

Deng's ashes scattered at sea

BEIJING, Mar 3: Weeping as they cast flower petals and ashes from a government jet Sunday, the widow and children of Deng Xiaoping kept their promise to scatter the remains of the late Communist Party patriarch at sea, reports AP.

State-run television Monday showed Deng's family and high-ranking party members bowing toward a box holding his ashes and covered with the party's red and gold flag in a final farewell ceremony at the compound for top leaders in central Beijing.

His three daughters then led a procession out of the Hall for Cherishing Benevolence — one bearing his portrait, the next a wreath and the last the flag-draped box.

Documentaries and eulogies of Deng have been running on state-run TV nearly non-stop since his death Feb. 19 at age 92 — part of a campaign by his political heirs to mourn his passing, celebrate his achievements and bolster their legitimacy.

After the ceremony, the family, party officials and a military escort traveled in black limousines and white buses to a western Beijing airport. Guards in dress uniforms stood at attention as the plane took off for an unspecified area.

Kabila rejects call for ceasefire 10-day ultimatum for Zairean army to join rebel forces

GOMA, Zaire, Mar 3: Zaire's rebel leader has issued an ultimatum for senior army officers to join his forces within 10 days or face unspecified consequences, a rebel spokesman said here today, reports AP.

Senior officers of the Zairian armed forces have until March 13 to lay down their arms and join the forces of the people," said Gilles Ingala Gwamona, a spokesman for guerrilla leader Laurent-Desire Kabila.

"Once the deadline passes, they will be considered rebels, with all the consequences that his carries," said Gwamona.

Kabila, whose forces control much of eastern Zaire and are advancing on the key town of Kisangani, said Sunday he had rejected calls from the United States and South Africa to agree to a ceasefire.

AP adds: Zairian rebels said Sunday that they had captured the Tingi-Tingi refugee camp, driving tens of thousands of refugees north toward the government stronghold of Kisangani, which the rebels say is

their next target.

Nyembwe Kazadi, a spokesman for rebel leader Laurent Kabila, told the British Broadcasting Corp. that rebels faced little resistance from government forces when they took Tingi-Tingi and the nearby town of Lubutu on Saturday.

The report could not be immediately confirmed.

Since September, when the revolt began, Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire has captured a 1,450 kilometre (900-mile) strip of eastern Zaire and is pressing steadily west toward Kisangani, the country's third-largest city.

"They are bombing us from Kisangani. We won't just cross our hearts and wait for them," said Kazadi, who said he had just spoken to Kabila.

Kazadi said another column of rebels was headed for the northwestern town of Gbadolite, where Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko has a jungle hideaway. The rebels' ultimate aim is to overthrow the Zairian ruler, who has been in power for

three decades.

"This is a national liberation war. It is not something in a particular area," he said.

However, he said, the rebels were willing to return to peace talks in South Africa with Zaire's government.

"The negotiation windows are open," he said. "The ball is on the Zairian side. Let's wait for them and hear what is their story."

The BBC said tens of thousands of Hutu refugees are on their way from Tingi-Tingi to Kisangani, 240 kilometre (385 miles) to the north, and that Kabila has offered to allow UN workers access to the refugees to ease their journey.

International aid workers abandoned Kisangani on Saturday after signs the Tingi-Tingi refugees planned to flee the camp in anticipation of the rebel assault.

The World Food Programme said it left about 500 tons of food in Kisangani and a smaller amount in Tingi-Tingi that could last about a week.

Proposed talks with Pakistan may help boost ties: Gowda

NEW DELHI, 3: Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda said he hoped a proposed dialogue with Pakistan would help boost relations between the two arch-rivals, newspapers reported today, says AFP.

"It is a first step," the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted Deve Gowda as saying in the southern city of Bangalore late Sunday. "I hope the talks would be a beginning for reviving our relationship."

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has suggested high-level talks in a bid to revive a bilateral dialogue suspended since January 1994.

Deve Gowda, however, hinted that Kashmir, a Himalayan province whose ownership is bitterly disputed by the two countries, may not figure in the talks.

"We want to mainly improve relations in the areas of trade, communication and transport," the prime minister said.

Sharif proposed foreign secretary-level talks with India this month to pave the way for a summit.



Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma (L) greets his Philippine counterpart Fidel Ramos during an official welcoming ceremony at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi on Monday. Ramos is in India for a three-day official visit. At right is Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda. — AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Arafat arrives in Washington: Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat arrived in Washington Sunday to seek support from President Bill Clinton in the dispute with Israel over a new Jewish quarter in disputed east Jerusalem. AFP reports from Washington.

Arafat landed at Andrews Air Force Base just outside Washington late Sunday and was to meet with Clinton yesterday. "Arafat will ask Clinton to personally intervene to pressure Israel to cancel its decision to build," Palestinian local administration minister Saeb Erakat told AFP in Jerusalem on Sunday.

Tunisia, Egypt sign 9 accords: Tunisia and Egypt Sunday signed nine agreements and protocols of cooperation in the fields of energy, transport, communications, housing and trade. Xinhua reports from Tunis.

The documents were signed at the end of the three-day visit by Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal el Ganzouri. The two sides also agreed on examining the prospect of establishing a free trade zone between the two countries and the founding of a joint bank.

Netanyahu to visit Russia: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will travel to Russia next week for a two-day official visit, officials said Sunday, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Netanyahu is to arrive in Moscow on March 10 for talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and other senior officials, along with meeting representatives of the Jewish community. He will then travel to St Petersburg before returning to Tel Aviv.

Mandela arrives in Brunei: South African President Nelson Mandela on Monday arrived on his second visit to the oil-rich sultanate of Brunei since his release from apartheid jails in 1990. AP reports from Bandar Seri Begawan.

Mandela, who is on a 10-day, 4-nation Asian tour, came from the Philippines and was received at the airport by Foreign Minister Mohammed Bolkiah, the brother of Brunei's Sultan Hassan Bolkiah. Later, after inspecting a guard of honour, Mandela went into a private meeting with the sultan.

Ex-Miss USA sues Brunei's Sultan: A former Miss USA has sued the Sultan of Brunei, claiming she accepted a deal to do promotional work in the oil-rich kingdom but was instead held a virtual prisoner and expected to engage in sexual activities, according to the New York Post, AP reports from New York.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Los Angeles by Sharon Marketic, who was Miss California '92 and Miss USA '93-'94.

DPRK man defects to ROK: A man claiming to be a North Korean sought asylum in South Korea on Sunday after arriving on a scheduled flight carrying a Chinese passport, South Korean state media reported yesterday, Reuters says from Seoul.

The passport identified the man as 28-year-old Lee Myung Ho, but he told authorities his real name was Kang Chul-Ho and that he had fled to China from North Korea in October 1992, the Korea Broadcasting System said.

Jet crash claims 3 in Malaysia: A light plane being used to film a cycle race crashed on the Malaysian island of Langkawi, killing all three people on board, Reuters reports from Kuala Lumpur.

The Cessna 172 crashed into a mangrove swamp shortly after Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had flagged off racers for the last leg of the Tour de Langkawi National Cycle Championship, the national Bernama news agency reported late on Sunday.

Ex-Seoul mayor to become new PM: President Kim Young-Sam will name a former Seoul mayor as South Korea's new prime minister in a major shakeup aimed at restoring his government's credibility, sources said Monday, AP reports from Seoul.

The reorganization of Kim's senior staff, Cabinet and ruling party leadership follows a bribery scandal that rocked his administration and sent his personal popularity plunging in a presidential election year he was expected to dominate by handpicking his successor.

LTTE may attack public meetings, warns police

COLOMBO, Mar 3: Sri Lankan police have warned political parties, candidate and their supporters of possible Tamil rebel attacks at election rallies, according to police sources today, reports Xinhua.

The sources said that the rebels could attempt to create trouble by attacking public meetings of politicians contesting the local government elections which will be held on March 21.

The police have warned candidates to alert their supporters to be on the lookout for suspected persons in their midst while their public meeting are on.

Security in the capital Colombo has also been intensified following information about possible threats to politicians by the rebels, the sources said.

Police believe that the rebels will use this opportunity to gather intelligence about security forces movements, procedures of the elections department and to establish new safe houses in the city.

According to security intelligence, the rebels have sent one of their best men to plan an attack on Colombo.



