non-commercial and presented to promote the welfare of nude models, newspapers said.

Netanyahu drops previous plan to fence off West Bank

JERUSALEM, July 3: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, calling for economic "openness" with the Palestinians, says he is not committed to the previous government's plan to fence off the West Bank, reports AP.

Netanyahu has already eased a four-month closure that has crippled the Palestinian economy by keeping tens of thousands of Palestinians from their jobs in Israel.

But in contrast to his liberal stance on economic dealings with the Palestinians, Netanyahu stuck Tuesday to his hardline against Palestinian demands for an independent state, saying Israel would agree only to some form of autonomy.

"We don't oppose an arrangement whereby the Palestinians would have an entity, an autonomous entity, that would give them all the freedoms to run their affairs... without those aspects of sovereignty that we believe threaten the existence of Israel," he said.

Many in Netanyahu's Likud party — which generally favours a tough line on security — are ambivalent about the closure policy because they feel it creates a de facto border that could be a first step toward the creation of a Palestinian state.

Speaking at a news conference, the new prime minister said he didn't agree with the previous labour government's 200 million dollars project to build a separation zone between Israel and the West Bank.

The plan would have erected fences, watch towers and electronic surveillance along the 360 kilometres (220 miles) frontier between Israel and the West Bank to make sure only Palestinians with permits enter Israel.

"We are not committed to this line of thinking," the prime told the Foreign Press Association.

"The economic component of peace is very beneficial, very stabilising and good from the human point of view."

Bahrain, Iran agree to stop war of words

MANAMA, Bahrain, July 3: Bahrain and Iran, spurred by Syrian mediating efforts, agreed on Tuesday to stop their war of words and seek better relations, the government-run Gulf News Agency reported, reports AP.

It said Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa succeeded in getting Manama and Tehran to stop the campaigns launched by their news media, which are government-guided in both nations.

Syria enjoys good relations with both Bahrain and Iran and al-Sharaa has been shuttling between them to try to end the hostile exchanges between the two Gulf states.

Kidnapping of four Westerners remains mystery in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, July 3: By any gauge, it was a long shot: mailing love letters to her husband in care of his kidnappers, without even knowing where they were, reports AP.

But Jane Schelly, an elementary school teacher from Spokane, Washington, was determined to do everything she could to free Donald Hutchings and three other Westerners taken hostage one year ago by Kashmiri rebels.

She addressed her letters to the militants, and gave the address simply as the remote tourist town in northern India where her husband was kidnapped.

"It may look childlike to some," Mrs. Schelly said in a recent interview in Srinagar.

But when your husband is snatched away from you and kept hostage for a year, you do anything to reach him."

As the July 4 anniversary of the kidnappings approaches, her letters are gathering dust in a Pahalgam, Kashmir post office.

All efforts to free the four men have failed. In fact, after an elaborate and costly search, basic questions in the case remain unanswered.

Despite repeated diplomatic appeals and secret military operations by India, the United States, England and Germany — no one knows if the captives are still alive.

No one knows if the militants carried out their threat to kill the four men, as they did a fifth captive, Norwegian Hans Christian Ostro. Ostro was decapitated near the remote kidnapping site, his severed head left balanced between his thighs.

No one knows if the guerrillas, who broke off negotiations with India in November, are still in Kashmir.

And no one knows much about Al-Faran, the previously unknown group that claimed responsibility for the kidnappings and demanded freedom for jailed Muslim militants.

Dozens of Muslim rebel groups are fighting in Jammu-Kashmir, the only state with a Muslim majority in predominantly Hindu India. They want independence or union with Islamic Pakistan.

Some believe that Al-Faran is really the militant rebel group Harkat al-Ansar, which has kidnapped foreigners before.

Others believe it is a group of mercenaries hired by Pakistan in an effort to free jailed pro-Pakistan militants.

Still others believe that Al-Faran is made up of former militants whom India freed from jail and ordered to kidnap the Westerners to blacken the image of Kashmir's separatists and of Pakistan, India's arch enemy.

Harkat al-Ansar, Pakistan and India all have denied any role in the kidnappings and urged Al-Faran to free the captives.

In addition to Hutchings, 43, a neuropsychologist who specialises in therapy for people with serious brain injuries, the hostages are Paul Wells, 23, of London; Keith Manga, 33, of Middleborough, England; and Dirk Hasert, 26, of Erfurt, Germany.

Another American, John Childs, of Simsbury, Connecticut, escaped three days after being kidnapped.

The last Mrs. Schelly heard from her husband was in a taped message released by Al-Faran on July 17, 1995.

Mrs. Schelly traveled to the Kashmiri rebel stronghold of Srinagar last week. On her trip, she urged Al-Faran to have mercy and free the captives. She also met with other Kashmiri militant groups, po-

Flash flood in China kills 107

BEIJING, July 3: At least 107 people have been killed and dozens more left missing in floods that have hit southern and eastern China since the weekend, news reports said today, reports AFP.

Sixty seven people were reported dead in the southern province of Guizhou alone, the Liberation Daily of Shanghai said.

There were at least 40 dead in the eastern provinces of Anhui and Zhejiang, according to the China Daily, which had there were at least 29 missing in Zhejiang.

A landslide in a railway station in Guiyang, the Guizhou provincial capital, killed 16 people and another 13 were missing, the Beijing Youth Daily said.