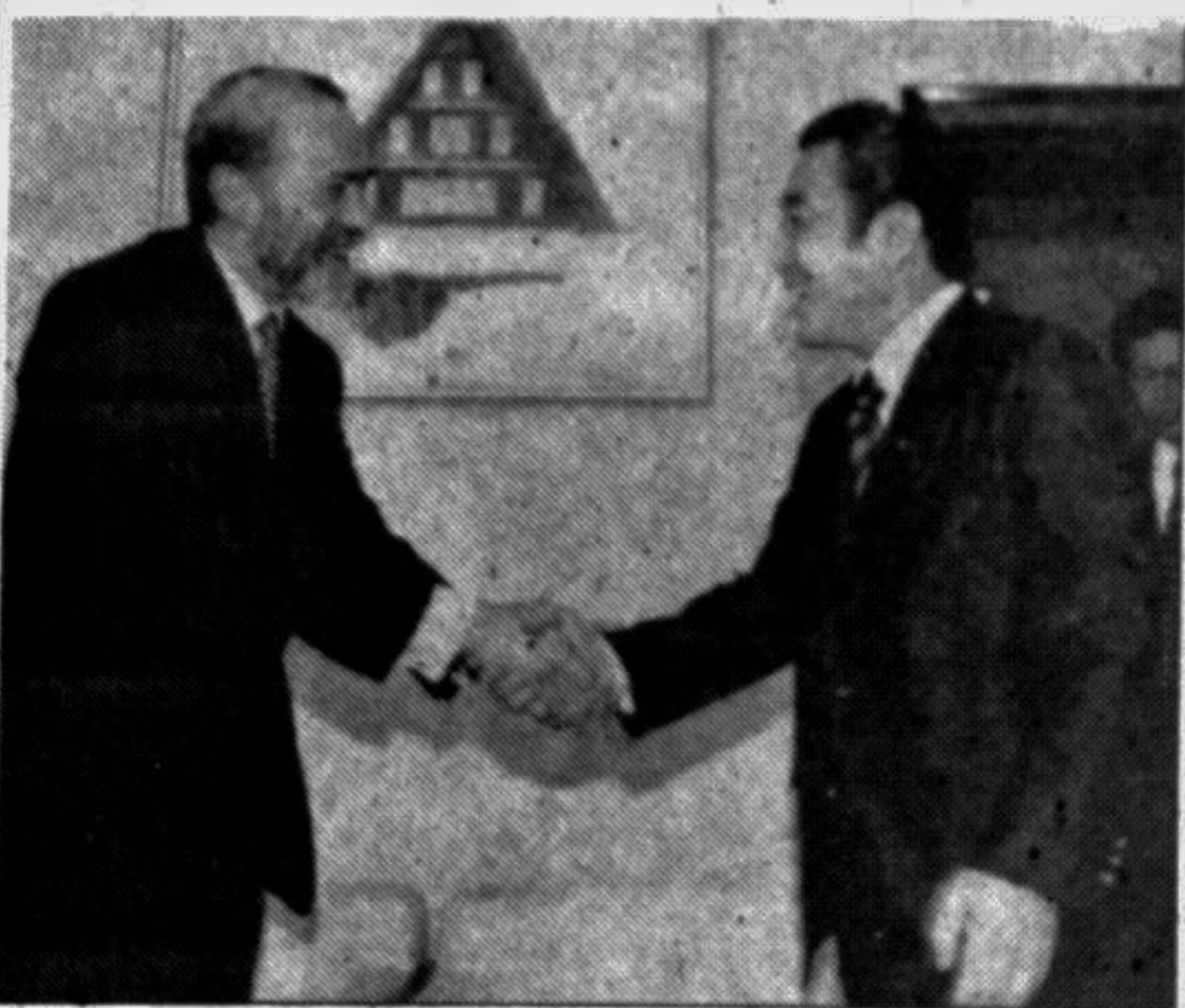


BRIEFLY



Mexican Foreign Minister Jose Angel Gurria (L) shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the latter's official residence on Monday. Gurria arrived in Tokyo on Sunday for a four-day official visit to discuss issues of mutual concern. — AFP/UNB photo

Hashimoto congratulates Yeltsin: The Prime Minister of Japan congratulated Boris Yeltsin on Monday upon his victory in presidential runoff last week. AP reports from Moscow.