Brandishing a portrait of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, joyful Baghdad women ululate on Sunday to express happiness following an announcement by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan that food will start arriving in Iraq. A UN resolution allows Baghdad a two billion dollars worth of oil exports every six months to import food and medical supplies to the country, hit by an embargo since 1991. — AFP/UNB photo

Tornado death toll rises to 34 in US Clinton declares Arkansas disaster area

WASHINGTON, Mar 3: President Clinton has declared parts of Arkansas as major disaster area and ordered federal aid to supplement state and local recovery efforts in areas struck by severe storms and tornadoes, reports AP.

The president also said he would travel to his home state on Tuesday to view the damage, and issued a new statement of sympathy.

"Hillary and I are deeply saddened by this tragic loss of life and property," he said Sunday. "The storm hit places and people we know well and our hearts and prayers are with everyone who lost loved ones, homes and businesses."

The storms killed at least 24 people in Arkansas, ripping through Little Rock, Arkadelphia and smaller towns around.

It seemed like "a year's worth of tornadoes," Gov. Mike Huckabee said Sunday.

There was a possibility the death toll could climb as rescue workers worked in Sunday's driving rain to pull away the wreckage, authorities said.

More than 200 people were injured and hundreds of homes, businesses and other structures were destroyed or damaged along a 260-mile (420 km) path. At least 10,000 electricity customers had no power.

The same huge system of thunderstorms also killed up to seven people in Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio on Saturday. Flooding forced scores of people from their homes in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio.

Huckabee said he would seek a federal disaster declaration covering at least eight Arkansas counties.

AFP adds: At least 34 people were reported dead and more than 200 injured as tornadoes and storms swept through the southern and central United States, officials said.

Arkansas was the hardest hit, with 24 dead after tornadoes tore through Arkadelphia and the area around Little Rock, the state capital emergency services spokesman Ray Brigler said.

Bomb explodes outside Pak newspaper office

KARACHI, Mar 3: A crude bomb exploded outside a newspaper office in southern Karachi shortly before dawn on Monday, reports AP.

There were no injuries and the damage was slight, according to the authorities.

No one has claimed responsibility for the explosion in the corridor outside the offices of the Qami Akbar (People's Newspaper) office. The Urdu-language newspaper is a popular tabloid publication.

The damage to the three-story building was restricted to the corridor where the bomb was placed, said police.

Another strong quake shakes Ardebil

TEHRAN, Mar 3: Another strong earthquake shook Iran's Ardebil province late Sunday cutting off power supplies to the area where 554 people were killed and 2,400 injured in a quake three days ago, Iranian radio reported today, says AFP.

The radio said the new quake had worsened the damage caused by the first one on Friday in which whole villages were destroyed and 35,000 people were made homeless in the northwestern province.

The latest quake, which measured 5.2 degrees on the Richter scale where the theoretical maximum is nine, was felt strongly in Ardebil and towns in the vicinity, the radio said. It occurred at 10:00 p.m. (1840 GMT), according to the radio which did not say if there were new casualties.

On Sunday afternoon, two aftershocks rattled Ardebil triggering panic among the population.

Aliens advised to leave, state of emergency declared Albanian parliament asks rebels to surrender arms

TIRANA, Mar 3: Albania's Parliament warned armed insurgents in the south of the country today that they would be shot without warning unless they surrendered their weapons by 2 PM (1300 GMT), reports Reuters.

The state-run news agency ATA said the directive was among seven measures introduced by Parliament to end the insurrection. Others included strict controls on the media and an extension to military service.

Meanwhile, Albania has advised foreigners in the violence-torn south of the country to leave, the state-run news agency ATA reported today.

It said, the advice had been issued by the Interior Ministry and covered the towns of Vlora, Gjirokaster, Sarande and Fier.

The ministry stressed that this is necessary for reasons of security," ATA said. It gave no figure for the number of foreigners in the affected area.

Parliament earlier declared an immediate state of emergency in Albania.

Subsequent measures adopted by Parliament included a directive that "armed rebels" would be shot without warning if they did not surrender their weapons by 2 pm (1300 GMT), ATA reported.

