

Noted Indonesian labour leader held

Police closes off area around PDI HQs

JAKARTA, July 31: Police closed off the area around the opposition Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) headquarters today after demonstrators began gathering in the area were major rites broke out at the weekend, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The demonstrators began gathering at dawn in the streets around the building in central Jakarta seized from supporters of ousted opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri Saturday by police and government-backed rebel PDI faction.

Police reinforcements in armoured vehicles soon followed said an AFP reporter at the scene.

The demonstrators sang patriotic songs and chanted anti-government slogans.

We came because we've learned something was going to happen, one of the demonstrators told the news agency.

Security forces did not immediately intervene. Jakarta's

62 drown as ferry sinks in India

GUWAHATI, India, July 31: At least 62 people drowned when an overcrowded ferry sank overnight in a rain-swollen river in the remote far eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, police said today, reports AFP.

At least 20 passengers were missing, a police spokesman told AFP in Guwahati, the capital of the neighbouring state of Assam.

The seizure led to the worst riots in Jakarta in more than 20 years. At least three people were killed and about 20 injured, while more than 200 were detained by police.

Indian army divers Wednesday joined a massive search operation in the swirling waters of the Nadihing, police said. They fished 10 more bodies out of the water today to take to 62 the number of known fatalities so far.

It was the worst ferry disaster in six months in India's remote far east, which has experienced severe flooding from the monsoon rains.

Two people drowned when a smaller ferry capsized in February in Arunachal Pradesh.

Sultan Mahmood elected PM of Pak-controlled Kashmir

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan-Controlled Kashmir, July 31: Sultan Mahmood, president of Kashmir branch of Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's party, was elected unopposed as new state premier Tuesday.

Mahmood, 41, replaces Sardar Abdul Qayyum, whose Muslim Conference was defeated by Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in the June 30 elections to the state legislative assembly.

Mumtaz Hussain Rathore, a former state premier and Israr Abbasi — both from PPP — were elected unopposed as Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

All nine legislators belong to Qayyum's party boycotted Tuesday's first session of the 48-member state assembly, election officials said.

Qayyum's party has alleged that the legislative elections had been massively rigged, a charge denied by the government.

Pakistan holds the northern third of Kashmir and the rest of the disputed Himalayan region is controlled by India.

Bomb threat

US aircraft turns back to Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, July 31: A US aircraft bound for Frankfurt turned back to Philadelphia airport shortly after takeoff on Tuesday when a bomb threat was phoned in by an anonymous caller, an airport spokesman said, reports Reuter.

The aircraft, with 200 passengers and crew on board, was forced to turn around 15 minutes after take-off at 8.20 pm (0200 GMT).

Passengers on US air flight 894 waited in buses while the police bomb squad searched the aircraft and luggage. No bomb was found.

Since the July 17 explosion of TWA Flight 800 off Long Island, there have been a string of bomb threats nationwide which have delayed flights or forced aircraft to turn back.

US embassy stole Marcos' gold hoard: Imelda

MANILA, July 31: Imelda Marcos accused US officials on Tuesday of stealing billions of dollars worth of gold certificates from her late husband 10 years ago, reports AP.

Mrs. Marcos said she will sue former US Ambassador Stephen Bosworth to find out what happened to the alleged gold, which she said was packed personally by Marcos into several duffel bags on the night they were forced into US exile by massive pro-democracy demonstrations.

She said Marcos camouflaged the certificates by covering them with a few fairs of pajamas.

The bags were taken by US military personnel who evacuated the authoritarian president from the palace as thousands of demonstrators approached in what has become known as the Philippines "people power" revolution.

"I wouldn't call it paranoia, but there is a security awareness in this country," said national police spokesman Eric Bar-Chen.

Nobody can prove that such measures work. Suicide attacks by Islamic militants claimed the lives of 63 people so far this year, and hardly a week goes by without a drive-by shooting, a stabbing, an in-

International

A senior cabinet minister warns

Sri Lanka can't spend so much on defence

COLOMBO, July 31: Alarmed at soaring war costs, a senior cabinet minister warned Wednesday that rejection of the government's peace plan would lead to a war to the finish that the country could not afford, reports AFP.

As fighting escalated against separatist Tamil rebels, the government already has exceeded this year's military budget and can expect to spend a great deal more, said Deputy Finance Minister Lakshman Peiris.

There is no way that a country like Sri Lanka can continue spending so much on defence, Peiris told a news conference. The war is not something we can go on with forever.

The government spends one quarter of its budget on fighting the guerrillas, who want an independent Tamil homeland in the north and the

east. The 13-year-war has left 43,000 people dead.

