

International

BRIEFLY



Kim Hyong U, permanent representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations, addresses reporters Friday at United Nations headquarters in New York. The ambassador discussed relations between North and South Korea and hopes for reunification.

— AFP/UNB photo

12 Indians die after consuming liquor:

Twelve people died after consuming home-made liquor. The Times of India reported yesterday, Reuter reports from New Delhi.

Five of the 12 were in India's northern state of Haryana which had banned liquor sales from July 1. The other seven were in the eastern state of Bihar. At least 35 others in Haryana were admitted to various hospitals in serious condition. In Bihar, the incident took place in the state's capital Patna, the newspaper said.

Typhoon claims 39 in Taiwan: At least 39 people died and 34 were missing when typhoon Herb lashed Taiwan this week, triggering the worst flooding in 30 years, the United Daily News reported yesterday. AFP reports from Taipei.

The death toll could rise as more bodies of victims buried by landslides in central Taiwan were retrieved, the paper predicted. The official National Police Administration (NPA) toll stood at 19 dead and 41 missing.

ULFA rebels kill 4 cops in Assam:

Separatist guerrillas in India's north-east state of Assam killed four Indian policemen on Friday, officials said. Reuter reports from Guwahati.

They said United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) rebels opened fire on a police vehicle in Dhubri town, killing the four. The ULFA is fighting to create a separate homeland. More than 2,000 people have died in the rebellion over the past 10 years in Assam known for its team and rich oil reserves.

US eases restriction on Ukraine:

The United States on Friday scrapped Cold-War era restrictions on defence trade with Ukraine, the eighth former Soviet republic to be taken off the prescribed list. AFP reports from Washington.

This is a major step forward for Ukraine and for the development of a very close US-Ukraine relationship, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. Ukraine was taken off the US government's international traffic in arms regulation list (ITAR) which directs the State Department to deny licenses or defence services to certain countries.

2 foreigners kidnaped in Chechnya:

Two members of a French humanitarian mission have been kidnapped by unknown armed people in the Chechen capital Grozny, a news agency said Saturday. AP reports from Grozny.

ITAR-Tass did not identify the mission but said its leader Jean-Pierre Mahe reported the abduction Saturday to Chechnya's Moscow-backed Interior Ministry.

Gunmen kill 12 Egyptian cops:

Suspected Islamic militants shot dead two policemen and a local official in a village of Egypt's troubled southern province of Minya, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Cairo.

They said three gunmen, believed to be members of the outlawed Jamaat Islamiya, killed the policemen standing guard outside the home of the mayor of Ashmuni village late Friday. As they fled, they also gunned down a local official who was coming out of a mosque, police said.

8 die as ferry sinks in Vietnam:

Eight people died when a ferry carrying twice the load it was licensed for sank in a river in central Vietnam, the official Nhan Dan Daily reported yesterday. Reuter says from Hanoi.

The newspaper said the vessel was swamped by high waves as it navigated the Gianh river to the north of the wartime demilitarised zone. Nhan Dan said the ferry had been carrying 40 passengers and 600 kg (1,320 pounds) in goods. It was licensed to carry half that amount.

Peasants, troops clash in Colombia:

At least two people were killed and more than 15 injured on Friday in a violent clash between peasants and government security forces caught on opposite sides of one of the frontlines of Colombia's drug war, authorities said. Reuter reports from Bogota.

Former French PM

Debre dead

PARIS, Aug 3: Former French prime minister and one of the founders of the Fifth Republic Michel Debre died today at the age of 84 at his home in Montlouis-Sur-Loire, local media reports quoted an announcement by his family as saying, reports Xinhua.

Born on January 15, 1912 in Paris, Michel Debre was the son of Robert Debre, an internationally renowned pediatrician at the time.

Debre joined the resistance force against Germany during World War II and was the government's representative in the region of Angers in the fight for the liberation of France from the Nazi occupation.

He was prime minister under General Charles De Gaulle from 1959 to 1962, and occupied several ministerial seats from 1966 to 1973.

President Jacques Chirac said in a message of condolence that France has lost one of its greatest servants.

One of the four sons of Michel Debre, Jean-Louis Debre, is now the Interior Minister.

Nepali opposition to block passage of river treaty with India

KATHMANDU, Aug 3: Nepal's main opposition party said yesterday that it would block passage of treaty with India on border river development in the Nepali Parliament, reports Xinhua.

The coalition government is expected to table the Nepal-Indian treaty on Mahakali River to the on-going Parliament session for ratification.

President of the opposition Communist Party of Nepal (UML) Man Mohan Adhikari said at the Lower House that the treaty could only be presented to Parliament six months from now after extensive discussions on every aspect of the treaty.