AP adds: More violence and shooting broke out, Parliament declared a state of emergency and the prime minister said even a new government could not save Europe's poorest country from its descent into chaos. President Sali Berisha said Sunday he would "employ all measures under the law, even the most difficult ones, against this rebellion." He gave no further details in his televised speech. The state of emergency allows the army to be deployed to quell public unrest and protect public buildings, roads.

Albania has been convulsed by weeks of riots and protests growing out of public rage over the collapse last month of popular, high-risk investment schemes in which nearly every Albanian lost money.

After Berisha's address, protest leaders in Vlora — who had threatened a march to the capital Monday if the president does not form a new government made up of non-partisan technocrats — told protesters to stay home.

No room for 007

BANOR, Cambodia, has refused to allow the next James Bond movie to be filmed either on the spectacular beaches of Halong Bay or in Ho Chi Minh City, reports AFP.

"Hanoi" refused permission for the shooting for "many complicated reasons," an official from the Culture and Information Ministry said on Monday.

The crew, including British actor Pierce Brosnan who stars as the suave spy 007, were to spend three months filming in Halong Bay and the city formerly called Saigon for a five-minute sequence for the new film, which so far has not been named, press reports said.

Quiz for prisoners

HANOI: They may have failed the first time round and landed behind bars, but inmates in Vietnam got a second chance to prove their knowledge of right from wrong, reports AP.

Prison inmates across the country were quizzed by the Ministry of Justice recently on legal rights and laws as part of a national campaign to raise awareness of Vietnam's legal system, official media reported Monday.

The Communist Party newspaper, The People, didn't say how the inmates did on the quiz, but said 93 per cent of Vietnam's prisoners took part in the test.

The quiz was part of a larger programme in which prisoners were taught about different social issues, ranging from national goals to family planning.

The Ministry of Justice said some 2,000 illiterate inmates were also taught basic reading in prisons in 1996.

As for the quiz participants? Top scores still won't earn them a get of jail free card, The People said.

Lioness recaptured

SYDNEY: Police and animal trainers recaptured a 250-kilogram (550-pound) lioness on Monday after it escaped from a travelling circus and spent a night hiding in scrubland near houses, reports AP.

A police spokesman said 7-year-old Zulu went missing at around sundown on Sunday at Broken Hill, 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) west of Sydney.

Her trainers found her sheltering beneath bushes many hours later.

Police tried to coax her out into the open but the animal ran into a backyard of a nearby house.

"All ended well with the lioness being cornered and twice shot with a tranquiliser gun before eventually nodding off," the spokesman said.

Australia slams SLORC's 'brutal war' against Karens

CANBERRA, Mar 3: Australia today condemned the Myanmar military regime's "brutal war" against minority ethnic Karens in Thailand to continue protecting the thousands of refugees who have fled across the border, reports Reuters.

The government condemns the Myanmar government's brutal war against the Karen people living near the border with Thailand," Foreign Minister Alexander Downer told Parliament.

The latest offensive by Myanmar troops against the Karen National Union rebels, fighting for greater autonomy, forced thousands of Karen civilians to flee into Thailand last month.

Three Karen refugee camps in Thailand were recently attacked, leaving an estimated 10,000 people homeless, Downer said.

Karen through negotiations.

"Our embassy in Yangon has conveyed my call on the Myanmar government to withdraw its forces immediately and seek to resolve its differences with the Karen through negotiation and dialogue," Downer told Parliament.

The latest offensive by Myanmar troops against the Karen National Union rebels, fighting for greater autonomy, forced thousands of Karen civilians to flee into Thailand last month.

Three Karen refugee camps in Thailand were recently attacked, leaving an estimated 10,000 people homeless, Downer said.

Chirac calls for firm stand against illegal immigration

PARIS, Mar 3: President Jacques Chirac said Sunday that a firm stand against illegal immigration is the only way to counter the "forces of hate" represented by the extreme right, reports AP.

Addressing for the first time publicly the current debate over a tightening of immigration laws, Chirac also implicitly criticized the left, saying that a "lax and ambiguous" attitude toward immigration played into the hands of the far right.

Speaking to a gathering of Jewish community representatives, Chirac also condemned recent calls for civil disobedience from intellectuals and others opposed to a controversial immigration bill.

