

International

Troops engage in looting across capital Phnom Penh under firm control of Hun Sen's soldiers

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, July 7: Soldiers who carried out a coup for Second Premier Hun Sen engaged in widespread looting across the capital Monday after overthrowing the major strongholds of their royalist opponents, reports AP. The sounds of stubborn fighting between Ranariddh loyalists and Hun Sen's stronger forces were still heard on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, but the capital itself was quite and firmly under the control of Hun Sen's side two days after the coup was launched. Supporters of deposed First Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh were reported to be reorganising resistance. The prince, safe in France, said his top general in Cambodia was regrouping his forces. "I call on my people that they join me, my party and all other patriotic forces to carry out resistance against Hun Sen and his partisans," Ranariddh said. Sok Phal, chief of the Interior Ministry's information department, denied reports that a state of emergency had been declared to stop looting by soldiers and police. Orders were going out to military units to cease looting. The coup marked the final unraveling of an imperfect peace settlement brokered by United Nations negotiators in 1991 to end the country's long-running civil war. The deal led to elections in 1993 won by Ranariddh's party. Hun Sen subsequently bullied his way into a coalition by vowing to continue civil war. Hun Sen had constantly chipped away at the prince's power base since. On Monday, Hun Sen was clearly in charge in the capital. Ranariddh's downtown compound, the headquarters of his FUNCINPEC Party and the military base west of the capital that had been headquarters for his toughest general all had been captured. Soldiers aligned with Hun Sen's formerly communist Cambodian People's party swarmed over the royalist base Monday. Journalists were not allowed inside, but the fighting that had raged for two days had clearly been heavy. Lt. Gen. Nhek Bunchhay, the base commander, had apparently escaped Saturday and his whereabouts could prove crucial to whether Funcinpec can mount a counter-offensive. The residential area behind Phnom Penh University, site of some of the weekend's heaviest fighting, was a quiet wasteland Monday of wrecked tanks, exploded cars and spent cartridge casings. Three dead royalist troops lay in the streets. A body also lay untouched

outside the Thai Embassy. At least 32 people, both military and civilian, were confirmed killed. Among the dead was a Japanese engineer, hospital officials said. US for end to fighting in Cambodia Meanwhile, the State Department on Sunday called on all parties in Cambodia to stop fighting and said American diplomats are in touch with both sides in the civil war. In asking both sides to end the violence, American officials said the rivals should "resolve any differences by peaceful means and abide by terms of the 1991 Paris accords" aimed at ending Cambodia's civil war. The statement urged that "all parties contribute to conditions which will allow elections scheduled for 1998 to take place. Meteorologists were reporting more high temperatures before monsoon rains arrive sometime later this month.

Heat wave leaves 20 dead in Pakistan ISLAMABAD, July 7: A blistering heat wave that has sent temperatures soaring to 45 Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) killed 20 people, according to news reports on Monday, reports AP. The victims died on Sunday as temperatures throughout the country soared. Most of the victims were labourers, the independent daily newspaper, The News, reported. The hardest hit area was the eastern Punjab province. In Sarghoda, about 200 kilometres (120 miles) southeast of the federal capital, nine people died from the heat and dozens more suffered heat stroke. The News quoted hospital officials as saying. Meteorologists were reporting more high temperatures before monsoon rains arrive sometime later this month.



As black smoke from a burning fuel station billows in the background, a Cambodian family makes its way out of the capital on Sunday. Fighting between forces loyal to the two prime ministers forced thousands to flee their homes. — AFP/UNB photo

