

Tigers kill 6 more cops

LTTE blamed for attack on commuter train

COLOMBO, July 25: A week after they overran a major military base, Tamil rebels are being blamed for a bomb attack on a commuter train outside the capital that killed 63 people and wounded more than 350, reports AP.

Two bombs — one in the fifth car, the other in the eighth — ripped through the train Wednesday as it pulled out of the station at Dehiwala, a middle-class suburb 10 kilometers (six miles) south of Colombo. The train was packed with commuters returning home from work in the capital. "I was walking to the exit when I heard the two explosions behind me. When I turned around, the whole station was filled with smoke. People were screaming and running," said Lakshman Sooriyawardene, 23, an office worker who had just gotten off the train.

There was no claim of responsibility, but the attack bore the hallmarks of Tamil Tiger rebels, who marked the 13th anniversary of their campaign for an independent homeland for the Tamil minority in this predominantly Sinhalese nation.

"This is obviously the work of the Tamil Tigers," said DM Tennakoon, one of the first policemen to reach the scene. The bombs "are similar to others they have exploded."

Police quoted eyewitnesses as saying two people had disembarked at an earlier station. They believed the explosions were caused by parcel bombs. Another bomb hidden in a briefcase was defused by soldiers later, police said.

AFP adds, Tamil Tiger guerrillas today stormed an isolated police post on the edge of their planned homeland and shot dead six policemen, the police said, reports AFP.

China denies sending missile components to Syria

BEIJING, July 25: China dismissed today a report that Beijing may have sent ballistic missile components to Syria, saying the charge was groundless, reports Reuters.

The report of sales of M-11 missiles... is entirely groundless and irresponsible," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

China's denial came a day after Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen volunteered a similar rejection at a meeting with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on the fringes of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) conference in Jakarta.

The Chinese volunteered a rejection of an article in the Washington Times yesterday having to do with some kind of Chinese transaction... in the missile area... with Syria," a US official said in Jakarta.

The Chinese foreign minister said that was unfounded and dismissed that article, said the official.

The newspaper reported on Tuesday that the Chinese manufacturer of M-11 missiles sent a shipment of military cargo to Syria last month that the Central Intelligence Agency believed may have contained missile-related components.

"Lebed has no objections to NATO expansion"

LONDON, July 25: Alexander Lebed, Russia's security chief, was quoted on Thursday as saying he had no objections to NATO's planned eastward expansion, reports Reuters.

Lebed, who came third in last month's presidential ballot on an assertive nationalist ticket, told the Financial Times NATO enlargement would be expensive and unnecessary but it did not pose a security threat to Russia.

The newspaper, which ran the interview with a front-page banner headline, said the remarks by the retired paratrooper general were a strong sign that Kremlin's hostility to the plan may be fading.

Asked about the prospect of NATO's eastward expansion, Lebed said: "Personally I am calm about this issue... may be others want to be more propagandistic, but I think that Russia simply cannot be aggressive any more."

"We have exhausted our appetite for wars. We do not want to fight any more."

Lebed added: "Russia is not planning to fight anyone. Truly this is so. And so this mighty NATO fist is being developed to do battle in the air."

8 states including China did not enforce ban on Libya: US, UK

UNITED NATIONS, July 25: The United States, Britain and France on Wednesday named eight countries, including China which they said had not enforced some of the UN sanctions imposed on Libya in connection with the 1988 Lockerbie air disaster, reports Reuters.

The sanctions including an air embargo a ban on arms sales and the downgrading of diplomatic relations were enacted in 1992, because of Libya's failure to extradite two men, accused of planting a bomb aboard Pan Am flight 103 which exploded over the Scottish village, killing 270 people, including 11 on the ground.

In a letter to the Security Council's Libya sanctions committee the three western powers said although all countries were regarded to reduce the staffs of Libyan diplomatic missions abroad, the number of Libyan diplomats had actually increased since 1993 in Bamako, Mali; Bangui, Central African Republic; Beijing, Beijing; Ndjamena (Chad) and Sanaa (Yemen).

Although all states were required to prevent the operation of Libyan Arab airlines offices they remained opened staffed in certain cities, including Amman and Cairo.

ASEAN rejects plan for UN contact group on Myanmar

JAKARTA, July 25: ASEAN has shot down a proposal for a United Nations contact group on Myanmar with analysts saying the proposal reflected differences between East and West on how to deal with the military junta, reports AFP.

