

BRIFFLY

Fahd, Chirac discuss ME peace:

Saudi King Fahd and visiting French President Jacques Chirac held wide-ranging talks into the early hours of yesterday on the Middle East peace process and prospects for developing Franco-Saudi ties, AFP reports from Jeddah.

7 Hutus killed in Bujumbura:

Western aid workers said on Saturday at least seven Hutus were killed three days after the massacre of more than 80 Tutsis by Hutu rebels as protests in the capital by the minority Tutsis fanned ethnic tensions, Reuters reports from Bujumbura.

Plane crash claims two in US:

At least two people were killed and several others were hurt Saturday when a Delta airlines flight aborted its take off from the Pensacola Florida airport, officials said. AFP reports from Washington.

Mugabe arrives in Cairo:

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe arrived late Saturday in Cairo for talks with his counterpart Hosni Mubarak on "strengthening bilateral political and economic ties," Egyptian officials said, AFP reports from Cairo.

Storm claims 7 in Mexico:

A violent storm that lashed Acapulco early Saturday left seven people dead, four injured and hundreds homeless, Guerrero state's governor Angel Aguirre told the official news agency Notimex, AFP reports from Acapulco.

Lightning kills two in Alps:

Lightning hit a group of mountain climbers in the Alps Saturday, killing two and injuring six others, police said. AFP reports from Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

Russia heading for new showdown with Chechens by breaking promise:

GROZNY, Russia, July 7: The Russian government appeared headed for a new showdown with Chechen rebels by breaking a promise made during peace talks launched during President Boris Yeltsin's re-election campaign, reports Reuters.

Lanka tapping phones of foreign correspondents, local journalists:

COLOMBO, July 7: Sri Lanka's main intelligence agency is tapping the phones of foreign correspondents and local journalists, a pro-government weekly said today, reports AFP.

New cases of polio worldwide fall to all-time low:

ATLANTA, July 7: New cases of polio worldwide fell to an all-time low of 6,179 last year as worldwide immunisation rates rose to 83 per cent, government health officials said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Yeltsin-an autocrat who mastered craft of electoral politics:

MOSCOW, July 7: Boris Yeltsin knows as much about getting power and using it as anyone in Russia today. It is a close aide once said, the president's friend, his ideology, his concubine, reports AP.

Floods hit over 1m Chinese in a province:

BEIJING, July 7: More than one million Chinese in one province alone were guarding against some of the worst floods in over a century while officials elsewhere moved to combat food speculators, official media said today, reports Reuters.

Mandela to retire in '99:

LONDON, July 7: South African President Nelson Mandela is to retire when his present mandate expires in 1999, the BBC reported, citing an interview that it is to broadcast early today, reports AFP.

Tight security at US facilities in Pakistan amid 'specific threat':

ISLAMABAD, July 7: Security has been stepped up at American facilities in Pakistan following a "specific threat" of violence against US interests here, a US embassy official said Sunday, reports AP.

Exhumations of mass graves in Srebrenica begin:

HAN-PJESAK, Bosnia-Herzegovina, July 7: US soldiers confronted Bosnian Serb tanks outside the stronghold of war crimes suspect Gen. Ratko Mladic on Saturday, compelling the Serbs to pull back from a defiant show of force, reports AP.

Rabin's assassin appeals against his conviction:

JERUSALEM, July 7: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin Yigal Amir appealed against his conviction in Israel's Supreme Court today, reports Reuters.

US First Lady Hillary Clinton with Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn during their meeting at the parliament building on Saturday:

Mrs Clinton is on a three-day non-official visit to Hungary. — AFP/UNB photo

Kashmiris denounce Gowda's pledge to hold polls

SRINAGAR, India, July 7: Muslim separatist leaders today denounced Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's pledge to hold legislative elections in Kashmir and vowed to pursue the independence struggle, reports AFP.

Three prominent leaders of the separatist drive said Deve Gowda's announcement during a special visit on Saturday was not acceptable in any way.