So far this year, the war has cost 50 billion rupees (drs 900 million), or 6.5 per cent of the gross domestic product, he said. The defence budget had been set at 38 billion rupees (drs 690 million).

The military has launched a series of offensives to drive the guerrillas from their strongholds in northern towns, hoping to force them to negotiate.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga said last week she would be forced to cut subsidies on rice and bread if the war doesn't finish before the end of 1997.

The high defence spending has forced the government to borrow more, leading to increased interest rates, less money for economic activities, lower profits, and ultimately workers being laid off. Peiris

said.

The government has proposed a plan to make Sri Lanka a federation of eight regions, each with wide powers of self rule, including one that would be dominated by Tamils.

Tamil guerrillas have rejected the plan as not enough. Influential Buddhist monks and hardline Sinhalese also oppose the plan as granting too much power to the Tamils.

Last week, the opposition United National Party said it supported an "indivisible Sri Lanka," echoing the theme of the plan's opponents. But the party, which governed Sri Lanka for 17 years until 1995, stopped short of rejecting the plan.

The UNP's support is required for a two-thirds majority in Parliament needed to amend the constitution.

Combating terrorism

Arab states draw up draft strategy

CAIRO, July 31: Arab countries finished work Tuesday on a strategy to combat terrorism by which they would commit to preventing their territory from becoming a base for terrorists, reports AFP.

Security experts from 15 countries closed a two-day session to draw up a draft strategy to be approved by the 22 interior ministers of the Arab League during their next council meeting in January.

Sudan, accused by Egypt of harbouring Muslim militants waging a violent campaign against the Cairo government, was absent from the meeting although it had expressed its intention to attend.

A spokesman for the Sudanese embassy in Cairo, Abdel Azim Awad, said Egyptian authorities had refused to provide entry visas to the Sudanese delegation. The Arab daily Al-Ayaat reported on Tuesday.

Khartoum was hit by UN diplomatic sanctions in May

for allegedly harbouring three Egyptian militants accused of involvement in the June 1995 foiled attack in Ethiopia on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Among the national who did attend were Iraq and Libya who US President Bill Clinton picked out on Sunday, along with Iran, as "states that sponsor or commit terrorism calling for 'strong sanctions' against them.

By the strategy Arab nations would commit to strengthen the punishments against perpetrators of terrorist acts and to freeze and seize monies directed to these acts a final statement issued by the session said.

It also calls for "strengthening the cooperation against terrorism between the members by exchange of help in searching for, investigating and arresting fugitives accused of or convicted of terrorist crimes."

Off the Record

Two-headed baby girl

TIJUANA, MEXICO: A two-headed baby girl born last Friday in a Tijuana hospital was in serious but stable condition on Tuesday, the hospital said, reports Reuter.

The child has serious heart malformations, said Alejandro Lira, a doctor at Notre Dame Hospital.

Her state is serious but stable, Lira said.

Money owed to Shakespeare's father to be repaid after 400 years

LONDON: Money owed to William Shakespeare's father, who was mayor of Stratford-Upon-Avon in 1599, will be paid back to his civic successor almost 400 years late. The Daily Express newspaper said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Derick Smithers, who has followed the father of England's most famous board into Stratford town hall, was due to drive to Marlborough, southwest England, where the town's mayor, Charles Bates, will hand over the 21 pounds (32 dollars) at a public ceremony.

But Marlborough has decided not to repay interest on the debt, which would be worth about 150,000 pounds (230,000 dollars) at today's price.

Paying back such a sum would have cast the town into financial ruin forever more, the mayor said.

Bates said that the 21 pounds would be given to charity.

He added that it was Britain's oldest recorded unpaid debt.

Good news for baldheads

HELSINKI: Researchers have succeeded in isolating the gene responsible for hair growth which could eventually lead to medication to combat baldness, the scientist in charge of a study announced here Tuesday, reports AFP.

The mutation of this gene cause a skin sickness that translates into a lack of sweat glands, teeth that refuse to develop properly and baldness, said Juha Kere, a professor at the University of Helsinki who headed up the international research team.

The gene is found in the X-chromosome common to both women and men, but the effect in women conversely begins.

The discovery constitutes a major success in the perennial male struggle against receding hairlines, because while the gene has been known to scientists since the 1970s, they were never able to isolate it, Kere said.

It would take 10 years for medicine fighting baldness to hit pharmacy shelves, Kere said.

The study is to be published in the August issue of "Nature Genetics."

Trading human flesh

MOSCOW: Police in the rural town of Berezniki have arrested four men suspected of trading in human flesh which was sold to consumers as veal, ITAR-Tass news agency reported Tuesday, says AFP.

Police were tipped off after a local resident brought in a sample of the meat, dubious about its origins and a medical expert confirmed that it came from a human being, a senior police official told ITAR-Tass.

