

Tribal feud leaves 15 killed in Sindh

KARACHI, July 1: Retribution killings, tribal style, left 15 people dead in Pakistan's southern Sindh province, the authorities said on Tuesday, reports AP.

A longstanding tribal feud erupted into a fierce rocket and machine gun exchange on Monday in the remote Shikarpur district, 400 kilometers (240 miles) north of the southern port city of Karachi, they said.

The feud between the Jagirani and Jatoti tribes is an old one, although the authorities are unclear what prompted the latest round of killings.

They suspected it might have been over a land dispute. Police reportedly arrested 20 people involved in the shootout.

In a separate incident, a family of seven was lined up and shot in Tando Adan, 200 kilometers (120 miles) south-east of Karachi, also in southern Sindh province.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (C) shares centre stage with Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa (centre R) and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen (centre L) during the finale of the official celebration ceremony in Hong Kong Tuesday. Thousands of mainland Chinese dignitaries attended the celebration marking the return of Hong Kong to the Motherland. — AFP/UNB photo

Thousands of PLA troops pour into Hong Kong

HONG KONG, July 1: Thousands of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops poured into Hong Kong at dawn today, taking up positions previously occupied by the former British colonial masters, reports AFP.

The troops, estimated at 4,000, began sweeping across three border crossings at 6:00 am (2200 GMT), exactly six hours after China resumed sovereignty over the territory following 156 years of British rule.

Despite torrential rain and thunderstorms, hundreds of well wishers turned out to greet the PLA troops as they drove into the new territories in a fleet of trucks, buses and armoured personnel carriers.

Many waved colourful flags while others performed lion dances.

At the town of Sheng Shui along, and AFP reporter saw at least 150 trucks and about 20 carriers rolling into the new

Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China.

White-gloved soldiers who had been standing at attention with rifles on open-topped trucks, saluted and waved as hundreds of people cheered and bands played.

At the border crossing of Man Kam To 174 vehicles including 21 carriers were sighted. About 1,300 men were seen carrying rifles and hand guns and a government official said six helicopters were due to fly over.

Also spotted was a large black 'red flag' limousine.

Hong Ziren, the PLA garrison's political commissioner, was greeted by Deputy Security Secretary Carrie Yau and her principal assistant Clement Leung along with Deputy Garrison Commander Major-General Zhou Borong.

The streets were lined with thousands of well wishers who had stayed up all night to greet the incoming troops.



A PLA soldier riding on an Armoured Personnel Carrier salutes while going through Man Kan Po border post from Southern China into Hong Kong Tuesday. — AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Li Peng leaves HK: Chinese Premier Li Peng departed Hong Kong for Beijing yesterday aboard a special flight. China's official Xinhua news agency reported, AFP says from Hong Kong.

Li and President Jiang Zemin on Monday became the first top Chinese leaders to set foot in Hong Kong since Britain took control of the territory in 1842. The two arrived in Hong Kong just ahead of late-night ceremonies to formalise the territory's return to Chinese sovereignty.

Clinton nominates 5 ambassadors: President Clinton nominated five career diplomats to ambassadorships Monday, including Daniel Speckhard to Belarus, AP reports from Boston.

In statements released during a Democratic fund-raising trip, Clinton said Speckhard has served as ambassador-at-large for the New Independent States.

Clinton also nominated: — Curtis Warren Kamman as ambassador to Colombia. — Maura Harty as ambassador of Paraguay. — Anne Marie Stigmund as ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic.

— Wendy Ruth Sherman as counselor of the State Department with the rank of ambassador.

Japanese ADEOS sat missing: A Japanese satellite carrying dollars 229 million worth of NASA instruments suddenly disappeared from orbit and is not responding to emergency commands, officials said Monday, AP reports from Washington.