"We want the intervention of the United Nations to solve the Kashmir dispute, said Farooq, who also heads the Freedom Conference, which groups many Muslim militant and political groups.

The Indian government should understand that we are not for elections," added Abdul Gani Lone, another leader of the Freedom Conference, he refuted New Delhi's claim that the Himalayan state was ready for elections after years of bloodshed.

Deve Gowda, 63, spent eight hours in the Kashmir valley on Saturday, becoming the first Indian prime minister to visit the strife-torn region in 10 years.

He toured flood ravaged areas, went to a military hospital, held talks with Kashmir officials and mainstream politicians and said New Delhi was ready to hold elections to pick a new Kashmir legislature.

He said he would convene a meeting soon to discuss poll dates. India officials said the elections were likely in September or October.

Off the Record



France: Is/Maria Presley, daughter of Elvis Presley and ex-wife of Michael Jackson, previews a short dress in chocolate lace for Italian designer Gianni Versace's high-fashion autumn/winter 1996-1997 collection shown in Paris July 6 opening fashion week through Wednesday. — AFP/UNB photo

Victim of own crime

MAYS LANDING, New Jersey: Donald Sprague had a great excuse for missing the court date for his sentencing in a car theft case: His own car had just been stolen, reports AP.

He would have been sentenced but for the fact that he was the victim of his own crime, said prosecutor Joel Mayer. "It's to lunacy."

The 24-year-old was to be sentenced Friday for taking a joyride in a stolen pizza delivery car last year in Atlantic City.

But Sprague called the courthouse Friday morning to tell Superior Court Judge Robert Neustadter his car had been stolen.

The judge was understanding. He gave Sprague a new sentencing date next Friday.

Cruise comes to the rescue in real life

LONDON: Movie hero Tom Cruise came to the rescue in real life, reports AP.

Arriving at a theater for the British premiere of Mission: Impossible, Cruise spotted a small boy caught in the crush of the crowd outside. Unable to move a barrier and free the gasping boy, he alerted nearby police who helped pull the child to safety, newspapers reported.

Cruise then comforted the frightened 7-year-old, Laurence Sadler, giving him an autograph after he caught his breath. "I chatted to him for a while, I guess I made his night more exciting," Cruise told The Sun.

Because Brazilians like sex

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil: It seems that Brazilians can't get enough of Divine Brown, the Hollywood prostitute caught in a compromising position with Hugh Grant, reports AP.

Since arriving here last Monday, Brown — whose real name is Estella Maria Thompson — has graced the covers of most major news dailies, appeared in a lingerie ad and posed for an adult magazine.

She also put in a much talked-about appearance on a late-night talk show.

When the host, Jo Soares, asked Brown why she came to Brazil, she said it was because she heard Brazilians like sex.

Brown, in town to promote her new X-rated film, "Sunset and Devine," has been charging up to 2,000 dollars for an interview during her stay.

Grant, the star of "Four Weddings and a Funeral," and Brown were arrested last summer in Los Angeles by vice squad officers who spotted them in the actor's white BMW.



US First Lady Hillary Clinton with Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn during their meeting at the parliament building on Saturday. Mrs Clinton is on a three-day non-official visit to Hungary. — AFP/UNB photo

New Turkish govt receives crucial pledge of support

ANKARA, July 7: The Turkish coalition government of the Islamic party leader Nemettin Erbakan, has received a crucial pledge of support for Monday's vote of confidence in Parliament from an Islamic nationalist party with just a handful of seats the Anatolia news agency reported, says AFP.

"We have decided to support the Erbakan government if no serious alternative emerges by Monday, Recep Kiri, the deputy leader of the BBP Grand Union Party told Anatolia.

The vote of the BBP's seven deputies could be crucial on Monday for the coalition set up by Erbakan's Welfare Party (Refah) and the True Path Party (DYP) of former prime minister Tansu Ciller.

The coalition parties hold a total of 285 seats out of 550, 158 for Refah and 127 for the DYP. However 17 DYP members are against the coalition with the Islamic party and four more are undecided.