"Let us respect the law" he said. "It is the law of democracy, and of the Republic. Let us not play the game of those who exploit the uncertainties of the future. They are waiting for our weaknesses."

The National Assembly, dominated by the governing conservatives adopted the bill Thursday night, but only after revising its most contentious section — a provision requiring French hosts to inform authorities of the departure of certain foreign guests.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu makes a triumphant gesture toward the 2,000 Likud Party members Sunday after he was called by Justice Minister Sahi Hanegbi (R) to the podium at a party conference in Tel Aviv. Netanyahu warned the Palestinians against announcing the creation of a Palestinian state and also made clear that Israel would build wherever it wanted to in Jerusalem. "Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel for 3,000 years and has never been the capital of a Muslim state," Netanyahu said. — AFP/UNB photo

'Declaration of Palestinian state would place ME peace in danger'

TEL AVIV, Mar 3: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sternly warned Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Sunday against carrying out a threat to unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state, reports AFP.

"If someone wanted to proclaim such a state, he would place the entire peace process in danger. This would be a very serious error," Netanyahu told a meeting here of 2,000 members of his rightwing Likud Party's Central Committee.

"If he wants to do it, we have a response," Netanyahu said.

The prime minister reiterated his strong opposition to a Palestinian state, stressing he planned to "expand the Jewish presence in Judeea-Smaria in the West Bank and Gaza, while assuring a great deal of autonomy for the Palestinians."

Arafat, speaking at an Arab League meeting in Cairo on Saturday, accused Netanyahu of "torpedoing" the Middle East peace process by approving plans last week to build a Jewish neighbourhood in disputed east Jerusalem.

"We are supposed to declare our Palestinian state in five years, but he is making changes and violating the agreements we have reached and ignoring the negotiations on a final status," Arafat said.

"So, if I declare today from the Arab League the creation of a Palestinian state what will be his position? (For me) it will be one for one," he told the Arab League session.

Israeli President Ezer Weizman also warned Arafat earlier Sunday against declaring a state.

AP adds: With tensions already high over Israeli building in east Jerusalem, Israel is hinting it will miss a deadline for a West Bank troops withdrawal.

In Hebron, about 15 Jewish settlers scuffled Sunday night with a Palestinian policeman near an ancient Jewish cemetery where gravestones were found smashed earlier in the day. No one was injured, and both Israel and the Palestinians sent extra troops to the site, just inside the Israeli-controlled part of Hebron.

A senior aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu conceded Sunday there might be logistical delays in completing the planned Israeli troops pull-back from the West Bank. But

Israel radio said Sunday that opposition from inside the ruling coalition was delaying the withdrawal.

Israel has committed to three troop withdrawals from rural areas of the West Bank, the first of which was supposed to be completed by Friday. But it may take time for the army to implement the withdrawal, said David Bar-Ilan, a senior aide to Netanyahu.

"It's a military matter," he told The Associated Press.

"Our desire is not to delay the matter," Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh told Israel Radio. "I can't tell you the exact date."

Meanwhile, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat hoped to build up opposition to an Israeli plan to construct homes for Jews in historically Arab east Jerusalem in talks Monday with President Clinton.

Arafat was scheduled to meet Clinton at the White House at the start of a US trip during which he will also see State Department officials on Monday and key congressional leaders on Tuesday.

With tensions already high over the plan, Israel hinted it would miss a deadline for a

West Bank troop pullout. Israeli soldiers fired on Palestinian workers Sunday at a roadblock and four tombstones were smashed at a Jewish cemetery in Hebron.

The Palestinian legislature has called for a general strike in Palestinian areas of the West Bank on Monday to protest the housing project.

Arafat told a dinner meeting of the Palestinian-American Congress Sunday night that the Israeli housing plan violated the Israeli-Palestinian accords.

"Not one single (Jewish) house should be added," in east Jerusalem. He said that part of the city "was Arab, is Arab, will remain Arab and eventually would become capital of Palestine."

Describing Clinton as a strong supporter of the Middle East peace process, Arafat said he would seek Clinton's help "in trying to stop what has been attempted" by the Israelis.

Arafat also pleaded for help for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, saying many were on the brink of starvation. He also said the area sorely needed roads and other infrastructure projects.