

BRIEFLY



Diana, Princess of Wales, arrives at the Tate Gallery in London Tuesday to attend a Centenary gala dinner to celebrate the Tate's 100 years. It was also the princess's birthday. The event was sponsored by Paris fashion house, Chanel. — AFP/UNB photo

Floods claim 28 more in India: Twenty eight bodies were recovered from three districts in the western Indian state of Gujarat Tuesday taking the death toll from the start of June's monsoon floods officials said 25 bodies were taken out by rescue teams from the worst-hit state of Mehasana while two were found in Rajkot and one in Sabarkantha district, AFP reports from New Delhi.

"The flood waters have started receding and with that more bodies are being found," an official said. However, unofficial reports have put the toll at 201.

2 held with heroin in Peshawar: Customs officers seized 75 kilograms (165 pounds) of heroin in northwestern Pakistan, the authorities said Wednesday, AP reports from Peshawar.

Two men have been arrested with the contraband drugs, apparently originating in the lawless tribal belt that borders Afghanistan, said Jahan Zaidi Khan, deputy customs collector. Niaz Ali and a companion had the heroin stashed in their car when customs officials stopped them at a police check post and searched their vehicle.

Fujimori arrives in Japan: Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori arrived in Tokyo Wednesday for his first visit to Japan since the end of the Lima hostage crisis, AP reports from Tokyo.

During his six-day visit, Fujimori will meet with Emperor Akihito, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and several other top Cabinet members, a Foreign Ministry official said. Hashimoto went to Peru in May to thank Fujimori for resolving the hostage crisis on April 22.

Yemen-KSA border talks held: Saudi interior minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz on Tuesday wound up a two-day visit to Sanaa during which he discussed the two countries' 60-year-old border dispute with Yemeni leaders, AFP reports from Sanaa.

"The rift between Sanaa and Riyadh has narrowed considerably and the two countries will reach a final solution within the coming weeks," Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh said before Prince Nayef's departure. He said the joint committees drawn up by the two countries were studying the issue.

US actor Robert Mutchum dies: Robert Mutchum, the gruff, sleepy-eyed actor who played tough guys, cynics and all-around hard cases in such movies as "Night of the Hunter," "Cape Fear" and "Thunder Road," died at 79, AP reports from Los Angeles.

The brawny, granite-faced Mutchum, who died Tuesday at his home in Montecito in Santa Barbara County after suffering from emphysema and lung cancer, appeared in more than 100 Westerns, comedies, war movies and dramas, remaining a star for over half a century and working well into his 70s. It wasn't all acting either: Offscreen, Mutchum was hard-drinking, surly and openly contemptuous of studio bosses and Hollywood. After serving 60 days for marijuana possession in the late 40s, he emerged from jail saying: "It's just like Palm Springs without the riffraff."

UN okays observer mission to Angola: Recognising that peace is still shaky in Angola, the UN Security Council agreed unanimously Monday to send a mission of unarmed observers to the southern African country to replace peacekeepers, AP reports from United Nations.

The dollars 64.5 million staff. They will replace the 6,000 peacekeeping troops whose mandate expired Monday. The new mission is expected to last until Feb. 1, 1998. Before the vote, Security Council members stressed that it is up to the Angolans — not the United Nations — to end more than two decades of conflict.

French mayor tried for racism: More than 600 supporters and protesters of the far-right National Front shouted at each other outside a courtroom here Monday, while a Front mayor faced racism charges inside, AP reports from Aix En Provence.

Catherine Megret, mayor of the southern city of Vitrolles, was charged with defamation and racial injury for an interview with German magazine Berliner Zeitung, in which she is quoted as saying, "there are differences in the races in the genes." In the interview, published last February, Megret also is quoted as saying she hoped to scare immigrants away from her city.

Buddhist monk held in Thailand: A Thai Buddhist monk has been arrested and charged with murder after allegedly shooting his homosexual lover, police said Wednesday, AP reports from Bangkok.

Peerapol Srinivatt, 32, shot and killed a 25-year-old man with whom he had been having a sexual relationship, said police in Nakhon Pathom, 50 kilometers (31 miles) west of Bangkok, where the incident took place. Police refused to release the name of the victim, who they said angered the monk when he tried to break off their relationship because he had fallen in love with a woman.

4 killed in Belarus bus mishap: Four children were killed when a bus overturned on a rain-drenched road while taking a group of kids from a region polluted by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster to a health resort, officials said Wednesday, AP reports from Minsk.

More than 60 children were injured in the crash Tuesday, three of them seriously, Russia's Interfax news agency reported. However, Belarus' Health Ministry said the injuries were not life-threatening.