The ratification of the treaty, which needs at least a two-thirds majority in the House would be unlikely without the support of the UML which holds 89 seats in the 205 seat Lower House.

US to pull out dependents of armymen from KSA

WASHINGTON, Aug 3: The United States has decided to pull out dependents of US military personnel from Saudi Arabia, where 24 Americans have been killed in two terrorist attacks since November, a Pentagon spokesman said Friday.

A decision has been made to take out dependents said Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon. We expect the vast majority of dependents will leave.

They'll be out relatively soon it's a question of chartering flights to get them out, he told AFP.

The decision to pull out the 1,000 dependents of US military personnel in Saudi Arabia coincides with the move of some 4,000 US troops from Dhahran and Riyadh to an air base in the desert.

The source did not provide the names or number of people on the blacklist and Antara did not report which authority issued the list.

Dozens of activists, student leaders and members of the

Assad greets King Hussein in Damascus

'Israel may pull out of Lebanon if Hezbollah men give up arms'

JERUSALEM, Aug 3: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday Israel would be ready to pull out of Lebanon if Islamic militants were disarmed and no measures were taken against the Jewish state's allies in the area, reports Reuter.

The right-wing Israeli leader told Israel television in an interview that such and arrangement with Beirut could pave the way for a formal peace deal with Syria.

"If we know that Hezbollah is disarmed in Lebanon, that it won't attack us anymore and that a proper arrangement is made for our allies in South Lebanon and we have satisfactory security for our northern border from the Lebanese side then we have no reason to be in Lebanon," Netanyahu said.

It was the first time Netanyahu — who ousted dovish

prime minister Shimon Peres in elections two months ago — spelled out what has been dubbed the "Lebanon first" initiative aimed at breaking the deadlock in peace move with Syria.

Damascus has rejected the idea.

Israeli troops and members of their allied South Lebanon Army patrol a 15-km (nine-mile) occupation zone in South Lebanon which the Jewish state says is necessary to protect its northern border.

Islamic militants from the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) group have waged a guerrilla war to expel Israeli soldiers from Lebanon, where Syria is the main powerbroker.

"I think this would be a real contribution towards achieving a wider understanding which will in the end bring about formal peace with Syria," Ne-

tanyahu said.

A senior Syrian official on Friday described the "Lebanon first" proposal as a "trap aimed at sabotaging the brotherly Syrian-Lebanese ties" which could not lead to peace.

Syria's price for peace is a complete Israeli withdrawal from the strategic Golan Heights which the Jewish state captured in 1967 Middle East war.

AFP adds: King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Damascus today on his first visit in to years for talks with President Hafez Al-Assad on sealing their reconciliation and efforts to jumpstart the peace process with Israel.

Syrian officials said Assad greeted the king at the airport at the start of the one-day visit.

King Hussein was accompanied by Prime Minister Abd-el Karim Kabriti.

Top negotiators to visit Grozny

Moscow keen to restart collapsed peace talks

MOSCOW, Aug 3: Top Russian negotiators said Friday they would fly to the devastated Chechen city of Grozny this weekend to try to restart collapsed peace talks with separatist rebels, although no concrete meeting is set, reports AFP.

The secretary of the government commission on resolving the 20-month war, Sergei Stepashin, said he told the mediator of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that he was ready to meet rebel leaders.

"We arrive on Saturday and this is not secret. I have said via OSCE mission chief Tim Goldmann that we are ready to meet," Stepashin told reporters.

No time or place has been set for a meeting, however.

Nationalities Minister Vy-

acheslav Mikhaliov, also going to Grozny, indicated there would be little room for compromise, squarely blaming the Chechens for the breakdown in talks.

He accused Chechen rebel chief of staff Aslam Maskhadov of deliberately avoiding new talks "to try and convince people that the federal centre is the side violating the agreement."

The two sides signed a wide-reaching peace accord in June, just before the presidential elections, but Russian forces went back on the offensive shortly after president Boris Yeltsin's re-election.

Mikhaliov said that while he supported new talks — the first since the now moribund accord was signed — military force would continue to be used in so-called "special operations."

EU wants to see failure of Dayton accord: Tudjman

ZAGREB, Aug 3: Croatian President Franjo Tudjman emerged from talks with his US counterpart Bill Clinton on Friday furious with Europe for trying to heap the blame for continuing disputes in Bosnia on his Croatian government and the Bosnian Croats, reports AFP.

As an EU deadline looms for truculent Bosnia-Croats in the divided southern city of Mostar, Tudjman lashed out at European circles for blaming Croats for all the ills currently plaguing Bosnia's Dayton peace accords.