During a telephone conversation, Ryutaro Hashimoto told Yeltsin's his re-election "is the evidence of consolidation of democracy and continuation of the reform in Russia," Yeltsin's press service reported.

Blast kills one in Islamabad: A powerful bomb hidden under a bench tore through a railway station in central Punjab province Monday killing one person and injuring 24 others, the state-run news agency reported. AP reports from Islamabad.

No one immediately took responsibility for the bombing in Faisalabad, about 350 kilometers (210 miles) southeast of the capital Islamabad. Previous bombings in Punjab province have been blamed on Pakistan's longtime enemy India.

Chandrika to visit ROK: President Chandrika Kumaratunga will visit South Korea next month on a goodwill visit, a government official said Tuesday. AP reports from Colombo.

Kumaratunga will meet with South Korean President Kim Young Sam to discuss bilateral trade and investment in Sri Lanka, the official said.

The exact dates of her visit were not revealed for security reasons. She will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Lashman Kadirgamar and Trade Ministry officials.

Kuwait's crown prince off to KSA: Kuwait's Crown Prince left for Saudi Arabia Tuesday to discuss security in the Gulf region following a terror bombing in the desert kingdom that killed 19 American military personnel and wounded hundreds last month. AP reports from Kuwait.

After Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah will visit Bahrain, which has been plagued by unrest for 19 months.

Sheikh Saad, who also is prime minister, was accompanied on the three-day trip by a high ranking delegation that included Interior Minister Sheikh Ali al-Sabah and other Cabinet members.

Anthony Lake meets Qichen: US National Security Advisor Anthony Lake met Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen at the start of a day of four key appointments with Chinese leaders yesterday Xinhua said, reports AFP from Beijing.

Later, Lake is to meet Defense Minister Chi Haotian, President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng. Lake, who arrived Saturday, spent Monday with Liu Huaiguo, Director of Foreign Affairs under the State Council in "extensive and intensive discussions on bilateral and state issues."

Mandela arrives in Britain: President Nelson Mandela arrived Monday night for a four-day state visit to Britain that will include a tour with Prince Charles of south London's mainly black Brixton district. AP reports from London.

Accompanied by his daughter Zenani Mandela-Dlamini, the South African leader told reporters on arrival at London's Heathrow airport aboard a South African Air Force jet: "I hope this visit will help all round relations — political, economic and others."

400 human skulls seized in India: Indian police have seized more than 400 human skulls from a river in the eastern state of Bihar, newspapers reported yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

Russia begins heavy shelling Night-time curfew across Chechnya from today

MOSCOW, July 9: Russian forces will impose a night-time curfew across the war-torn republic of Chechnya starting Wednesday, Interfax quoted a military spokesman as saying, reports AFP.

Russian military spokesman Roman Sokolovsky said that all necessary measures would be taken to enforce the curfew.

At present, only the heavily occupied capital Grozny is subject to an effective curfew, while other towns and villages are under far slacker control by Russian soldiers.

The curfew order came as a 24-hour deadline set by Russian commander general Vyacheslav Tikhomirov for the Chechens to free all prisoners of war or face "adequate measures" was to expire at 6.00 pm (1400 GMT).

The Itar-Tass News Agency

said that troops had been ordered to prepare for action.

A Chechen rebel spokesman said that overnight Russian forces had already begun shelling villages with grad missiles and other heavy artillery.

Another AFP report from London says Russian forces began heavy shelling of villages in southern Chechnya today, killing some civilians, Moscow Echo Radio said in a report monitored here by the BBC.

The radio quoted Chechen rebel spokesman Movladi Udugov as saying the Russians were using grad missile systems and heavy artillery, columns of Russian heavy armour had also been moved to southern Chechnya, he noted.

Russia put troops in breakaway Chechnya on increased alert today as a deadline approached.

Russia still opposed to NATO expansion

SAI ZBURG, Austria, July 9: Serving notice that Russia remains opposed to NATO's expansion after Boris Yeltsin's re-election, a senior aide to the Russian president warned Monday that the pact's eastward push could spark another arms race, reports AP.