Taiwanese FM begins C America tour: Foreign Minister John Chang left Wednesday to strengthen ties with Taiwan's allies in Central America and the Caribbean amid stepped-up pressure from rival China to isolate his government, AP reports from Taipei.

Chang said Hong Kong's handover from British to Chinese sovereignty on Tuesday lent added importance to his trip. The move is seen as increasing Beijing's leverage over the region, home to 14 of the 30 countries recognizing Taiwan. Chang also will smooth the way for President Lee Teng-hui's attendance in September at a major international conference in Panama and a meeting with Central American allies in El Salvador.

Laloo supporters to set up 'suicide squad'

PATNA, July 2: Laloo supporters in Bihar would constitute a 'suicide squad' (suicide squad) under the banner of the Jan Morcha to counter evil designs of feudal and communal forces to unseat the Chief Minister, reports PTI.

Jan Morcha General Secretary, Ramanand Yadav, said ground work had begun to raise the squad and a violent agitation would be launched from July 22.

Yadav said the Jan Morcha would fight with full vigour and strength the forces inimical to the cause of social justice and those trying to weaken the Chief Minister.

Jan Morcha activists brought a procession in the state capital last evening in protest against the CBI chargesheeting Prasad in the fodder scam.

Activists of 'Laloo regiment' constituted by the student and youth wing of the ruling Janata Dal also brought out a procession in the state capital yesterday to express resentment over the move to oust the chief minister.

Govt jets pound LTTE positions

COLOMBO, July 2: Government warplanes strafed Tamil Tiger rebel positions in northern Sri Lanka Wednesday after a skirmish between soldiers and Tamil guerrillas, military officials said, reports AP.

A small group of rebels fired on military defence lines near Omantahai, a town captured in the army's ongoing offensive, said the officials, who asked not to be named.

Soldiers repulsed the attack using field guns without suffering any casualties. It was not known if there were any rebel casualties.

Israeli-built Kfir jets then took off from the capital, 220 kilometres (135 miles) to the south, and bombed rebel positions in the Vavuniya district, said the officials. It was not clear what damage they caused.

The military's offensive, which began on May 13, stalled after two furious rebel counterattacks in June killed more than 300 soldiers.

Police arrest 68 in East Timor

DILI, Indonesia, July 2: Police have arrested 68 people allegedly involved in recent violence in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, an official said Wednesday, reports AP.

Police Col. Atok Rismanto told The Associated Press that 45 were detained at the police headquarters in Dili, East Timor's capital, 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles) east of Jakarta, and 23 others at the coastal town of Baucau, 130 kilometres (81 miles) east of Dili.

"They are being detained for questioning in connection with recent violent incidents in the territory," he said.

The latest arrests followed an attack last month in which six rebels fired on a military convoy in Baucau and killed a driver.

Rebel activity in East Timor, invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and annexed the following year, has flared since Indonesian national elections last month. An estimated 42 soldiers, police, civilians and rebels have been killed in June.

Berisha's top aides flee Albania

TIRANA, July 2: Several top security officials close to President Sali Berisha have left Albania following the weekend victory of the Socialists, local media and other sources said Tuesday, reports AP.

The officials effectively represented the entire leadership of the police and security network which has been used by Berisha to fight political opposition and run the state of emergency in effect since March.

Sources at Tirana's airport confirmed that on Tuesday the Interior Minister Beul Celu took an Olympic Airways flight to Athens.

His departure comes hot on the heels of that of Agim Shehu, the deputy minister of interior and national police chief the head of the national guard, Xhavit Xhaferi, and Gjergj Lezha, the chief of military intelligence.

A fifth man who left Verdat Sezani, headed the personnel department in the interior ministry.

The latter departures were reported in Tuesday's edition of Koha Jone, an independent newspaper.

Lankan newsmen demand end of stiff media laws

COLOMBO, July 2: A journalists' group Wednesday demanded an end to stiff media laws after the editor of a local newspaper was convicted for writing an article that the court said defamed the president, reports AP.

The sentence on Sinha Ratnanga, editor of The Sunday Times, "could be considered a precedent in future cases against journalists," said a statement by the Free Media Movement, a watchdog organisation.

The court sentenced Sinha Ratnanga to 18 months in prison but suspended the sentence for seven years. The 40-year-old editor of the popular news weekly also was fined 10,000 rupees (172 dhs).

Jiang likely to become new supreme leader

BEIJING, July 2: Chinese President Jiang Zemin, who enjoyed a moment of triumph as the world watched the return of Hong Kong, is now well placed to be officially chosen as the country's new supreme leader at the next Communist Party Congress, reports AP.

