

BRIEFLY

US ex-vice president Agnew dead:

Former US vice President Spiro Agnew, who served under President Richard Nixon from 1969-1973, has died at a Maryland Hospital. Cable News Network said yesterday. He was 77. AFP reports from Washington.

The former Maryland governor was taken to a hospital in ocean city, Maryland, where he passed away Tuesday, CNN said, adding that no other details about his death were released. Officials at Ocean City's Atlantic General Hospital would not confirm or deny the report. Agnew resigned as vice president while facing charges of tax evasion in 1973, one year before Nixon was brought down by the Watergate scandal.

5 soldiers killed in Philippines:

Five soldiers were killed in two attacks by suspected Muslim guerrillas near Cotabato, a southern Philippine city, military spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from Cotabato, Philippines.

An infantry platoon was attacked near the town of Pikit on Tuesday, leaving three soldiers dead, while two other infantrymen were killed at the public market of Pikit on Sunday, lieutenant Noel Detoayato told reporters. He accused the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which is preparing for peace talks with the government, of being behind the two attacks, however a spokesman for the group denied any role in the ambushes.

Quakes rock Hokkaido:

A pair of moderate earthquakes with preliminary magnitudes of 5.5 and 5.2 struck off the east coast of Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido on Wednesday morning, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries, AP reports from Tokyo.

Both tremors struck about 60 kilometers (37 miles) beneath the ocean floor in the same general location about 450 kilometers (279 miles) east of the coastal city of Kushiro, located 890 kilometers (552 miles) northeast of Tokyo, the Sapporo District Meteorological Observatory said.

There was no danger of tsunami, or undersea waves triggered by volcanic activity or earthquakes, from the quakes, it said.

22 insurgents in Myanmar surrender:

Twenty-two anti-government insurgents in Myanmar surrendered to the ruling military authorities last month, Myanmar state-run radio reported Tuesday. AFP reports from Bangkok.

Those who surrendered included militant pro-democracy students from the All Burma Students Democratic Front and ethnic Karen minorities, radio Yangon said in a broadcast monitored in Bangkok. The rebels gave themselves up with their weapons to the Myanmar army between August 1 and 12, the report said.

Landslide kills 4 in Philippines:

At least four gold miners were killed and 15 others missing and feared dead in a landslide on a remote mountain, police said Wednesday, AP reports from Iligan, Philippines.

Regional police spokesman, Nelson Constantino said heavy rains triggered the landslide late Tuesday in the mountain village on Mount Mambitayan in Prosperidad, the capital of Agusan del Sur province, 840 kilometers (525 miles) southeast of Manila. Constantino said four survivors who suffered cuts and fractures told authorities that the 15 missing miners were buried under boulders and mud on the side of the mountain where they were digging for gold.

Assassination attempt last year

Mubarak blames Iran

CAIRO, Sept. 18: President Hosni Mubarak has accused Iran of helping assassins who tried to assassinate him last year, marking the first time the Egyptian leader has publicly said that Iran participated in the plot, reports AP.

Egypt has long blamed its southern neighbour Sudan for masterminding the attempt in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1995. The charges led to UN diplomatic sanctions on Sudan after it refused to turn over three suspects.

Khartoum denies any role and says the men are no longer in Sudan.

Mubarak said the Iranian role came to light through confessions by some of the assassins on trial in Ethiopia.

There is information coming from the confessions of the arrested terrorists that Iran is involved and, that it helped Sudan train for this attack," Mubarak told the London-based Arabic newspaper al-Hayat in an interview published Wednesday. His remarks were carried Tuesday by Egypt's Middle East News Agency.

Infiltration from North suspected

DPRK submarine found

stranded in ROK east coast

SEOUL, Sept. 18: Thousands of soldiers and police scoured rugged border mountains Wednesday for an unknown number of infiltrators from a stranded North Korean submarine off South Korea's east coast, reports AP.

RBS TV, quoting police sources, reported that several gun shots were heard in the area and said it could have been a firefight between South Korean troops and the North Koreans.

The Defence Ministry ordered a massive manhunt after the submarine was found stranded on a reef off Kangnung, 120 kilometres (80 miles) northeast of Seoul, at about 1:35 am (1635 GMT).

