

International

China to station up to 6,000 troops July 1 HK people won't agitate for more democracy

SINGAPORE, June 11: Hong Kong's people will not agitate for more democracy after Britain hands the territory over to China on July 1, Singapore's elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew has predicted, reports Reuters. While there might be some who thought they could "cock a snook" or show contempt for China, their number would be few, the pro-government Straits Times newspaper on Wednesday quoted Lee as telling reporters in London. China was too powerful to be influenced by Hong Kong calls for democracy, he said. "If you don't believe that the Hong Kong people understand that, then you don't understand Hong Kong," Lee said. Lee said observers should wait until expected partial elections were held next year before discussing prospects for democracy in Hong Kong, a British colony for more than 150 years. "Let's not waste time talking about democracy. There never

Month-long fighting claims over 270 lives in Lanka

COLOMBO, June 11: Rebels claimed victory Wednesday after sneaking behind government lines to clash with troops, but the government said it had reestablished a supply line severed by the separatists. The death toll in the fighting was reported at more than 270, reports AP. "Thandikulam remains under LTTE control," the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam said in a statement faxed to news agencies from their London headquarters. But government officials said troops were clearing the region after reestablishing their supply line. "Over a thousand terrorists had taken part in the abortive attack... troops defending their positions held on and fought back repulsing terrorist attempts causing very heavy casualties," said defense ministry spokesman Maj. INK Dewage. Military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a military ammunition store and a bridge were destroyed in Tuesday's attack on the military base at Thandikulam. The ammunition store served troops involved in a month-long offensive on rebel positions in the north. The fighting took place about 15 kilometres (10 miles) south of the government's frontline, 215 kilometres (135 miles) north of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital. Independent accounts are not available because the government has barred journalists from visiting the area, but Tuesday's daring rebel attack sparked the most serious fighting reported since the military began its offensive. Military analysts said it was a temporary setback for the government. The rebels, who want a homeland for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, said "hundreds of Sri Lankan soldiers" and 50 of their own fighters were killed. But Dewage, in his defense ministry statement, said only 58 bodies of security force personnel killed in the fighting had been recovered. Dewage added 12 officers and 86 soldiers were injured, but military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity said over 200 injured soldiers were admitted to hospitals. Dewage said at least 210 rebels were killed and more than 300 wounded. He quoted technical sources, an indication the figures were gleaned from eavesdropping on rebel field radio transmission. Military officials said four civilians, including a 7-year-old girl, also died and at least 35 civilians were injured. The rebels accused the military of shelling civilian areas, a charge the army has denied. Civilians have been repeatedly caught up in a war fought in and around Sri Lanka's towns and villages. Several people were injured in election violence in May. Our coalition partner unleashed an orgy of violence and hoodlumism... Lohani said, adding that his party workers were jailed, beaten and not allowed to participate in free and fair elections. The Nepali Congress had also accused the Communists of election rigging, and has refused to sit on any of the local councils.

Nepal's FM quits

KATMANDU, June 11: Nepal's foreign minister quit Wednesday, accusing the main partner in the country's governing coalition of using violence and fraud to steal local elections last month, reports AP. Prakash Chandra Lohani's angry resignation could bring down Nepal's three-party coalition government after only three months. Prime Minister Lohani Bahadur Chand refused to comment, Lohani, secretary-general of Chand's National Democratic Party, is influential enough to lead a revolt against the Communist Party of Nepal. The Communists, who form the largest bloc in parliament, gave the prime minister's post to Chand to lure him into a coalition government in March, after Chand's party and two smaller groups toppled a centrist Nepali Congress government. On Wednesday, Lohani accused Manmohan Adhikari, the Communist Party leader and deputy prime minister, of stacking election commissions with Communists before announcing that polling for local councils would be held May 17 and May 26. Several people were injured in election violence in May. Our coalition partner unleashed an orgy of violence and hoodlumism... Lohani said, adding that his party workers were jailed, beaten and not allowed to participate in free and fair elections. The Nepali Congress had also accused the Communists of election rigging, and has refused to sit on any of the local councils.