The satellite, known as Advanced Earth Observing Satellite, or ADEOS, stopped responding to signals at 4:20 pm Monday, Japan time, and an announcement from the Japan space programme said that "there is little possibility of the satellite's recovery." NASA officials said the satellite failed to respond Sunday, US time, suggesting it was in trouble. Later, a signal was detected indicating that it was operating off its emergency batteries. After that, there was silence.

Volcano in Mexico spewing ash: Popocatepetl spewed ash and steam Monday, blanketing downtown Mexico City, 45 miles (70 kilometers) away, with gritty soot, AP reports from Mexico City.

Before the volcanic activity subsided late Monday, the government of the state of Puebla had made preparations to evacuate at least 15 small communities on the slopes of the 17,992-foot-peak (5,484-meter-peak). An official at the Mexico City international airport said aviation authorities were preparing, at a moment's notice, to divert flights to landing facilities further inland. Ash can clog aircraft engines, causing them to stall.

Quake rocks NZ: An earthquake registering a magnitude of 4.7 rocked central New Zealand on Tuesday, the eighth in a swarm to hit the region in the past 12 days, AP reports from Wellington.

The latest quake shook buildings in Wellington shortly before 3 pm (0300 GMT). There were no immediate reports of injury or damage.

The country's Institute of Nuclear and Geological Sciences confirmed Monday that a "swarm" of tremors was shaking the Wellington region. Scientists are debating whether they are "a normal swarm" or signals of something bigger.

Avalanche claims 2 in Peru: An avalanche of snow and ice roared down a mountain in the Peruvian Andes, burying a mountaineering camp and killing a French climber and his Peruvian guide, an official said Monday, AP reports from Lima.

Etienne Girard, 30, and his Peruvian guide, Cesar Hinostroza, 28, were killed as they prepared to climb the final stretch of the 22,334-foot (6,807-metre) Mount Huascarán, Peru's highest peak, on Friday afternoon, said Selio Villon, spokesman for the Peruvian Association of Mountain Guides. Their camp was erased by tons of ice and snow, burying them in 25-to-35 feet (7.5-10.5 metres) of ice, Villon said.

HK handover won't ruffle Sino-Japan ties: Japan's prime minister said Tuesday that the handover of Hong Kong to China will not ruffle Tokyo's relations with Beijing, a news report said, AP reports from Tokyo.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's comments, reported by Kyodo News agency, backed up Japan's policy of not letting concerns about China's internal affairs get in the way of building ties.

2 hostages rescued in Spain: The longest-held hostage of the Basque separatist group ETA was rescued by police Tuesday, hours after a second captive had been released, state police reported, AP reports from Bilbao, Spain.

Prison official Jose Ortega Lara had been held by the group for more than a year. Businessman Cosme Delclaux had been freed by ETA in the countryside 35 miles (60 kilometres) from the Basque city of Bilbao before dawn Tuesday, the news agency EFE reported.

PNG PM loses his parliamentary seat in polls

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea, July 1: Papua New Guinea's prime minister lost a tight election race for his parliamentary seat on Tuesday, ending his bid to use foreign mercenaries to quell a nine-year rebellion, reports AP.

Sir Julius Chan lost his parliamentary seat in New Ireland province by 110 votes to former university lecturer Ephraim Apelis after ballot counting ended shortly after midnight.

Apelis, of former prime minister Sir Michael Somare's cross-party National Alliance coalition, received 7,969 votes to Chan's 7,859, according to final results announced Tuesday.

A record 2.6 million people registered to vote — out of an estimated 3.4 million eligible — in this South Pacific country of 4.3 million just north of Australia.

Chan's defeat appeared to reflect voter resentment over a 36 million-dollar plan to hire mercenaries to put down a nine-year secessionist rebellion on the island of Bougainville.

Arafat agrees to renew security cooperation with Israel

JERUSALEM, July 1: In a step toward easing a three-month crisis, Yasser Arafat agreed to boost security cooperation with Israel during a secret meeting with a top Israeli military official, media reports said Monday, reports AP.