Plans to include former Soviet bloc nations in NATO have become "more contentious... than ever," with the need for expansion reduced by the spread of democracy and Yeltsin's victory, said Dimitri Ryurikov, Yeltsin's assistant for international affairs.

Ryurikov said at a summit of Central and Eastern European nations that NATO currently is a "strong instrument of peace." But "are new dividing lines and new mistrust in Europe needed?" he asked.

African leaders back Ghali for second term defying US

YAOUNDE, Cameroon, July 9: African leaders defied the United States on Monday and recommended that Boutros Boutros-Ghali be considered for a second term as UN secretary-general, reports AP.

The endorsement, which the Egyptian UN chief had counted on to keep his hope of a second term alive, was half-hearted. It called for an African to be named the next chief of the world body and recommended "consideration be given" to Boutros-Ghali.

The 32nd summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) started nearly five hours late as heads of state and governments debated whether to support their fellow African in the face of American threats to veto his re-election.

Rwanda, Ghana, Ethiopia

and Eritrea opposed the non-binding agreement to support Boutros-Ghali. Rwanda blames UN inaction for the 1994 genocide in the Central African country.

The Clinton administration accuses Boutros-Ghali of being too slow to reform the world body. It has threatened to use its veto power on the UN Security Council to oust him.

The US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, who is attending as an observer, said he was pleased with the "constructive outcome" of the session. He said he was satisfied the recommendation left room for debate and the possibility that another African be nominated.

In Cameroon's capital Yaounde on Saturday to lobby for sup-

port, was beaming as he walked into the conference hall at the Palais du Congrès alongside South African President Nelson Mandela.

"African... more than any other continent, has suffered from neglect," he told the 53-member gathering.

While the leaders' endorsement gave Boutros-Ghali a psychological boost, it cannot save his job if the United States uses its veto power.

Tanzania President Benjamin Mkapa opened the public sessions by blasting the governments of Rwanda and its troubled neighbour Burundi for failing to end their ethnic bloodshed. About 2 million Rwandan and Burundian refugees have fled to camps in Tanzania and Zaire.

"How long should Tanzania and other neighbouring coun-

tries continue to receive and provide shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees?" he demanded angrily, to rousing applause.

This situation is threatening to turn into an explosive development," said OAU Chairman Salim Ahmed Salim.

One resolution to be considered supports forming an African intervention force to try to quell Burundi's bloodshed.

The declaration on Rwanda blasts the government's failure to salvage its justice system since the Central African country's 1994 civil war and calls on it to relieve overcrowding in its prisons, where hundreds of people have died in the past two years.

Most of the prisoners are Hutus accused of taking part in



Deputies of Turkey's True Path Party of former prime minister Tansu Ciller and Motherland Party of former prime minister Mesut Yilmaz clash in Parliament on Monday after the coalition government of Turkey's first Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan won a parliamentary vote of confidence with 278 deputies voting for it, 265 against. — AFP/UNB photo

Clinton, Netanyahu look for understanding on peace pledges

WASHINGTON, July 8: Benjamin Netanyahu is looking for President Clinton's support for his hard-line stance toward the Arabs, but the United States wants reassurance that Israel will keep its commitments to peace, reports AP.

In meetings with Israel's new prime minister on Tuesday, Clinton is expected to show patience as Israel works out a strategy for negotiations with the Arabs, but also a determination that Israel keep its past promises.

Netanyahu says he intends to be more selective in yielding land to Israel's peace partners. The approach seeks to guarantee Israel's security,

especially in light of terrorist attacks on Americans in Saudi Arabia. Twenty-five Americans were killed in incidents in Riyadh and Dhahran.

"The Israeli government is recently constituted, just getting its bearings," Clinton said at a news conference last month in France. "It's quite important that both sides in the Middle East, the Arab parties and the Israelis, give each other some room here. A little time needs to pass."