Gujral denies reports of missile deployment

PUNE, India, June 11: Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral on Wednesday dismissed reports of a missile deployment that had alarmed longtime enemy Pakistan, reports AP. "We have successfully acquired missile technology. But we have not deployed the missile," Gujral told reporters at a military base near Pune, about 1,100 kilometres (680 miles) southwest of New Delhi. Gujral was presiding over the induction of eight Russian-made Sukhoi-30 fighter planes into the Indian air force. India has purchased a total of 40 Sukhois for 1.5 million dollars; the remaining 32 are to be delivered over the next five years. The Washington Post, quoting US intelligence sources, reported last week that India had received a few Prithvi missiles from a weapons factory at Hyderabad some 1,500 kilometres (about 1,000 miles) north to a prospective launch site near the city of Jullundur in Punjab state in northwest India. Such a move would put the missiles within range of Islamabad, the Pakistani capital. India denied the report and the US State Department said it could not confirm it. In a letter to US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright last Friday, Pakistan's foreign ministry said the reported deployment could trigger a ballistic missile race in South Asia. India and Pakistan have fought three wars since the Indian subcontinent gained independence from Britain 50 years ago. The United States repeatedly has criticised both countries for their weapons programmes. The controversy comes just weeks after Pakistan and India renewed high-level talks aimed at improving their tense relationship.

BRIFFLY

Gun battle breaks out in Freetown: Heavy mortar fire and shooting broke out in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown late on Tuesday, causing panic in the city where many fear a Nigerian attack to restore ousted president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, witnesses said. Reuters reports from Freetown. A spokesman for the May 25 coupmakers said the incident, which lasted 10 minutes, followed a quarrel between Sierra Leonean and Nigerian soldiers at the island airport of Lungi off the capital.

Blasts kill 7 in China: Explosions at two illegal cigarette lighter factories have killed seven people and seriously injured six others, a Chinese newspaper reported, AP reports from Beijing. Five female migrant workers were killed in an explosion last Friday in Xinxiang City in central Henan province, and the factory boss was detained, said Tuesday's edition of the Yangcheng Evening News, seen in Beijing Wednesday. It said the factory lacked safety measures and was never certified to operate. The other explosion occurred Monday in a three-room factory in Xuwen County, Guangdong province in southern China. Two people died and six were seriously injured, the newspaper said.

China, Ukraine want military deal: Ukraine and China want to bolster bilateral military cooperation, Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma said as he met Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian in Kiev Tuesday, Interfax news agency reported, AFP says from Kiev. "Our military cooperation is a big success" and has great potential, Kuchma said, but his government refused to go into details on arms supplies to China. Before the collapse of the Soviet union in 1991, Ukraine produced some 30 per cent of the monolith's arms, notably missiles, tanks, fighter planes and warships.

Typhoon Nestor passes Spanish island: Typhoon Nestor passed the Northern Mariana Islands without causing major damage Wednesday, but a typhoon warning remained in effect for the most northern islands of Alamagan, Agrihan and Pagan, AP reports from Spain. Wednesday morning, the typhoon was 270 nautical miles northeast of Saipan and 410 nautical miles northeast of Guam, said Civil Defense officials. It was as close as 65 nautical miles from Agrihan, and hitting various uninhabited islands, officials said.

Prisoner gunned down in India: Police shot dead a prisoner when a group of 100 convicts tried to escape from a jail in northeastern India by hijacking a water tanker, the United News of India (UNI) reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi. Thirty-seven other prisoners were injured in the firing following the break-out bid at the district jail in the town of Diphu in Assam on Tuesday, the news agency said.