Israeli Radio said the Palestinian leader met two days ago in his Gaza office with Brig. Gen. Herzl Getz, the Israeli in charge of cooperation with the Palestinians, and agreed to renew security cooperation "on all levels," including field and police cooperation.

Renewal of full security cooperation is a key Israeli demand toward restarting peace talks which have been frozen since March.

Israel's Channel 2 TV said that the arrangement included a resumption of intelligence-

sharing — an important Israeli demand — and that it had already resumed Sunday.

David Bar-Ilan, an adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian negotiator Hassan Afour could not confirm the reports. "I haven't heard about any such meeting," Afour said.

The Palestinians scaled down — but did not break off — security cooperation in response to Israel's launching of a new housing project for Jews in Jerusalem's disputed eastern sector. Intelligence-sharing ceased, and there have since been sporadic clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops.

The reports follow a series of leaks in the Israeli media of secret meetings held between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials in recent days.

Overstuffed cargo ship may have caused collision with Mir

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, July 1: The crew of Russia's space station Mir may have caused last week's crash by accidentally overstuffing the cargo ship that veered off course and captured the aging outpost, reports AP.

Russian flight controllers are testing the still-orbiting cargo ship to see if that, indeed, is what happened.

"Until they finish their testing... we're not going to get anything specific," Frank Culbertson, director of NASA's shuttle-Mir programme, said Monday. He described the pos-

sibility of overloading as "A potential factor in all of this."

NASA astronaut Michael Smith and his two Russian crewmates had filled the progress supply ship with space-station trash before sending it loose last week. The accident — the worst space collision ever — occurred the next day during a practice redocking of the supply ship ordered by Russia's Mission Control.

Commander Vasily Tsibilyev was guiding the supply ship toward its port by remote control, as planned, when it started coming in too fast.

Berisha concedes defeat in Albanian polls

TIRANA, Albania, July 1: President Sali Berisha has conceded his party's defeat in nationwide elections and even hinted he would cave in to a longstanding opposition demand to resign, reports AP.

Despite Monday's announcement, it remained unclear whether the elections would fulfill the goal of bringing reconciliation to this embattled country.

Gunfire rang through the streets of Albania after Berisha's nationally televised address, some in celebration and some in defiance.

In a statesmanlike announcement, which contrasted strongly with his inflammatory campaign speeches, Berisha admitted his ruling Democratic Party had been voted into the opposition.

According to partial and unofficial results collected by the parties, the Socialist Party had won the majority of parliamentary seats in Sunday's vote.

"I will accept the result, and I will respect all the declarations I have made," he said.

That seemed to be an allusion to his March pledge to step down if his Democratic Party

lost to the polls.

But it fell short of an unequivocal promise to step down — the long-standing demand of the political opposition and the rebels who have controlled much of Albania's south this year. The violence broke out after failed high-risk investment schemes exploded into an armed, anti-Berisha insurrection.

The former cardiologist, initially credited for leading the nation's fight for democracy after five decades of communist dictatorship, has in the last few years been increasingly criticised for authoritarianism and tolerating corruption.

Albanian police patrolled the capital in armored personnel carriers, and Tirana streets echoed with automatic weapons fire and explosions late into Monday night. Members of the 7,000-strong international force took up position around foreign missions.

In Viroa, the heart of the armed insurrection, people fired in the air continuously for a full half-hour after Berisha's appearance. An Italian soldier in the multinational force was wounded in the back.

Chinese in N American cities celebrate HK handover

NEW YORK, July 1: Chinese in major North American cities watched and celebrated on Monday as China took control of Hong Kong from Britain, but some protested and said they feared human rights abuses, reports Reuters.

Thousands gathered in the Chinatown section of New York, gleefully waving flags and cheering the floats in a colourful parade.

"This is a glorious day for us, especially since it's a peaceful day," parade organizer Yi Lum said. "We feel very proud that Hong Kong is being returned to China. We see a very bright future."