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Two men push a coffin with the inscription "CPRF" (Communist Party of the Russian Federation) into the water on Monday during a symbolic funeral of communism following the defeat of Russian Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov in the second round of the presidential elections on July 3. The action was organised by the "Democratic Union" and the "Youth Solidarity Union." — AFP/UNB photo

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Kashmiri rebels free 19 newsmen

SRINAGAR, India, July 9: Separatist Muslim guerrillas in India's troubled Kashmir freed 19 journalists today after a 10-hour hostage drama in which four of them were threatened with death, reports Reuters.

All of them (journalists) have been released unconditionally. They were freed after one of the local editors spoke to the group," Sheikh Tariq, a camera operator with Asian News International, said.

The guerrillas had asked editors of local newspapers to present themselves, but they refused, local journalists said.

Sheikh Mushtaq, part-time correspondent of Reuters in Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, was among the captives.

The detention, on the first anniversary of the kidnapping of German Dirk Hassert by another separatist group, coincided with an Indian government decision to hold state assembly elections later this year.

The guerrillas of the splinter Ikhwan Jammu and Kashmir released the hostages taken while on their way to a news conference organised by another separatist group.

China urges Taiwan to resume talks 'without any delay'

BEIJING, July 9: China today urged Taiwan to resume peace talks "without any delay" in a call a day ahead of high level Sino-US talks on the nationalist island, reports AFP.

Remarks by Taiwan leaders have been "harmful... and done much to damage the reunification of the motherland," the official Xinhua News Agency said in a dispatch today.

But "it is not too late to mend the fold, even after some of the steps have been lost," it said, adding "we hope they (Taiwan's leaders) will make a sensible choice."

US national security advisor Anthony Lake is to meet China's top Taiwan policy official Wang Daohan in Shanghai on Wednesday, a day after talks with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, premier Li Peng and other top officials.

Wang is chairman of the association for relations across the Taiwan Strait, which handles contacts with Taiwan through the island's straits exchange foundation.

US asks Turkish govt to respect its interest

WASHINGTON, July 9: The US State Department Monday congratulated Turkey on the formation of its new government but also urged Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to respect US interests, reports AFP.

Turkey's National Assembly Monday gave a narrow vote of confidence to the government made up of a coalition between Erbakan's pro-Islam Welfare Party and former premier Tansu Ciller's conservative True Path Party.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns congratulated Erbakan and Ciller but promptly stressed that "relations between the United States and Turkey do not depend on individual governments, they depend on our national interests."

US interests in Turkey "dictate that we will continue to be concerned by Turkey's full participation and active participation in NATO," he said, adding that "Turkey should be associated with Western institutions like the European Union."

Vietnam's FM calls for co-operation with New Zealand

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, July 9: Vietnam's visiting foreign minister wants wider contact and ties with New Zealand, reports AP.

Nguyen Manh Cam said Tuesday that existing co-operation in education and training have been fruitful.

However, he also hopes that Vietnam can gain from New Zealand expertise in other sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, communications, environmental protection, and transport, particularly railways.

Cam, who is on an official visit, made the comment after meeting New Zealand Foreign Minister Don McKinnon and before a scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Jim Bolger.

Cuban military officer hijacks plane, seeks asylum in US

WASHINGTON, July 9: A Cuban military officer hijacked a commercial flight in Cuba at gunpoint on Sunday and forced it to land at the US Navy base at Guantanamo Bay on the communist-ruled island, US officials said on Monday, reports Reuters.

The hijacker, identified by the Pentagon as lieutenant colonel Jose Fernandez Pupo, requested asylum in the United States and was in the custody of the immigration and naturalisation service, the officials said.

One said the other 16 people aboard the flight, which had originated in the nearby southeastern city of Santiago de Cuba, were released unharmed and returned to Guantanamo city, close to the US base at the eastern end of the island.

An official at Santiago de Cuba airport, asked if he could confirm the hijacking had taken place, said: "It's true." The official, contacted by telephone by Reuters from Havana, gave no further details. One US official in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the hijacker apparently acted alone.

It was the second such embarrassing incident for the Cuban authorities in eight days. Last week two members of Cuba's boxing team training in Mexico for the Atlanta Olympics slipped away and sought asylum in the United States.

Speaking of the aircraft hijacker, one US official said, "We are looking at the case to determine what our legal responsibilities and obligations are."