Heavy rains claim 1 in Cuba: A seven-year-old girl was killed Tuesday after she was swept away by flooding brought on by heavy rains that have damaged thousands of homes across Cuba, civil defense officials said, AFP reports from Havana. Torrential rains in Matanzas province, 100 kilometres (62 miles) east here, caused the waters to rise in several streams and rivers, including one in which children — seven-year-old Eliana Viera among them — were swimming. The rains forced the evacuation of 1,300 people and destroyed or damaged 139 homes in Havana province alone, the official AIN press agency reported, citing defense authorities.

German jet crashes in New Mexico: A German Air Force Tornado fighter jet crashed on a training flight at White Sands missile range in New Mexico on Tuesday but both crewmen ejected safely, the defense department said, Reuters reports from Washington. The Tornado was among jets assigned to the German Air Force tactical training centre at Holloman air force base in New Mexico. The Pentagon said that the two crew "successfully ejected" and were taken to the base hospital for evaluation. The cause of the crash was not immediately known.

2m forged USD seized in UK: Armed police seized two million forged US dollar notes and arrested six men Tuesday during a hotel raid in this northwestern English city, police said, AFP reports from Chester. The operation followed investigations by the north west regional crime squad, the US Embassy and the National Criminal Intelligence Service. Police said it followed the seizure of one million forged notes in the US city of Minneapolis.

1 beaten to death in India: A 65-year-old watchman has been beaten to death by a mob after he allegedly raped a four-year-old girl in the Indian capital, The Times of India reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi. Karan Singh reportedly seized the sleeping girl from near her house late Monday, took her to a desolate spot and raped her, The Times quoted the police as saying. When the girl accused Karan Singh of attacking her, an enraged crowd set upon him. He was taken to a police station where he collapsed and died.



US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (R) testifies to the Senate Finance Committee as Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky (L) looks on during hearings on Capitol Hill Tuesday. Albright and Barshefsky were on Capitol Hill seeking renewal of normal trade relations with China. — AFP/UNB photo

Killing of Arab land dealers US threatens to block aid to Palestinian Authority

WASHINGTON, June 11: US legislators on Tuesday angrily condemned the killing of Arabs who sold land to Israelis, and House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich said those responsible were acting like Nazis, reports Reuters. Gingrich, who led a series of Republicans and Democrats in condemning the action, also said he would block aid to the Palestinian authority if its leaders failed to denounce the killings. "The Palestinians must be on notice that these senseless acts must stop. The vigilant murder of realtors by Palestinian security officials is an egregious violation of human rights and of international norms," Gingrich said in an emotional floor speech. The killing must be renounced by the Palestinian leadership and end immediately. If not, I for one will actively oppose the continuation of any aid to the Palestinian authority," he said. The killings began after Palestinian Justice Minister Freih Abu Medeen was quoted on May 4 as saying Palestinians who sold land to Jews faced execution. Gingrich was speaking on a "Sense of Congress" amendment, which expresses the house's opinion but does not make law. It condemned the killings and called on the Palestinian Authority, led by Yasser Arafat, to condemn them. The amendment, to a bill funding State Department operations, was passed on a voice vote. The United States has pledged 500 million dollar in aid to the Palestinians over five years, of which 220 million has already been disbursed. The State Department deplored the killing of the land dealers and said it was outrageous for the death penalty to be imposed for such an act. But it has said Washington planned to continue giving the pledged aid. Gingrich cited Israeli defence officials who alleged Palestinian security officials killed three land dealers and marked 16 more for death. "This is the kind of action we identify with Nazis. This is the kind of racist activity that this planet holds to be reprehensible



Palestinian protesters make the V-sign as they symbolise the Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, during a demonstration held in front of the offices of the International Red Cross in Gaza City Monday. Some 200 protesters demanded the released of around 3,000 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. — AFP/UNB photo

US proposes sale of Stinger missiles to ROK WASHINGTON, June 11: The US Defence Department announced Tuesday the first planned sale to South Korea of Stinger air defence missiles, reports AP. The 307 million dollars deal will enable the Korean Army to "develop a defence capability with an ability to protect itself from unwarranted aggression," the Pentagon said in an announcement that made no direct mention of North Korea. The deal is for 1,065 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, plus spare parts and related materials. "It comes at a delicate time in relations between North and South Korea, whose large armies stand face-to-face across the Demilitarized Zone at the 38th Parallel. The United States is the largest military supplier to South Korea. It recently has discouraged South Korea from buying Russian-made air defence missiles. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns defended the proposed sale.