The United States has a leading role but there are European circles which want to see Dayton (the Bosnia peace accords) fail and the Croats blamed for this," Tudjman told Croatian journalists in Washington in remarks broadcast by Croatian television.

Tudjman's meeting with Clinton ended without the usual joint statement to the international press and the traditional photograph, and the Croatian president also cancelled an expected visit to Atlanta to see the Olympic Games, according instead to Zagreb.

Croatia was expected to some under fire in the meeting on two counts for Bosnian-Croat intransigence.

He European Union has given the Bosnia-Croats in the southern city of Mostar until midnight (2200 GMT) Saturday to end their boycott of the newly-elected city council of which mainly Muslim coalition has a majority.

Mijo Brkovic the mayor of Croatia held west Mostar, said Friday that the Croats would not give in.

Off the Record

Protest against monkey project

SAN FRANCISCO: About two dozen activists, some wearing space suits and monkey masks, staged a noisy protest Friday to demand the federal government cancel a \$3 million dollars project to send monkeys into space, reports AP.

"NASA, stop torturing monkeys now," some chanted.

The demonstration was an appeal to the Senate, where a vote was scheduled on an amendment that could cancel the project, which involves the United States, France and Russia. The project studies bone loss and the effects of space travel on astronauts' muscles.

Two monkeys are scheduled to fly into space in October.

"I'm not an extremist. I could see in some cases where you can use animals for medical reasons, but I can't justify this in my mind," said Barbara Chase as the passed out flyers at the downtown Federal Building.

But Susan Paris, president of Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation, said it is important to understand the health effects on astronauts.

"We know there is bone loss and heart muscles get affected when astronauts fly into space," she said, "but we need to understand why that happens."

Hunt for missing elephants

COLOMBO: Police detectives in Sri Lanka are hunting for at least seven elephants reported missing from various Buddhist temples, police said Saturday, reports AP.

The directive to send sleuths on the trail of elephants came from President Chandrika Kumaratunga after allegations that elephants donated to various temples were being kept as pets in the homes of powerful local businessmen and politicians.

The custodians of the temple of the tooth, which Buddha's tooth contains, a tooth of Lord Buddha, had complained to president Kumaratunga that they could not find enough elephants this year for an annual religious parade.

Temples in many parts of the country usually send their elephants to take part in the parade honoring the tooth, held in the central mountain city of Kandy, 100 kilometres (60 miles) east of the capital, Colombo.

The two-week-long spectacle with more than 100 elephants and thousands of drummers, dancers and flag bearers, took place in July.

The custodians told Kumaratunga that the elephants given to some temples by the country's elephant orphanage could have been kept as pets by politicians and businessmen who served as trustees of temples.

The complaint to the president said seven elephants were known to be missing, but the number could be higher.

Kumaratunga has ordered the Criminal Investigations Department of the police to find the elephants, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Aidid's death may offer a way out of Somali civil war

PA slams Israeli PM for lifting freeze on Jewish settlements

JERUSALEM, Aug 3: Palestinian officials have slammed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to lift a freeze on Jewish settlements in occupied lands as a huge setback for peace, reports Reuter.

Israel's decision on Friday to ease restrictions on settlements came as hundreds of Palestinian rioters stormed a PLO prison in the West Bank town of Tulkarm, freeing around 40 jailed activists from the Islamic militant Hamas group.

Residents said the Palestinian police opened fire on the 2,000 protesters, killing 38-year-old Ibrahim Hadayeh, whose two sons were jailed. The protesters were demanding the release of imprisoned relatives on hunger strike.

The Palestine Liberation

Organisation jailed hundreds of Hamas activists after an Islamic bombing spree in February and March that killed 59 people in the Jewish state. Hamas has spearheaded Palestinian opposition to Israel-PLO peace moves.

Members of the Palestinian Authority (PA) discussed Israel's decision to cancel restrictions imposed by the previous government hours after was announced.

The Israeli government's resolution is a serious setback to the peace process. I think settlement activity, building settlements, expanding settlements, is a de facto cancellation of peace," said Palestinian Authority (PA) member Saeb Erekat.

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The decision marked the new Likud administration's clearest break yet with the

area in what Palestinians hope is a step to statehood.

The PA's statement, apparently from the new committee, calling on the soldiers of the National Army — Aidid's militiamen — to "remain watchful and defend their rights."

The station also declared a 30-day mourning period, and broadcast somber music and messages of condolence to Aidid's family.

Aidid's radio station had been appointed to head his United Somalis Congress-Somali National Alliance, whose members are drawn primarily from the Habr-Gedir sub-clan of the Hawiye clan, one of the six in Somalia.

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