Folk singers adorned in silk and flowers sang traditional songs, dancing dragon puppets entertained children, and community leaders drew loud cheers from the crowds with

chants of "long live China."

One float depicted a handshake and proclaimed, "everlasting peace with America."

"We're here to show our love for our country," teenager Andy Sit, who marched in the parade, said. "Hong Kong is Chinese. It should be part of China."

"Hong Kong will still be free economically to be capitalist," a beaming Jean Zhu said. "It will be an opportunity to show the government the benefits and problems of capitalism."

But outside the Chinese embassy, dissident Lian Shengde, a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest who was granted political asylum in the United States last year, spoke of his concern for Hong Kong.

"This should not be a day of celebration," he said. "July 1 is a very sad day. This is not about China getting back land they

once had. It's about totalitarianism spreading into a free, democratic and prosperous region."

In Vancouver, Canada, which has seen a dramatic influx of immigrants from Hong Kong in recent years, celebrations included an early-morning party at a classical garden in the city's Chinatown.

Demonstrators scheduled pro-democracy protests outside Chinese diplomatic posts in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa.

"With the largest Hong Kong immigrant population in the world, the Chinese communities in Canada are visibly concerned about the loss of civil liberties after the handover," said Henry Chau, head of the Vancouver Society in support of democratic movement.

Pro-secular coalition replaces Islamic-led govt in Turkey

ANKARA, Turkey, July 1: A pro-Western coalition on Monday replaced the Islamic-led government, whose challenge to Turkey's secular tradition led to its downfall, reports AP.

"Our government considers the protection and development of the secular and democratic republic as its basic principle," the new Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, said.

Winning presidential approval of his Cabinet on Monday, Yilmaz replaced Necmettin Erbakan, whose pro-Islam policies had angered Turkey's powerful generals. The military regards itself as the guarantor of modern Turkey's secular traditions.

After months of uncertainty, markets welcomed the new government. The Istanbul Stock Exchange index closed at a record high of 1857 points, up 2.3 per cent from Friday.

Yilmaz's centre-right Motherland Party wants good relations with the West and supports this NATO-member country's bid for full-membership in the European Union.

The new government is expected to face a parliamentary confidence vote on July 12. Defections from Erbakan's coalition have given it the votes it needs.

Yilmaz formed a coalition with former Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party and a small conservative party.

Ismail Cem, a deputy from Ecevit's party, was named foreign minister. Ecevit, who ordered Turkish troops into Cyprus in 1974 as premier, will be deputy prime minister.

The new government has outlined policies in line with the military's wishes, including a cutback in religious education.

It has also endorsed the military's much-disputed claim that the Kurdish problem is not "ethnic" in nature. This is a change of position for Yilmaz,

who in the past advocated ethnic cultural rights for the Kurds.

Turkey's armed forces have been battling a Kurdish separatist insurgency since 1984.

President Suleyman Demirel asked Yilmaz a 50-year-old economist known for his stiff manner, to form a government after Erbakan's coalition crumbled under pressure from the military two weeks ago.

Erbakan sought closer ties with Iran and Libya, upsetting

this NATO-member country's Western-oriented foreign policy.

Yilmaz served as prime minister for seven months in 1991. He has also served as foreign minister.

He and former prime minister Tansu Ciller, Erbakan's coalition partner, are bitter rivals.

They teamed up in a coalition last year, but it fell apart after three months, opening the way for the Islamic-led coalition to take power.

Di's 36th birthday in style

LONDON, July 1: Diana, Princess of Wales was due to celebrate her 36th birthday in style Tuesday, at the gala dinner to commemorate the centenary of Britain's foremost modern art gallery, reports AP.

In her first public appearance since returning from a New York charity auction of 75 of her dresses for 3.5 million pounds (5.6 million dollars) Diana will again be surrounded by famous names and faces at the Tate Gallery in central London.

French actress Carole Bouquet, the face of the perfume Chanel No 5 for many years, will be among the 500 guests, and event sponsor Chanel will also display their art collection, including silk screen prints by Andy Warhol.