Qatar against US strategy of dual containment with Iran, Iraq WASHINGTON, June 11: The Emir of Qatar, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, said he was committed to good relations with Washington, but could not endorse the US strategy of "dual containment" of Iran and Iraq, The Washington Post said today. Hamad, who also serves as Qatar's defence minister, is due to meet President Bill Clinton and Defence Secretary William Cohen in separate meetings on Wednesday. In an interview with The Post, Hamad said the United States should work to develop better ties with Iran after the election last month of moderate leader Mohammad Khatami. "With Iran, you have no more excuses," he was quoted as saying. Hamad stopped short of saying sanctions against Iraq should be lifted, but said the "Iraqi people have suffered enough" because of the embargo imposed by the UN Security Council after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. Hamad told the paper the main purpose of his trip was to promote a November regional economic summit conference in Qatar's capital of Doha, the fourth of such conferences promoting Arab-Israeli ties.

British Holocaust Educational Trust chairman and former Labour MP Greville Janner QC, with the Nazi gold bars which could contain gold stolen from the bodies of Jewish Holocaust victims, at the Bank of England Tuesday, before they were displayed publicly for the first time. — AFP/UNB photo

10 killed in 2 days Ethnic violence continues in Karachi KARACHI, June 11: The mutilated body of a 25-year-old was the latest victim Wednesday of a bitter feud between rival factions of a militant ethnic group, reports AP. In the past two days 10 people have been killed in gunbattles that have terrorised residents in the eastern and central neighbourhoods of this southern port city. The combatants are members of the Mohajir Qami Movement, representing Indian Muslims who came to Pakistan when the Asian subcontinent gained its independence 50 years ago. Several years ago, the MQM fractured into two factions one the breakaway group called the Haqiqi faction and the other — the original group — known now as the Altaf Hussein group. Sikkim, which has a population of just half a million, is nestled between Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. It is located on the foothills of the Himalayas and is a popular tourist attraction. Sikkim officials said rescuers had made little progress in sifting through the mounds of mud and boulders under which a number of bodies were still believed to be buried. PTI said the death toll had touched 60, but some officials maintained only 38 people had died with 50 injured.

Tensions in Congo may spill over into Angola: Annan UNITED NATIONS, June 11: Tensions in the former Zaire and the Republic of Congo threaten to spill over into Angola, where new fighting is being reported, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Tuesday, reports AP. A month after rebels seized power in the former Zaire and changed the country's name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, fighting broke out in neighbouring Republic of Congo between government troops and forces loyal to a former dictator. Clashes broke out last week when President Pascal Lissouba, fearing attempts to disrupt next month's presidential elections, tried to disarm militiamen loyal to Gen. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the former military leader. Now, UN officials are reporting clashes in northern Angola that threaten to unravel the peace agreement between the government and former UNITA rebels. "I have been concerned about a sort of domino effect," Annan said. "Once Congo appears to have been settled, we are now seeing difficulties in the Republic of Congo, we are worried it could spread to central Africa, and now of course, also, there are reports of possible fighting in northern Angola." Earlier Tuesday, UN spokes-

man Fred Eckhard said the commander of the 6,000-strong UN force in Angola had confirmed "there was heavy fighting" in the Lunda Norte region. He said the commander Maj. Gen. Philip Valerio Sibanda, had "received some witness accounts of casualties."