"Hong Kong was the first test on the way to his coronation and it seems he was successful," said a western diplomat. "Jiang is trying hard to appear as the leader responsible for a united and powerful China, as many television viewers are discovering for the first time."

But the handover of the former British colony was only one step and the results will not come to fruition until the 15th party congress in October, as the official party organ, the People's Daily, said Monday, calling "all the party cadres and the Chinese people to unite behind the leadership of President Jiang Zemin and now look towards the 15th congress."

This huge ceremony, held every five years, is the moment of truth for successive leaders, after they have battled between them selves in the struggle for power.

Since the death in February of China's patriarch Deng Xiaoping, Jiang, now 71, who holds the posts of head of state, the party and the army, has tried hard to move from being regarded as heir apparent to being recognised as Deng's successor.



Jiang Zemin

"The gloves are off at the Congress and Jiang's rivals won't be making it easy for him," said another diplomat.

The competition rules are also being laid down, analysts noted the remarkable absence during the Hong Kong ceremonies of Qiao Shi, president of the parliament and number three in the regime's hierarchy.

Qiao Shi was deliberately left out of the festivities by Jiang, while Li Peng the Prime Minister, number two in the regime, was in high profile in both Hong Kong and Beijing, the diplomat said, noting "the sharing of roles between Jiang and Li still works well."

But Qiao has certainly not had his final word and the preparatory meetings for the

Congress which will be organised this summer, probably in Beidaihe, southeast of Beijing, are likely to be lively.

Jiang will not truly be able to take on the mantle as leader until he starts political reform, many analysts believe.

China's economic success is attributed to Vice Premier Zhu Rongji, his former right-hand man from his days running Shanghai, an analyst of Chinese, politics said. "But in the wider scheme of the things Jiang suffers from a lack of political and ideological theories."

With the return of Hong Kong just completed, Jiang must keep up the attack on a far more ambitious project: Reunification with Taiwan.

"It is a sacred mission for all candidates hoping for the supreme leadership," the expert said.

Late Tuesday as he returned from Hong Kong Jiang called on the Taiwanese authorities to follow the example of the former British colony and take "concrete measures" towards reunification.

Taipei immediately replied by saying the "one country, two systems" formula, which will allow Hong Kong to retain a capitalist system for 50 years, could never be applied to Taiwan.

Even in January 1995 an "eight-point proposal" put forward by Jiang to Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui was rejected by Taipei.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on Emperor Akihito at the Akasaka Palace in Tokyo yesterday. — PID photo

Pak govt asked to explain Kansi's arrest, extradition

ISLAMABAD, July 2: A Pakistani court has ordered the government to disclose its role in the capture and extradition of a man accused of shooting two CIA employees, according to newspapers on Wednesday, reports AP.

The High Court in the Punjab capital of Lahore ordered Pakistan's attorney general to appear next week and testify what role the government had in the clandestine operation that led to the capture of Mir Aimal Kansi, the report said.

Kansi, 33, is being held in a Fairfax, Virginia jail after US agents captured him in his native Pakistan last month and whisked him by military cargo aircraft to the US.

A two judge panel is considering charges that Pakistani authorities defied their own law when they allowed US agents to snatch Kansi from a hotel in southern Punjab and take him out of the country without an extradition hearing.

The July 11 hearing will

mark the first time since Kansi's arrest that the government has had to publicly explain its role in a case which has drawn widespread condemnation in Pakistan.

An opposition politician, the former head of Pakistan's spy agency and the Pakistan Institute of Human Rights all have filed suits against the government of Pakistan alleging it broke its own laws.

Kansi faces a possible death penalty if convicted in the January 25, 1993 attack outside the CIA headquarters that left two dead and three wounded.

Meanwhile, as the authorities arrested hundreds of known Muslim extremists, another Sunni Muslim activist was gunned down on Wednesday, the authorities said.

Tariq Farooqi, a Sunni Muslim cleric with the militant Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet, was returning home after saying his morning prayers at a religious school in Lahore's central district when

gunmen came up beside him and opened fire, police said.

His attackers fled as bystanders scurried for cover. Farooqi died instantly of two gunshot wounds to the head, witnesses said.

No one has claimed responsibility for the killing, but it is believed to be the latest in a relentless wave of violence between militant Shi'ite and Sunni Muslim groups that has left almost 100 people dead and 150 injured across the eastern Punjab province so far this year.

In an attempt to put an end to the violence the authorities earlier this week launched a crackdown sweeping through homes and offices of known Muslim extremists arresting hundreds throughout the province.