The corpse of an elderly man was discovered in a local apartment during a subsequent police investigation.

Saudi Arabia assures US of protecting its troops

RIYADH, July 31: Defence Secretary William Perry travels Wednesday to a base in southern Saudi Arabia — the future home of US troops being moved from elsewhere in the kingdom as a precaution against terrorism, reports AP.

Perry's Saudi counterpart, Prince Sultan, assured him Tuesday that the kingdom is doing all it could to protect the 5,000 US troops in Saudi Arabia, Saudi officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Perry's trip was prompted by last month's truck bombing at a military complex in Dhahran, the second of two bombings in Saudi Arabia that have killed a total of 24 Americans since November.

While the Pentagon has refused all comment on the trip, Perry reportedly planned to ask the Saudis for help paying for increased security for the US troops here.

Saudi sources said the Saudi

defense minister would not commit to sharing the expenses, apparently on the grounds that current safeguards are adequate, although he promised to cooperate with the United States on security issues.

The kingdom is capable of ensuring the security of every citizen and resident on its land, the sources quoted Sultan as saying during the three-hour meeting in the Red Sea port of Jeddah.

The Pentagon did not respond to requests for comment on the Saudi account of Tuesday's meeting.

Perry is expected to raise security issues again in talks with King Fahd.

The officials said Perry praised the Saudis for the quick arrest of four suspects in the November bombing of a US-run military training center in Riyadh. That bombing killed five Americans and two Indians.

Pravda stops publication

MOSCOW, July 31: Pravda, the Communist newspaper founded by Vladimir Lenin in 1912, has stopped publishing, AP reports from Moscow.

The paper's Greek owners, who have been feuding with the editor, closed it down last week after being denied entry to the Pravda building, reports AP.

Pravda has suspended publication at least twice in recent years, once because of similar dispute, and it was unclear whether the struggling paper was closing its doors for good.

The owners, brothers Christos and Theodoros Giannikos, who are co-directors of Pravda International, are still putting out a tabloid newspaper called Pravda Pyat (Pravda Five) under a separate editorial staff.



A Palestinian woman carries her belongings on her way to work in Abu Dis village, near Jerusalem on Tuesday. Israel eased its blockade of the West Bank to allow 13,000 Palestinians to get to their jobs in the Jewish state.

— AFP/UNB photo

Terrorists make Israel world's most security conscious country

filtration attempt or a bomb threat.

But Israelis believe the efforts are effective, and they pay a lot for the extra precautions, even though the result is often tantamount to security mania.

"Living with terror is our fate," said Ran Cohen, a liberal member of parliament and a reserve army colonel in the elite paratroop unit. "We need every civilian to be very concerned about the possibility that a terrorist is not far away from him."

That concern is spreading to the United States. A bomb killed one woman and injured more than 100 people at the Olympics in Atlanta last weekend, and evidence is mounting that a bomb caused TWA flight 800 to explode over New York on July 17, killing all 230 people

aboard in Israel. Mailbox slots are barely wide enough for letters to prevent bombs from being mailed, and trash containers on Jerusalem's streets are made from a heavy, rubberized material that can absorb the blast of most pipe bombs.

The security pit — a hole lined with concrete and topped with a metal lid — has been placed outside schools and other buildings in case explosives are found and need to be disposed of.

After Palestinian infiltrators killed 21 children and wounded 70 at the village of Ma'alot in northern Israel in 1974, more than one million parents volunteered to stand guard at kindergartens and schools throughout the nation.

Parents at a Jerusalem pre-

school in the exclusive Yemin Moshe neighbourhood voted to hire a former combat soldier to protect their children after a stabbing in the neighborhood in early 1995.

Israeli police responded to 49,979 reports of suspicious objects last year, and safely defused 51 bombs. In many cases, traffic was brought to a standstill while bomb squads using remote-controlled robots searched for explosives.

In Jerusalem alone, police investigate about 20 suspicious cases a day, which means a lot of motorists return to find their trunks popped open and a note saying the car was searched.

Photographer Eyal Warshavsky recalls running outside in his nightshirt one morning to keep police from

LRA rebels kill 58 in northern Uganda

KAMPALA, July 31: Rebels killed 58 people, including 40 government soldiers, in two attacks in northern Uganda on Monday, army officers said yesterday.

The officers told Reuters a group of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels attacked a military post near Karuma on the river Nile on Monday and killed some 40 soldiers in a two-hour battle.

A group of LRA fighters had earlier on Monday attacked Pabbo village north of Gulu, the regional capital 345 km (215 miles) north of Kampala, and killed 18 civilians, residents said.