Rabin's assassin appeals against his conviction

JERUSALEM, July 7: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin Yigal Amir appealed against his conviction in Israel's Supreme Court today, reports Reuters.

Amir, a religious Jew who admitted shooting the Israeli leader at a peace rally last November, arrived at the Jerusalem courthouse under heavy security, witnesses said.

Amir's lawyers say evidence suggests another gunman was involved.

"There are too many questions unresolved, too many contradictions relating to the shooting that were not settled in the (lower) court," attorney Gabi Shahar told Reuters ahead of the hearing before a three-judge court.

A Tel Aviv court sentenced Amir in March to life in prison for murdering Rabin and wounding his bodyguard on November 4. Amir, a 26-year-old former law student, said he shot Rabin to prevent Israel from handing over land to Palestinian self-rule authority but insisted he only meant to paralyse the prime minister.

Mandela to retire in '99

LONDON, July 7: South African President Nelson Mandela is to retire when his present mandate expires in 1999, the BBC reported, citing an interview that it is to broadcast early today, reports AFP.

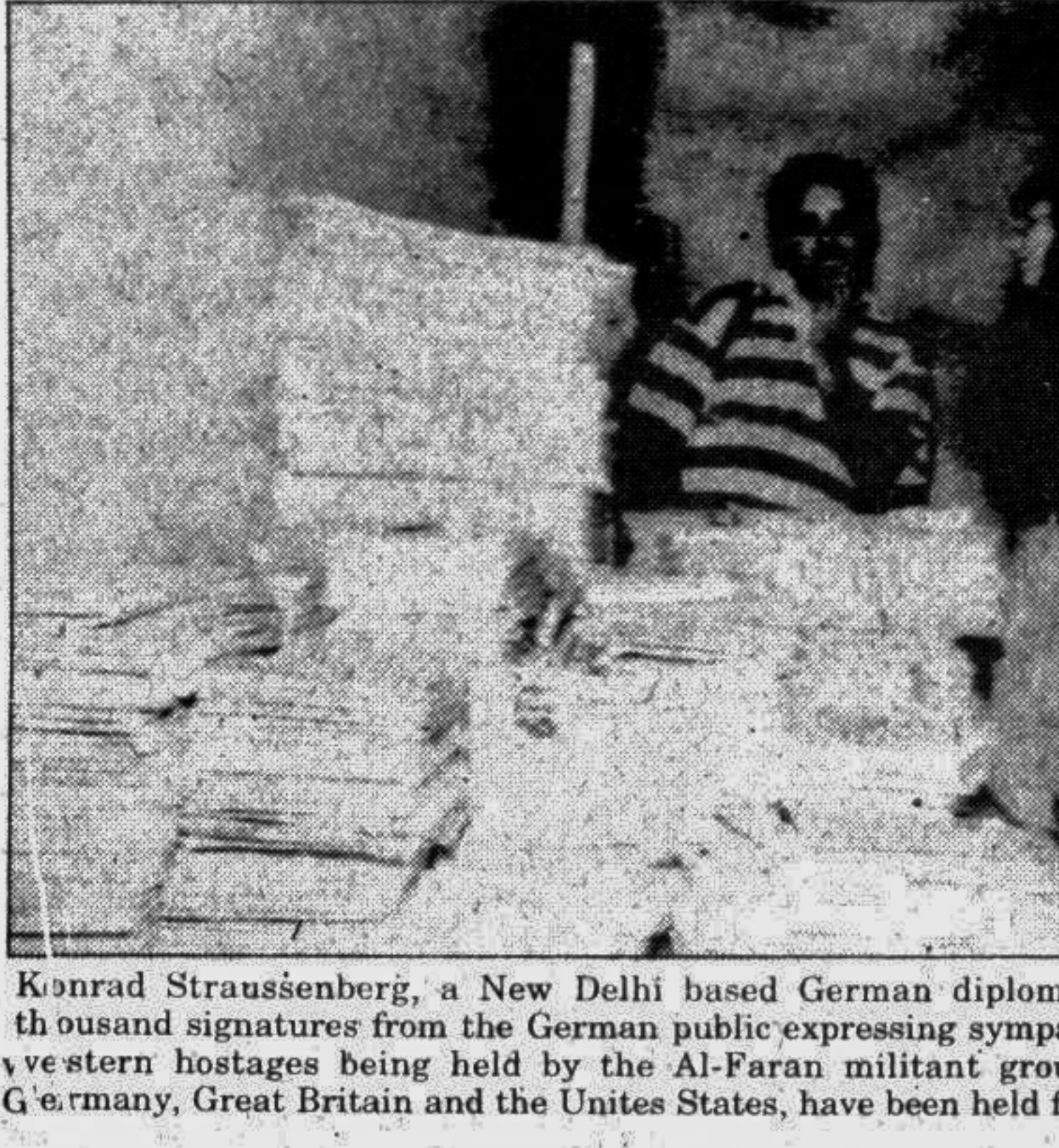
Mandela, who will be 81 when he retires, named Thabo Mbeki, his Vice President, to succeed him as head of the African National Congress, the BBC said.