On Wednesday the crackdown continued with heavily armed police arresting dozens more, many of them in the eastern capital of Lahore.

Arafat urges Arabs, Christians to defend Jerusalem

TUNIS, July 2: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday called on Arab Muslims and Christians around the world to rally to the defence of Jerusalem against a tide of Jewish colonisation, reports AP.

I call on the Arab and Islamic nations to defend sacred Jerusalem, as it is not only a Palestinian issue but also an Arab, Muslim and Christian one," he said after talks here with Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali.

Arafat said the talks centered on "the obstacles to the peace process erected by the head of the Israeli government, Benjamin Netanyahu, with the intention of paralysing it."

He said the world had already shown its rejection of Israeli attempts to undermine the peace process and pointed to the resolutions on Middle East peace passed by last month's summit of the G8 industrialised nations in Denver and the European Union in Amsterdam.

The Palestinians walked out of peace talks with Israel in mid March following the start of construction of the 6,500-home Har Homa Jewish settlement in historically Arab east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians want the eastern sector of the holy city as the capital of a future independent state, while the Israelis insist the whole of Jerusalem will remain its eternal capital.

Arafat arrived in Tunis on Tuesday for a 24-hour visit, his wife Suha and daughter Zahwa have already been in the Tunisian capital for weeks.



Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday he was confident his fractious right-wing coalition would remain intact despite a series of political crises.

This may disappoint our opponents, but I can assure you this coalition will stay together, Netanyahu told a meeting in his Likud Party.

He is to meet today with his Foreign Minister David Levy in

an attempt to smooth over a dispute which is holding up a long-awaited cabinet reshuffle. The pair have not met since Friday.

Two weeks after forcing the resignation of Finance Minister Dan Meridor, Netanyahu has been unable to announce the reshuffle because of Levy's repeated threats to resign.

Levy believes the prime minister is consistently freezing him out of major decisions on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process even though he is officially in charge of negotiations with the Palestinians.

The foreign minister is furious that he was not informed about a secret meeting between hardline infrastructure minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian authority number two Mahmud Abbas on June 16.

The most natural thing is that the foreign minister will oversee the day-to-day work between us and the Palestinians, Netanyahu said when asked about what he told Levy in a meeting last week.

"We discussed this and I think we found a way to implement it," he added.

Levy also objected the appointment of ex-general Sahron as Finance Minister with a seat on the inner security cabinet that handles all discussions with the Palestinians.

Off the Record

Warning for Muslim beauties

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Islamic Religious Court has fined three Muslim women for being indecently dressed while taking part in a beauty contest, a newspaper reported Wednesday, says AP.

Shalina Shaari, 23, Noni Mohammad, 19, and Fahyuh Hanim Ahmad, 18, all models pleaded guilty and each was fined dhs 160 Tuesday, The Star reported.

They were also charged with participating in a beauty contest, which is also banned for Muslims. This case is to be heard later.

They were alleged to have exposed parts of their bodies while wearing sports attire, swimming costumes and evening gowns in the contest for Miss Malaysia Petite.

Under a 1995 law enacted by Selangor state, Muslim women have to be properly attired in public, which includes not exposing more than their heads and hands.

Prosecuting officer Ismail Mohamed told the court, "I hope this will be an eye opener for all Muslim women from now on."

The women said they would not participate in any further beauty contests.

Childbearing, pills lower risk of ovarian cancer

WASHINGTON: The risk of ovarian cancer is directly related to a woman's lifetime number of ovulations, or menstrual cycles, according to US researchers who found that bearing children and birth control pills provide protection from the disease, says AP.

A high number of ovulations can increase by nine times the chances of producing a cell with a genetic flaw that often leads to ovarian cancer, said Dr. Andrew Berchuck, professor of gynecologic oncology at the Duke University Medical Centre.

A statistical link between the number of ovulations and ovarian cancer has been known for some time, but the new study suggests the reason: A high number of ovulations increases the chances a tumor suppressor gene called p53 can be mutated, Berchuck said.

"We show that in women with ovarian cancer there is a very strong association between having a lot of ovulatory cycles and an alteration in the p53 gene," he said. "The majority of ovarian cancers have this p53 mutation and these mutations occur because of ovulation."

Anything that lowers the number of lifetime ovulation cycles thus reduces the risk of ovarian cancer, Berchuck said.

Khmer Rouge acknowledges talks with co-premier

PHNOM PENH, July 2: Khmer Rouge rebels in northern Cambodia acknowledged in a clandestine radio broadcast Wednesday they were talking peace with one of the country's prime ministers, reports AP.