It offered a cash reward of 100 million won (125,000 dollars) for information leading to the whereabouts of the intruders.

The exact number of infiltrators was unknown. The Defence Ministry said the submarine, capable of carrying up to 10 people, is believed to have planned to drop off just half

that number. But when the submarine became stranded, the rest of the crew also left, it said.

After daybreak, police found footprints believed left by the infiltrators on a road leading to a rugged mountain. They also discovered a North Korean rifle, 150 rounds of ammunition, a life jacket and several pieces of clothing.

All army units and militia forces in the area were put on alert. The searchers were using dogs to sniff out the infiltrators. Helicopters were hovering over the area.

"This is a clear violation of the armistice," said Lt. Gen. Kim Kung-jin, who was directing the search. Appearing on television, he asked people to report anyone who looks suspicious.

TV footage showed the gray-brown top of the submarine near jagged rocks about 20 metres (yards) off the shore. Police were ordered not to approach it for fear it was booby trapped.

Hundreds of US soldiers were left behind in Korean war

WASHINGTON, Sept. 18: Shown intelligence indicating more than 900 American prisoners remained unaccounted for, the late US President Eisenhower in 1953 told a top aide he might not have begun peace talks with North Korea had he known the information earlier, reports AP.

Documents made public Tuesday show intense concern within the Eisenhower administration over secret reports that hundreds of prisoners of war had been left behind. And testimony Tuesday before the House National Security personnel subcommittee brought forth several theories on their fate.

The documents include intelligence reports, classified policy statements, and memo-

randas of conversations among top government officials. They disagree widely on estimates of unaccounted-for Americans.

One document, dated December 22, 1953, recounts a conversation between President Eisenhower and US Army Secretary Robert T. Stevens about internal reports that more than 900 Americans were left behind.

"The president made the statement that he was not sure that if he had fully appreciated the situation he would have felt it wise to go into the forthcoming conference," the memo says, apparently referring to peace talks over ending the Korean War. "Perhaps we should have insisted on their return as a precondition to the conference."

Peace talks with North Korea had ended with an armistice

International

Iraqi leader warned of new attack

US sends 3,500 soldiers to Kuwait, deploys Patriot

WASHINGTON, Sept. 18: In moves designed to "keep Saddam Hussein in a box," President Clinton has dispatched 3,500 US Army soldiers to Kuwait and warned the Iraqi leader of new attacks should he threaten his neighbours or US forces, reports AP.

The warning to Saddam will remain in effect indefinitely, the US State Department said.

"It's obvious that he's always pushing the envelope," Clinton said Tuesday. "We didn't want to create a precedent that would lead him to believe he could take further action. We didn't want there to be any ambiguity

at all."

After congressional leaders met with Clinton at the White House, Democratic senators said Clinton had not hesitated in sending the troops to Kuwait. Although plans to send 5,000 soldiers were announced on Friday, reports emerged Monday the decision was being reviewed.

"We're doing it because the Kuwaiti government feels threatened," US Defence Secretary William Perry said of the deployment. The 3,500 soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas, would join 1,200 others conducting exercises in Kuwait by the end

of the week, he said.

Perry flatly rejected speculation the Kuwaiti government initially was unwilling to accept additional US forces, or that the US-led coalition that mounted the 1991 war against Iraq had been fractured during the past two weeks of confrontation with Saddam.

"The bottom line is, the coalition is alive and well," said Perry, who had returned early Tuesday from two days of consultations with Gulf and European allies.

Senate Republican leader Trent Lott of Mississippi expressed satisfaction after at-

tending the meeting with Clinton, although he termed it "somewhat belated."

He said he hoped "there will be no basis" for the troops to go into action, but added that would depend on whether Saddam threatens US forces or his neighbours.

Before departing for a three-day campaign swing in the Midwest and West, Clinton said his actions were designed to improve the strategic position of the United States and our allies to keep Saddam Hussein in a box and limit his ability to threaten his neighbours.

The actions are designed to tell Saddam the "box you are in is now a tighter box," Clinton said.

Perry, asked at a Pentagon briefing what Iraqi steps actions would prompt renewed US strikes, replied: "We will not tolerate any threatening actions against our air crews. Should any be taken, he pledged, 'we will respond very sharply'."