Thai PM opens Asia-Africa Forum BANGKOK, June 11: Thai premier Chaowalit Yongchaiyudh opened a forum here attended by representatives from around 70 countries Tuesday aimed at expanding development cooperation between Asian and African countries, reports AFP. Chaowalit told delegates that despite "increasing optimism about the future of Africa" the international community "must redouble its efforts... to sustain positive trends into the second half of the 1990s and beyond." He also called on Group of Seven (G7) nations, who are due to hold a summit in Colorado later this month, to "pursue practical and concrete programmes of action" to support African countries.

US army refines defences against chemical weapons FORT McCLELLAN, Alabama, June 11: The US Army Chemical Corps is at the heart of the evolving nature of chemical combat in the post-Cold War era, reports AP. Officers are refining the Army's approach to chemical defence — an approach which assumes that US soldiers abroad and citizens at home will be threatened by chemical arms despite a new treaty banning them. The Army's emphasis is on more accurate detection devices, better communication of chemical warnings and alerts, and better training with the Air Force, Marines and Navy in conducting combat in and around chemical hazard areas. The military is also putting more emphasis on responding to peacetime threats — mainly small-scale attacks on civilians with chemical or biological agents. The Chemical School at Fort

McClellan is the focal point of the Army's training in chemical defence. It includes what the Army calls "the world's only known live-agent facility" — a series of sealed rooms where troops in protective gear encounter nerve agents in amounts just below what is officially labeled "immediately dangerous to life and health." The United States and more than 160 other countries have sworn the use of nerve gases and other chemical warfare agents, but the Army is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into new technologies for defending against them. "The threat is real," says Col. Daniel Oyesugi, and it now comes more from shadowy terrorists who blur the cross-national boundaries than from traditional enemies who could simply be targeted and deterred from using them in the first place. Oyesugi is director of combat development at the Chemical

School. Deterring chemical attacks by threatening to respond in kind is no longer an option. The United States is destroying all its chemical weapons. From the European battlefields of World War I, where troops suffered gas attacks by the Germans, to the desert sands of Kuwait, where Iraqi forces ignited oil well fires during the Gulf War, the nature and scope of chemical warfare has changed. Today's military leaders worry that nations such as North Korea or Iran will use ballistic or cruise missiles to deliver chemical or biological strikes. The need for better chemical defences was exposed in the 1991 Gulf War. US forces lacked the means to determine with full confidence whether they had encountered Iraqi chemical munitions on the Kuwaiti battlefield. In at least one case

American soldiers may have been unknowingly exposed to a cloud of nerve gas after they demolished an Iraqi ammunition depot at the war's end. The dragon featured on the insignia of the Chemical Corps is an apt image: the use of chemical agents in war is widely considered inhumane; just the thought of the agonizing wounds and death they cause make them a weapon of terror. The fear factor is what convinces the Army that chemical training must be realistic. Being told that your mask and other gear will block the invisible vapors of deadly toxins does not instill confidence like having worn it in the presence of real agents. Small amounts of chemicals are produced here for use in the training, and so Fort McClellan itself is subject to inspection under the Chemical Weapons Convention that was ratified by the Senate and took effect April

29. The 17-acre (7-hectare) live-agent facility was built 10 years ago for 17 million dollars. It is so contaminated with VX and sarin nerve agents that once abandoned, the building would have to be taken apart and incinerated, officials said. The Army is criticised by some for failing to make training realistic enough and for not practicing more with the forces of likely US allies in a future conflict. In an August report, Robert G. Joseph of the National Defence University wrote that chemical defence training was "an area of particular weakness."

In a report to Congress in March, the Pentagon acknowledged that "relatively few" realistic representations of the effects of chemical contamination have been incorporated into military war games. It vowed to assign "consistent and higher priority" to chemical defence.