"Prince Norodom Ranariddh has sent envoy to negotiate with a representative of (Khmer Rouge nominal leader) Khieu Samphan," the radio broadcast said. "The discussion is aimed at jointly achieving real national reconciliation and peace in Cambodia."

The announcement marked the first overt signal from the one-time feared rebel army that the two sides are talking.

Ranariddh has been pushing for a peace deal, but insists Khieu Samphan, must read the text of the agreement over rebel radio.

Wednesday's radio statement follows a week of belligerent broadcasts attacking Ranariddh's government coalition partner, Hun Sen.

Hun Sen, Cambodia's other prime minister, has remained

adamantly opposed to the peace negotiations, saying the current proposal does not dissolve the Khmer Rouge's political or military structure.

Hun Sen and Ranariddh formed an uneasy partnership to lead the government following United Nations-brokered elections in 1993.

Tensions between Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party and Hun Sen's former communist Cambodian People's Party turned violent last month when bodyguards and police loyal to the two premiers waged a two-hour gun battle in central Phnom Penh.

Two grenade attacks in recent months, including one that killed 16 people, may also have been politically motivated, police said.

Ranariddh's party announced in early June that the remaining Khmer Rouge hardliners in the northern village of Anlong Veng were preparing to defect en masse to the government bringing an end to the longstanding conflict.

Dust storm on Mars moving towards NASA's spacecraft landing site

WASHINGTON, July 2: An unexpected, large dust storm on Mars is moving toward the July 4 landing site of NASA's unmanned Pathfinder spacecraft, researchers studying Hubble Space Telescope images said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The dust storm is filling the Valles Marineris Canyon system, a series of three-to-five-mile-deep (five-to-eight-km-deep) canyons stretching for 1,800 miles (3,000 km) and coming to within about 600 miles (970 km) of the Pathfinder landing site, according to a statement by the University of Colorado.

Unless the dust storm evolves into a massive, global event, its effects on the Pathfinder mission should be minimal, said Steve Lee of Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics of the University of Colorado at Boulder.

"This is something we did

not expect to see — it's very early in the Martian year for major dust storms to occur," Lee said. "It could go away tomorrow, stay for weeks or turn into a global dust storm. We haven't seen a storm like this one before, so we just don't know."

The researchers took high-resolution colour images of the side of Mars where the landing site is located in the early morning, mid-morning and early afternoon of June 27 to check weather conditions before the Pathfinder landing.

Hubble Space Telescope images and microwave observations taken by the researchers earlier this year indicated the planet was cold and cloudy.

The lander will touch down in an ancient flood plain known as areas Vallis, about 500 miles (800 km) southeast of where the Viking 1 spacecraft landed in 1976.

Serb president threatens to dissolve parliament

BELGRADE, July 2: In a deepening power struggle, the Bosnian Serb president on Tuesday accused top associates of "chaos and theft" and threatened to dissolve parliament if it sided with them, reports AP.

The harsh comments by President Biljana Plavsic, who heads the Serb-controlled half of Bosnia, intensified a conflict between her and her predecessor, Radovan Karadzic, and his allies.

"All important decisions are being made behind closed doors," she complained in a TV address to Bosnian Serbs. Her voice sometimes wavered during the address.

Plavsic has US support, and can also count on the backing of the Serb army. But the military has been severely weakened by military defeats, command shakeups and forced demilitarisation under the Dayton peace accords.

Her rivals — Karadzic and his associates — command a police force that is better paid and more motivated than the army and would likely be backed at least covertly by neighbouring Serbia.

Plavsic was elected after Karadzic was forced to step down a year ago because of indictments by the UN war crimes tribunal for his role in the Bosnian conflict.

However, Karadzic wields considerable power through associates like Momcilo Krajisnik, the Serb member of the three-man rotating Bosnian presidency. They reportedly have piled up considerable wealth through oil and cigarette smuggling.

Over the weekend, the government defied Plavsic's attempt to fire Dragan Kijac, the top police official in the Serb sub-state and one of Karadzic's closest associates.

Plavsic was briefly detained by Serbian police at Belgrade airport, an apparent sign of Karadzic's continued links with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

At a news conference Tuesday in Banja Luka, Plavsic accused Karadzic and Krajisnik of conducting a policy of "chaos and theft" and of undermining the Bosnian Serb sub-state by their alleged involvement in smuggling and other illegal operations.

"I have kept silent about this for months, but it is time the people heard the truth," she said, in comments broadcast in Belgrade by independent B-92 radio. "If need be, I will dissolve parliament."

Plavsic is empowered by law to dissolve the Bosnian Serb legislature, which is dominated by her opponents.