In a short extract broadcast late Saturday, Mandela described Mbeki as "very talented and very popular."

If the ANC elected him, Mandela said, "I would feel that they would have made the correct decision."

Mandela's spokesman in Johannesburg noted that South Africa had "no constitutional provisions for the handover of power" by a President to his Vice-President.

The ANC would elect a successor to Mandela and a new presidential election would be called, the spokesman said.



Konrad Straussberg, a New Delhi based German diplomat, displays on July 6 200 thousand signatures from the German public expressing sympathy and support for the four western hostages being held by the Al-Faran militant group. The four westerners from Germany, Great Britain and the United States, have been held for the past one year. — AFP/UNB photo

Floods hit over 1m Chinese in a province

BEIJING, July 7: More than one million Chinese in one province alone were guarding against some of the worst floods in over a century while officials elsewhere moved to combat food speculators, official media said today, reports Reuters.

The floods hit the provinces of Hubei, Guizhou, Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangxi, causing more than 2.0 billion US dollars of damage.

Many areas face a bleak harvest, with newly-planted rice and corn seedlings washed away and 1.35 million hectares (3.3 million acres) swamped.

The National Press today gave no overall figures for casualties and property damage.

New cases of polio worldwide fall to all-time low

ATLANTA, July 7: New cases of polio worldwide fell to an all-time low of 6,179 last year as worldwide immunisation rates rose to 83 per cent, government health officials said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Cases in 1995 fell 28 per cent from 1994 and fell 82 per cent from 1988, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

The Indian subcontinent continued to account for 60 per cent of reported polio cases, and polio remains endemic in most countries in Western and Central Africa.

Polio was eradicated in the Americas earlier this decade, while cases in the Eastern Mediterranean, Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific are down sharply since 1988.

Yeltsin-an autocrat who mastered craft of electoral politics

MOSCOW, July 7: Boris Yeltsin knows as much about getting power and using it as anyone in Russia today. It is a close aide once said, the president's friend, his ideology, his concubine, reports AP.

Yeltsin has done little to foster democracy and good government. The nuts-and-bolts of reform and running the country do not interest him. He is an autocrat who mastered the craft of electoral politics, a power player not a policy expert.

Yeltsin's comeback election campaign was a virtuoso performance by any standards, the master work of a brilliant, ruthless politician.

It could turn out to be the 65-year-old president's last hurrah. Given his age and health problems many people

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years ago, the constitution now says the prime minister would take over temporarily, then call new elections.

The list of allies, especially young reformers, used by Yeltsin and then discarded over the last five years is long. He made mincemeat in this campaign out of rivals in the democratic camp like Grigory Yavlinsky, leaving voters with what many said was a sorry choice: Yeltsin or communism.

"Something else needs to emerge and it hasn't yet," said Michael McFaul, an analyst at the Carnegie Foundation think tank in Moscow. "There's a real vacuum."

Russians can speak freely and the vote was clean, but basic elements of democracy are feeble. Parliament is weak, so is the legal system political

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