Another report from Kuwait adds: The United States has deployed Patriot anti-missile units in the Kuwaiti desert as it prepares for possible military action against Iraq.

AP from London further adds: Britain is still ready to send troops to Kuwait to defend it against threats of Iraqi attacks. Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said Tuesday.

Speaking after talks with Kuwaiti foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, Rifkind said: "We have shown in the past a willingness... for troops to be sent and if it became necessary in the future we would also respond in a positive way."

The British foreign secretary said he had an "important and positive discussion" with his Kuwaiti counterpart, who had earlier also visited France.

Denise Brown (L), the sister of murder victim Nicole Brown, is accompanied by her attorney as she is followed by reporters outside the Orange County Courthouse where O J Simpson is fighting for custody of his children September 17. The two Simpson children have been staying with the Brown family since the slaying of their mother and the Brown's want permanent custody of the children. — AFP/UNB photo

JERUSALEM, Sept. 18: Syria has shifted troops closer to Israeli-controlled territory in Lebanon — a move Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday was intended to pressure Israel to resume negotiations on Syrian terms, reports AP.

Several thousand of Syria's 40,000 troops in Lebanon have been moved since mid-August. Military convoys have headed out of Beirut nightly, moving toward the strategic central mountains and possibly into Syria, according to residents near the Lebanese capital.

The movements have prompted a flurry of speculation in Israel. The deployment of troops in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and at the base of Mount Hermon, the site of key Israeli reconnaissance stations, has been especially concerning.

"I am convinced that Syria is trying to put psychological pressure on the government of Israel. It is testing the determination of the government and the Israeli public," Netanyahu told reporters after briefing

parliament's Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee.

Netanyahu said Israel was "watching every development very closely and taking the appropriate steps. We don't know the Syrians' intentions... but it's important to address their capabilities, not just their intentions."

Abdullah Amin, a former Lebanese Cabinet minister and close ally of Syria, said the Syrian army was redeploying its forces to more defensive positions following hard line statements by Netanyahu.

"There are fears of an Israeli escalation," he said. "The redeployment is a precautionary measure to confront any possibility of an aggression on Syrian troops based in Lebanon as well as in Syria."

Israeli military commentators are skeptical of Syria's motivations.

"When you add what the Syrians say to their troop movement in Lebanon over the past month, you get the picture that they are readying the infras-

tructure for a military option along with the diplomatic signals," commentator Ron Ben-Israel wrote in the Yediot Achronot newspaper.

Tensions between the two countries have risen since Netanyahu's Likud Party took office in June.

Netanyahu has said he does not want to return the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau seized in 1967, in exchange for peace with Syria. Israel's previous government had indicated it would do so.

Syria wants talks to pick up negotiations where they were left off in March. Netanyahu said Israel would not give in to the Syrian pressure.

"Syria and the rest of the Arab world must get used to the idea that this government does not have the same positions as the previous government," he said.

Netanyahu met Tuesday with former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and discussed Syria and the Israel-Palestinian peace process, Israel radio reported.

JAKARTA, Sept. 18: Police have threatened to close the newly opened headquarters of Megawati Sukarnoputri, whom the government no longer recognises as leader of the opposition Indonesian Democratic Party, reports AP.

National Police Chief Lt. Gen. Dito Yudono was quoted by the newspaper Jakarta Post on Wednesday as saying it was only a matter of time before authorities took action.

Megawati, who was deposed as party leader at a military sanctioned conclave in June, opened a new office for her faction last week in the east Jakarta area of Condet.

"We will move in when they use the office to disrupt public order. Dito was quoted as saying."

Dito's threat followed a warning by Home Affairs Minister Yogie S. Memet that he would ask security authorities to close it.

Jakarta Police Chief Maj. Gen. Hamami Nata said the Condet district was intended only as a residential area, and any office located there is illegal.

KABUL, Sept. 18: A blistering rocket duel between government troops and rival Taliban soldiers on the southern edges of the capital early Wednesday has left four people dead, including a young woman who was running for cover with her four-year-old son, hospital officials said, reports AP.

The young boy was in serious condition in Karte Se hospital, where the dozen people who were wounded in the assault were being treated.

"Heavy weapons fire continued to hit areas south and southeast of Kabul," said a government spokesman who gave his name only as Annullah.

Neither side made any military gains in the attack, he said.

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