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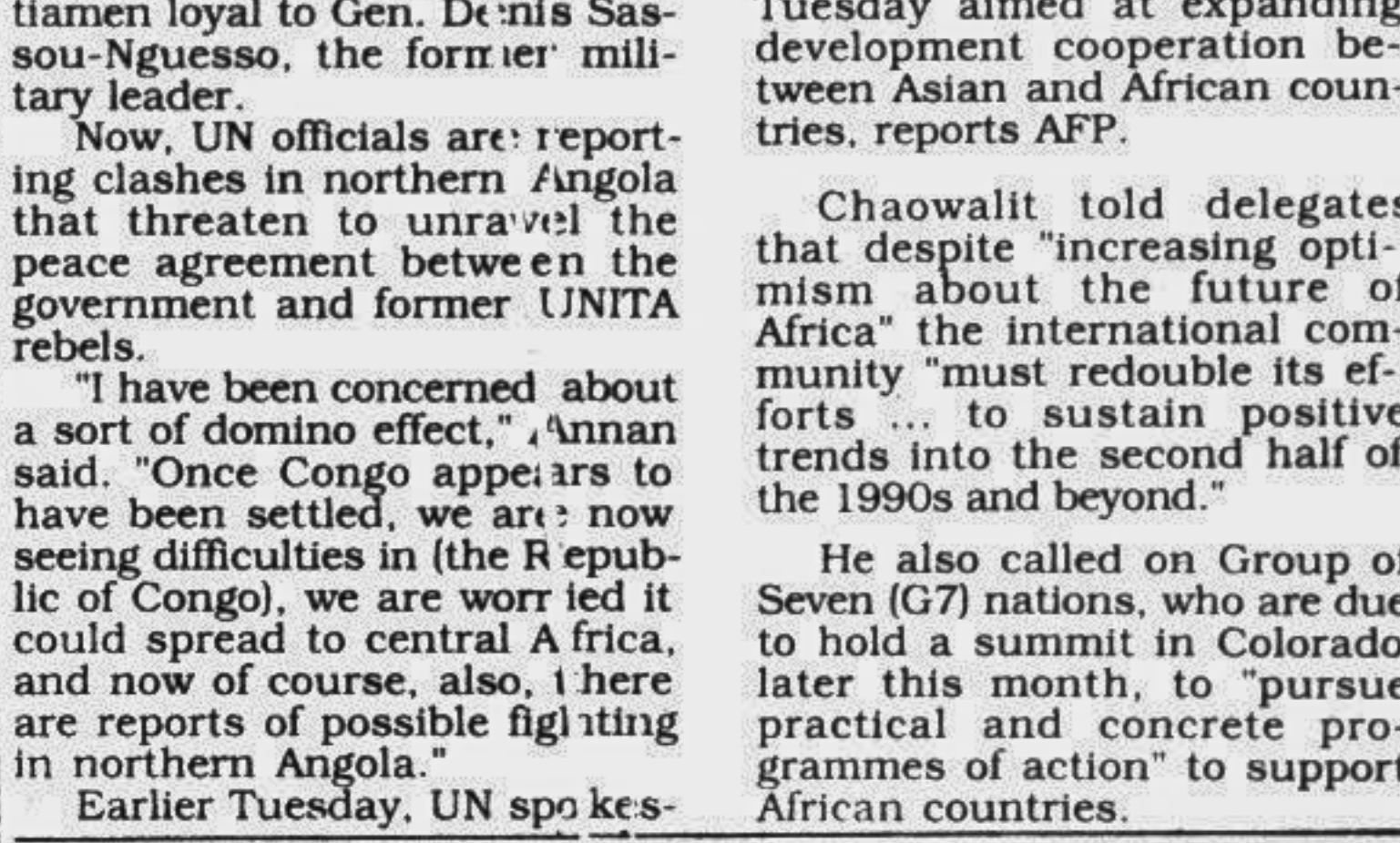
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Qatar against US strategy of dual containment with Iran, Iraq

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