"They will win support from their friends, but not from ASEAN... I think they are barking up the wrong tree," Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, secretary general of the Malaysian Foreign Ministry, said of the Canadian proposal.

Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy on Tuesday proposed a UN-sponsored contact group which would open a multilateral dialogue with Yangon's generals.

Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were upset at Canada for failing to consult them before announcing the proposal to the press, a senior ASEAN diplomat said.

The official suggested the idea was a "new initiative on Myanmar (Burma) designed to get headlines in Canada" rather than to get results.

Christopher fails to win India's commitment on CTBT

JAKARTA, July 25: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher today failed to win a commitment from India not to block a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that Washington and other advocates are rushing to complete by September, reports Reuters.

But senior US officials said the two sides would hold more talks in an effort to find a way to keep the landmark pact moving forward. "I'm not going to try to predict the outcome, play it in neutral," a senior US official told reporters after a 40-minute meeting between Christopher and new Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

Negotiators from 61 countries are to reconvene in Geneva on July 29 to decide the treaty's fate. The United States and Russia, two major nuclear powers are urging nations to accept a compromise text. So that the treaty could be ready to sign in September session.

It will be a get to know you

Earlier report says, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher holding his first talks with India's new foreign minister today, will urge New Delhi not to block a global nuclear test ban treaty.

In spite of a growing international consensus in favour of a compromise draft India has resisted appeals to support it.

US officials hope India can be persuaded not to stop the compromise from being approved by negotiators in Geneva and sent it to the UN General Assembly in New York for signature in September. "I'll be urging them (India) not to block that approach... It should not be within the capacity of India to block such a treaty," Christopher told Reuters in an interview last week.

He will hold talks with Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral on the fringes of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) annual conference in Jakarta.

It will be a get to know you

session as well as an opportunity for business. Gujral was appointed with the government elected last month after a period of political turmoil.

US officials told Reuters they did not expect a definitive answer on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to emerge from the meeting. Because of the issue's sensitivity, there will be no new conference with the ministers.

India faced mounting pressure this week from ASEAN members and Western countries to accept the compromise text opposed last month by Jaap Ramaker, Dutch chairman of the conference on disarmament's CTBT negotiating committee.

The compromise received a boost when Russia announced it would join the United States in backing it. That meant the two biggest nuclear powers oppose further haggling when negotiators from 61 countries met again in Geneva on July 2.



Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (C) is conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Law by Choi Young-Sang (R), Vice President of Korea University, during a visit to Korea University in Seoul 24 Wednesday July. Benazir in South Korea for a two-day official visit aimed at strengthening economic cooperation. — AFP/UNB photo

Bujumbura running without govt

UN pushes for peacekeeping force for Burundi

UNITED NATIONS, July 25: The United Nations wants an intervention plan ready in case Burundi explodes in violence, but few countries have offered troops for a multinational force and no major military power is willing to lead the mission, reports AP.

"We have to move very quickly before everything blows up in our faces," Kofi Annan, the head of UN peacekeeping, said Wednesday. "History will judge us rather severely for Rwanda and I don't think we can repeat that experience in Burundi."

Rwanda has repeatedly accused the United Nations of standing aside as government troops and allied militiamen

slaughtered 500,000 people, mostly Tutsis, in 1994. Burundi and Rwanda share a similar ethnic composition.

Several European countries and the United States have offered logistics support for a mission, but only three countries — Zambia, Malawi and Chad — have offered soldiers.

The Security Council said Wednesday that it was "gravely concerned" by reports that the Burundian military had apparently forced the president from power and "strongly condemns any attempt to overthrow the present legitimate government by force or coup d'état."

US Ambassador Madeleine Albright warned that "the in-

ternational community will not acquiesce in efforts to solve Burundi's crisis by military means."

Earlier Reuters adds: Burundi was without a government on Thursday after its Hutu President sought US protection and the Tutsi army faced international threats not to stage a full-scale coup.

President Sylvestre Ntibunganya was holed up in the US ambassador's residence in Bujumbura on Wednesday night. The frightened city was fire with speculation that he would be flown into exile perhaps in neighbouring Tanzania. "I would expect that he would depart the residence quite shortly Burns said."



Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (C) talks before cabinet members during an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss Japan's worst outbreak of food poisoning in half a century Wednesday. Attending with Hashimoto are Chief Cabinet Secretary Setoku Kajiyama (L) and Finance Minister Wataru Kubo. — AFP/UNB photo

Chernobyl study raises low-level radiation concerns

NEW YORK, July 25: For the first time, researchers have detected elevated leukemia rates among children exposed in the womb to fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, raising disturbing questions about the effects of everyday, low-level radiation on early pregnancy, reports AP.

Infant leukemia rates more than doubled among Greek children who were exposed to the nuclear power plant's fallout while their mothers were in the early stages of pregnancy, according to a study released Thursday.

Radiation exposure in Greece was much lower than in regions closer to the accident, which occurred near the Ukrainian city of Kiev. Exposure was only up to five times higher than what Greeks normally would have received in the year after the accident.

That suggested, to the researchers that even the low levels of radiation people are exposed to everyday — much of it naturally occurring in food, water and the air — also could contribute to cancer. There are trace amounts of radioactive elements everywhere.

"This is going to create a lot of objections from people who think there is an overanxiety over low levels of exposure," said one of the authors, Dimitrios Trichopoulos of the Harvard Centre for Cancer Prevention in Boston.

The study, published in the journal Nature, is the first indication that leukemia rates might have increased in areas affected by the Chernobyl fallout. Other studies have found elevated rates of thyroid cancer among children.

Chernobyl's reactor No. 4 exploded on April 26, 1986.

spewing a radioactive cloud across Europe and releasing 200 times as much radiation as the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

The researchers collected information on 1.3 million children born in Greece during the 1980s. Among those born in the months after Chernobyl, the researchers found, children in parts of Greece exposed to the fallout were 2.6 times more likely to suffer from leukemia than their unexposed counterparts.

In Europe overall, about one in 2,000 children develops leukemia by the age of 15. The cancer, which affects the tissues that generate blood cells in the bone marrow and lymph system, is fatal for about three out of four infants who get the disease.

Among epidemiologists, the

Off the Record

New snapshot for human family album

NEW YORK: Anthropologists have a new snapshot for the human family album, and site's got a face only a mother could love: gaping, squarish eyes, a protruding mouth and not much of a forehead, reports AP.

But who looks attractive after being buried for 10 million years? Ankarapithecus meteai, a 60-pound (27 kilogram), fruit-eating ape that roamed the woodlands of central Turkey long before the evolutionary split that separated humans from chimps, actually looks pretty good to people who study human evolution.

For years they've had almost no fossil evidence of what happened to humanity's ancestors between about 18 million years ago and 5 million years ago. Finally, anthropologists excavating near Ankara, Turkey, have discovered a fossil ape face more complete than any known from that period.

"I think people are going to be very surprised when they see what this looks like," said John Kappelman, a member of the expedition that discovered the fossil last year.

Kappelman, a Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, and researchers from Ankara University in Turkey, the Finnish Museum of Natural History in Helsinki, and the Natural History Museum in London describe the fossil face in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

The fossil probably didn't belong to a direct ancestor of modern humans. It was more of a cousin, many times removed. But studying the face will tell anthropologists much more than they now know about the common ancestor of humans and the great apes. The great ape group includes gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans.

No alcohol, no drugs, only sex is allowed

STUTTGART, Germany: Sixty eight of the 1,500 women serving in the US contingent of NATO peacekeeping force in Bosnia have been sent home for getting pregnant, the US Army said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Major Lewis Boone, spokesman for the US Army headquarters in Europe, said this means that since the US deployment began in December of last year, every three days a soldier has got pregnant.

Boone said that unlike US soldiers who served in Vietnam or the Gulf War, US troops in Bosnia are barred from off duty socialising with Bosnian civilians.

Goats are getting out of control

QUITO, Ecuador: Goats are getting out of control on the Galapagos, reports AP.

And to prevent them from overwhelming native flora and fauna on the Pacific islands famous for influencing Charles Darwin's evolution theories, a hunt to wipe them out began Wednesday.

The goats were introduced to the islands during the last 50 years but have multiplied, an experts estimate at least 30,000 live on Isabela Island, the largest island in the archipelago. It wasn't clear how many of the animals would be killed in the hunt.

Meat from the goats will be donated to charitable institutions, such as orphanages, and jails, according to the Andean Agricultural Institute.