Meanwhile, a senior Cuban official said on Monday Havana expected the United States to repatriate the Cuban who hijacked a plane to the US naval base.

Ricardo Alarcon, President of the Cuban National Assembly, said that under a May 1995 US-Cuba migration agreement, Washington had agreed to repatriate Cubans trying to use the Guantanamo base as a way to migrate to the United States.

Alarcon told reporters that under international UN anti-hijacking agreements, a country receiving a hijacker should either prosecute the offender or return them to their country of origin.

Suu Kyi urges tourists to boycott her country

TOKYO, July 9: Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi called for foreign tourists to boycott her country, in an interview with a Japanese news agency released today, reports AFP.

The head of the National League for Democracy, who was released from house arrest one year ago, told Kyodo news agency that tourists should not support the military junta in Myanmar.

The Burmese government is in the midst of a "visit Myanmar (Burma) year" campaign in an effort to increase tourism revenues.

But Aung San Suu Kyi said "we are totally against the 'visit Myanmar campaign'."

She added: "This is tantamount to supporting authoritarianism in Burma."

The Noble Peace Prize winner also repeated calls for foreign countries not to give official aid to Myanmar and for companies not to invest in the country until progress toward democracy is made.

Aung San Suu Kyi's party overwhelmingly won national elections in 1990 but was stopped from taking power by the military junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). She spent five years under house arrest.

She said a recent renewed crackdown on the party, with the detention of around 260 party activists, had not undermined popular support for the movement.

"The party is stronger and the public support is stronger," she said in the interview.

World Court refuses to declare N-arms illegal

THE HAGUE, July 9: The World Court refused Monday to declare nuclear weapons illegal, but it did limit the circumstances in which they might be used legally — to one, reports AP.

In a non-binding, advisory opinion sought by the UN General Assembly, the court said nuclear weapons use would be unlawful for any reason other than self-defence in the survival of a state.

"The court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a state would be at stake," said court president Mohammed Bedjaoui.

Anti-nuclear groups had hoped to use the UN court opinion as a launching pad for a worldwide campaign to ban the weapons. They disagreed on significance of the ruling.

"That's a very strong narrowing of the circumstances in which the use or threat might be legal," activist Daniel Ellsberg said in New York.

But Jeremy J. Stone, president of the Federation of American Scientists in Washington, complained that the court "failed to give a clear statement which the world wants about nuclear weapons."

Stone said the court failed to differentiate between threat and use of nuclear weapons, and between first use and second use.

Off the Record

Mosquito to act as vaccine against malaria!

LONDON: British scientists are working on a breed of genetically engineered mosquitoes to act as a sort of flying phylodermic needle against malaria. The Times newspaper said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The paper said the mosquitoes, which normally spread malaria, would transfer a protein through their saliva to act as a vaccine against the disease, which claims more than two million lives a year.

"We are exceedingly excited by the research," Professor Bob Sinden of Imperial college in London said. "It's eminently logical, and we are confident we can make it work."

History forgotten

BANGALORE: It was the day, on July 7 exactly a century ago, that Indians saw the first motion picture at a hotel in Bombay, reports PTI.

"But it is astonishing that the media has forgotten this all important day in the history of Indian cinema industry," veteran film maker, KS Jagannath, told PTI here Sunday.

Jagannath recalled that Lumiere Brothers exhibited about six short films at the Watson hotel in Bombay and it was followed by screening of regular films at the Novelty Cinema, also in Bombay.

He hoped that the media would highlight this at least now so that the younger generation interested in history of film industry would be benefited.

Elizabeth Taylor blasts Canada, US for AIDS policies

VANCOUVER, July 9: Elizabeth Taylor criticised the governments of Canada and the United States for what she called inadequate and even dangerous policies towards the AIDS crisis, reports AP.

"I understand that here in Canada, the government isn't sure whether they want to fund AIDS research at all," she said Monday in a speech at a reception sponsored by the American Foundation for AIDS Research.

Taylor was referring to Canada's National AIDS Strategy, which began in 1989 and was renewed in 1993. Although it is set to expire in 1998, Health Minister David Dingwall has not committed himself to renewing the programme.