The Tate, founded and given to the nation by Victorian sugar merchant Henry Tate, was opened on July 21, 1897 — by the then Prince and Princess of Wales.

Tigers attack two civilian ferries

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, July 1: Tamil rebels attacked two passenger ferries off Sri Lanka's northwest coast Tuesday, setting one vessel ablaze and in danger of sinking, military officials said, reports AP.

Both ships were empty of passengers. Navy gunboats were searching for the crew of the crippled "Misson" but it was not immediately known how many seamen were missing, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The boats normally ferry up to 200 passengers each between Mannar Island and the Jaffna Peninsula.



US President Bill Clinton (C) and Vice President Al Gore (R) thank actress Whoopi Goldberg (2nd-L) and actor Dick Latessa on stage at the St James Theater in New York City Monday after their performance in the Broadway musical "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum". The Performance was a fundraiser for the Democratic Party. — AFP/UNB photo

Editor convicted of defaming Chandrika

COLOMBO, July 1: A Sri Lankan court Tuesday found a newspaper editor guilty of criminal defamation against President Chandrika Kumaratunga, the first conviction in her campaign against a critical press, reports AP.

Sinha Ratnatunga, editor of the popular weekly, The Sunday Times, was convicted for a report published in February 1996 saying Kumaratunga snuck in through the back door of a luxury hotel after midnight to attend a party.

Ratnatunga, 40 was due to be sentenced later Tuesday. He faces a maximum four years imprisonment and a fine.

The article was one of several accusing Kumaratunga, a widow, of behaviour inappropriate for the nation's head of state.

Kumaratunga denied that she had been to the party, hosted by a member of Parliament. She also warned the media against inaccurate reporting.

Kashmir govt worried about large influx of foreign mercenaries

by Surinder Oberoi writes from Srinagar

Separatist groups in the Valley support the foreign militants. "It is not a sin for others to come to the help of the Kashmiri people when they are fighting Indian occupation forces," said Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of the Jamiat-e-Islami, the political wing of the Hizbul Mujahideen. "It is not against the principles of the freedom struggle," he said.

The mercenaries depend on local Kashmiris for food and shelter. Kashmiri militants also act as their guides, showing them the mountain routes.

Terrorists in the Valley, who had hitherto targeted their attacks on urban areas, have in recent months taken to mountain guerrilla warfare. Foreign mercenaries, who are better armed than local militants and possess automatic assault rifles and heavy machine guns, have built bunkers in the mountains where even troops fear to go. They live in natural mountain caves, stocked with rations for

months. Officials said the mountainous terrain made the hunt for the foreign mercenaries difficult. "We cannot use helicopters in the thickly forested mountains because even if one helicopter is downed by militant fire, it would demoralize our security troops," said a senior army officer on condition of anonymity.

The involvement of foreigners in the insurgency first came to light in late 1991 when Akbar, an Afghan, virtually took over Sopore district until he was shot dead by the Indian Army. Masood, a former chemical engineer from Sudan, was also active in Sopore before he was killed.

than the local militants. They fight better, last longer and have more fire power. They are experts in mountain warfare," an army officer said.

"Several foreigners are infiltrating (into the Valley) and we expect some 400 to 500 foreign mercenaries who will sneak into the Valley as the snow melts in the mountain passes," said Maj. General M.J.S. Yadav.

"Foreign militants will be more prominent in future as locals are not coming forth to run the insurgency," he said. "So there is a need to keep vigil."

More than 530 foreign mercenaries have been killed in various encounters since 1990 and 130 arrested, officials said. "This included 60 mercenaries killed and 10 arrested since January this year," Kulbushan Jindiyal, the state government's official spokesman, said. The figures include Pakistanis and people from Pakistan-held Kashmir.

"Of the killed foreign mercenaries, 162 belong to Pakistan or Pakistan Occupied Kashmir