Muslim, Christian leaders gather in Cairo to counter Western image of Islam

CAIRO, July 25: Some 150 Muslim and Christian leaders here Wednesday for a dialogue aiming to counter the Western image of Islam as a religion that preaches violence and intolerance, reports AFP.

"Religion must not be used ill-advisedly. It is a crime to make it a tool in conflicts to plant seeds of hatred," Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in a message read to the conference by Religious Affairs Minister Hamdi Zaqqi.

Citing passages from Islam (the holy book Quran Mubarak) underlined that "from the beginning Islam has called for dialogue, peace and the refusal of violence."

"Dialogue is civilised language while turning to arms and violence is a call to barbarity," he said.

Egypt has witnessed over the past four years a violent campaign by Muslim militants claiming Mubarak's government is "un-Islamic" which has left over 1,000 dead since 1992.

The three-day conference, under the banner "Islam and the future of the dialogue between civilisations," is the eighth to be organised by Egypt's Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.

Sheikh Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, the head of al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's highest authority, called for a "dialogue as a way of attaining goodness and elevating civilisation."

Chinese Red Cross appeals for int'l aid to battle floods

BEIJING, July 25: The Red Cross Society of China has issued an international appeal for emergency aid to battle flooding that has killed more than 1,100 people nationwide, state media said today, reports Reuters.

China's Red Cross appealed to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for 4.4 million Swiss francs (3.64 million dollars) in emergency aid, the China Daily said.

The international federation had responded with a promise to supply flood-stricken areas with food, medicines, disinfectant, clothing, bedding and materials for temporary reconstruction, it said.

It had so far provided some 500,000 Swiss francs (409,000 dollars) worth of aid.

The Red Cross Society of China had already sent more than 7,000 medical workers to help residents of the flooded regions and would work to prevent the spread of epidemic diseases and ensure a

supply of clean drinking water. Donations from foreign governments to China's flood-hit areas have surpassed 600,000 dollars, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said.

TWA jet's flight recorders found

SMITHTOWN, NY, July 25: Both of the flight data recorders from the TWA jetliner that crashed off New York's Long Island one week ago have been found, a US government official said Wednesday night, reports Reuters.

Both of the recorders were located at the wreckage site tonight, said Bob Barlett, an investigator in charge for the National Transportation Safety Board, which is spearheading the search operation for the 230 victims and the wreckage of the Boeing 747.

TWA flight 800 crashed July 17 shortly after beginning its journey from New York to Paris.

BRIEFLY

Top Hamas leader arrested:

Palestinian police said yesterday they had arrested a top militant from the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Awad Silmi, AFP reports from Gaza City.

Police also rounded up a number of other Hamas members and seized arms and explosives in the night-time raid.

Silmi as arrested in March by Palestinian police after a string of suicide bombings carried out by Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad that killed 56 people in Israel, but he escaped from prison three weeks later.

Debate on Rafsanjani's future opens:

A debate has opened in Iran on the political future of President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who under the constitution is not allowed to seek a new mandate when his second term in office expires next year. AFP reports from Tehran.

Officials from the two main factions of the Iranian regime — the moderates and religious conservatives — have publicly raised the subject, with several suggesting that Rafsanjani should run for a seat in parliament in by-elections to be held in a few months time.

104 AIDS cases in Indonesia:

At least 303 people are known to be infected with the HIV virus in Indonesia and another 104 have full-blown AIDS, the Antara News Agency said yesterday. Reuters reports from Jakarta.

It quoted the Chairman of the National AIDS Commission, Azwar Anas, as saying the number of unreported victims could be in the hundreds of thousands.

US, SA reach accord on Armscor:

The United States and South Africa reached a preliminary accord to seek a resolution on the US embargo on South African state-owned arms procurement agency Armscor, the White House said Wednesday. AFP reports from Washington.

The announcement was made during the White House visit of South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki who met with President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.

Fire claims 5 in Taiwan:

At least five people were killed as a fast-moving fire engulfed a wedding gown store in Taiwan's capital Taipei yesterday, a police officer said, Reuters reports from Taipei.

The victims were expected to include would-be brides who were trying on wedding gowns when the fire broke out shortly after the shop opened, the officer said. Identification of the victims was incomplete.



Undersecretary General for Peace Keeping Operations at the United Nations, Kofi Annan, discusses UN plans in regards to Burundi Wednesday in New York. The Security Council issued a statement condemning the massacre of 300 civilians in Burundi July 20. — AFP/UNB photo