

Iranian military cargo plane crashes: 86 killed

TEHRAN, Iran, Mar 15: An Iranian military cargo plane carrying soldiers and their families has crashed in the mountains of northeastern Iran, killing 86 people, the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said Friday, reports AP.

Thursday's crash left no survivors, the agency quoted an unidentified official as saying. The aircraft was carrying 86 passengers and crew, Iranian radio and television said.

Police, soldiers and Red Crescent workers searched for the wreckage of the aircraft amid heavy snow and freezing temperature in the mountains but were unable to find any trace of the airplane.

The US-made C-130 lost contact with the control tower at Mashhad airport at 6 pm (1430 GMT) Thursday, more than an hour after taking off for Mashhad from Dezful in western Ahavaz province.

The pilot had reported technical difficulties before losing contact with tower, Tehran radio reported.

The plane crashed 24 kilometers (15 miles) from Mashhad, the Iranian news agency reported. Mashhad, 700 kilometers (435 miles) northeast of Tehran, is a city holy to Shi'ite Muslims.

Iran's air force is a mix of Russian, US and Chinese aircraft. Fewer than half the US aircraft are believed fit to fly.

Jakarta won't allow int'l observers to investigate May 29 polls

JAKARTA, Mar 15: The Indonesian government said foreign observers invited to monitor the country's May 29 general elections would not be allowed to investigate or pass judgment, the Jakarta Post newspaper reported today, reports Reuter.

"We are letting foreigners come to see how the election proceeds. But it is our right to judge the election," Soetjo, Director-General of Socio-Political Affairs at the Interior Ministry, was quoted as saying on Friday.

We did not do anything but watch when we were invited by governments of neighbouring countries to observe their elections," he added.

Interior Minister Yogie Memet said last week that Indonesia would invite neighbouring and other countries to monitor the election to be contested by the ruling Golkar Party and the two minorities parties, the Indonesian Demo-

BRIEFLY

King Hussein to visit Israel:

King Hussein plans to visit Israel this weekend to offer his condolences to the families of seven Israeli schoolgirls shot dead by a Jordanian soldier, AP reports from Amman.

The monarch on Friday postponed a visit Tuesday to the United States to supervise an investigation into the shooting. Hussein's office said Friday the king and President Clinton agreed to meet soon, but set no date. An Israeli Embassy source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said no day has been set yet for the Israel visit because technical arrangements are under discussion. He did not elaborate.

Hillary postpones Africa tour by 1 day:

Hillary Rodham Clinton decided on Friday to postpone her departure for a six-nation Africa tour by one day until Sunday because of President Bill Clinton's knee surgery, her office said. Reuter reports from Washington.

A spokesman for the first lady, Neel Lattimore, said Mrs. Clinton would depart on Sunday morning instead of Saturday morning but would still carry out a full schedule on the two-week trip.

Pak govt to send 38 Indian kids back:

The Pakistani government announced yesterday it would repatriate 38 Indian children detained in Islamabad in a goodwill gesture aimed at improving the atmosphere for the forthcoming bilateral talks, AFP reports from Islamabad.

The minors were apprehended on Indian boats which "trespassed" into Pakistani territorial waters recently.

The government has decided to make the "unilateral gesture on humanitarian considerations" to create a "propitious climate" for the forthcoming talks between Pakistani and Indian foreign secretaries, the announcement said.

US navy deserter held in Japan:

A US Navy deserter has been arrested for allegedly robbing a bank customer of 16,000 yen (130 dollars) at the point of a toy at an automated-telling machine in Tokyo, police said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

Enoch Singleton, 20, who was discharged from the US Navy after his desertion, had been sought by Tokyo police since the robbery on February 24.

Russian border troops kill 7 gunmen:

Russian border troops shot and killed seven gunmen as they tried to cross into this former Soviet republic from Afghanistan, the Interfax news agency reported Friday, citing the border troops' press service, AP reports from Dushanbe.

The incident began Thursday morning when a convoy of Russian troops, who patrol Tajikistan's southern border with Afghanistan, arrived to halt a group of 100 gold prospectors who were crossing illegally into Tajikistan across the Pyanj River, the press service said.

UNSC agrees to keep observers in Tajikistan till June 15

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 15: The UN Security Council agreed unanimously Friday to keep its military observers in Tajikistan until June 15 on condition the parties abide by an agreement signed this month to end the five-year conflict, reports AP.

The Tajikistan government and the rebels signed a pact in Moscow on March 8 which could be the first stage of a peace agreement. The conflict began with a 1992-93 civil war in which hard-liners drove out their opponents, who regrouped in the rugged mountains and across the border in Afghanistan.

Israel moves closer to showdown with Palestinians

JERUSALEM, Mar 15: Israel moved a step closer to a showdown with the Palestinians on Friday, saying it will begin building a new Jewish neighbourhood in east Jerusalem next week, reports AP.

Israel's 18 Cabinet ministers voted unanimously to go ahead with the project, despite a warning from the chief of military intelligence that Palestinian protests would erupt the moment construction begins.

The defence minister put troops on alert to prevent violence, according to television reports.

The United Nations' General Assembly warned Israel on Thursday against building the 6,500-apartment project. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was "more de-

AI urges Albanians to respect human rights

European mediator calls for int'l force to halt anarchy in Albania

Under a US embargo that dates back to Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, the Iranians cannot buy US aircraft or airplanes containing US made components.

The C-130 is common throughout the world and spare parts are generally available on the open market.

Ex-DPRK PM passes away

SEOUL, South Korea, Mar 15: Former North Korean Premier Kang Song San, who was replaced last month and believed ill, has died, South Korean news reports said Saturday, reports AP.

South Korea's KBS television, quoting anonymous sources in Tokyo, said Kang had died and that former deputy premier and economic technocrat Kim Tai Hyon has been agreed upon as his replacement.

Last month, North Korea disclosed that it had named its than deputy premier Hong Song Nam as acting premier, replacing Kang.

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