Violence mars 2nd round of polls in Albania: 3 killed

TIRANA, Albania, July 7: Shooting at two polling stations marred the second round of elections intended to end months of chaos in the country. Three people were killed and two wounded, reports AP. Turnout on Sunday was noticeably lower than in the previous weekend's first round, when voters overwhelmingly chose the Socialists in a resounding defeat for President Sali Berisha's Democratic Party. The elections were intended to calm a country beset by unrest since protests over failed high-risk investment schemes erupted early this year into armed insurrection, but both sides have complained of voter fraud. The Socialists bolstered the 61 seats they won outright in the first round with 12 more

seats Sunday, the Central Electoral Commission said. The Democrats won five, adding to their 10 seats from the first round. In the northern village of Pulp, near Shkodra, a gunman opened fire on members of a local election commission, killing two and injuring two, the central commission said. A third person was shot and killed in a polling station in Mat, 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Tirana, the central commission said. Before reports of the killings, Catherine Lalumiere, the head of 150 election observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, had said polls were calm Sunday. Much of Albania's insurrection had been aimed at Berisha, who later ceded some power to a

Socialist-led caretaker government ahead of the elections. He indicated after the first round he would step down despite having four years left in his term. If Berisha keeps his promise, parliament will appoint a successor. The transition is vital to harmony in Albania, because there has been uncertainty over whether security services have switched their allegiances from Berisha to the caretaker government. Socialist leader Fatos Nano beamed as he cast his ballot Sunday and told reporters he would be the country's next prime minister. He said the current caretaker premier, Socialist Bashkim Fino, "will be at my right, and others on both sides — operating as partners and not as yes-men."

Navy destroys 2 LTTE boats: 30 killed

COLOMBO, July 7: The Sri Lankan navy Sunday destroyed and sank two Tamil rebel boats and killed at least 30 cadres with many more injured after a three-hour confrontation off the northern coast, according to reports reaching here today, reports Xinhua. It is believed that several Sea Tiger (the rebel's navy) leaders were among the dead. The high-powered boats fitted with radar equipment are reported to be used for transporting arms and ammunition and senior Sea Tiger officials. No further details are available about the exact casualties among the rebels. The reports added that in another operation at Kilinochchi in the north of the country on the same day, government troops engaged a group of more than 20 rebels and killed eight of them. The troops

were also able to recover several weapons. The Tamil rebels have been fighting a 14-year war against the government for a separate state in north and east of the island country. Earlier Xinhua said, Sri Lanka's Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) MP, A. Thangathurai, was killed along with four others in a bomb blast last night in Trincomalee town in eastern province, according to police sources in Colombo Sunday. When Thangathurai was to get into his vehicle after attending an opening ceremony of a new building at Sri Shanmuga Vidyalaya, a hand grenade was lobbed into the vehicle. A Thangathurai and four others, including the MP's bodyguard and two school principals were killed and 15 people others injured in the blast.

Rajiv Gandhi got kickbacks in Bofors gun deal, says ex-envoy

NEW DELHI, July 7: Former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi got kickbacks from a Swedish gun manufacturer to give it a lucrative contract, a retired Indian diplomat has alleged, reports AP. B. M. Oza, who was India's ambassador in Stockholm when the controversial howitzer deal was brokered, alleged in a book that Rajiv Gandhi was paid the money through an Italian friend, The Indian Express newspaper reported Monday. In his book, "Bofors: The Ambassador's Evidence," Oza claimed the money was paid to Rajiv through his Italian friend, Ottavio Quatrochi, but offers no proof. The newspaper reported details about the book on its front page.

Taliban accuse Russia, Iran of supplying jets

KABUL, July 7: Opposition jets pounded Kabul's combined military and civilian airport for the third consecutive day Monday, amid accusations by the Taliban rulers that Iran and Russia were supplying the bombers, reports AP. It was still dark Monday when Taliban anti-aircraft guns roared into action. Three jets screamed in low overhead dropping several bombs, all of which appeared to land in the vicinity of the airport. A strictly enforced curfew in this war-ravaged capital made it impossible to verify where the bombs landed and whether there were any casualties. But the bombs shook the surrounding neighbourhoods, waking sleeping residents. Windows rattled in the once posh Wasir Akbar Khan neighbourhood, where several inter-

national aid agencies are located. Mullah Mohammed Akbar, the Taliban's Public Health Minister, who recently returned from northern Afghanistan accused both Iran and Russia of supplying fighter jets to opposition forces. The anti-Taliban alliance controls the northern one-third of the country and is on friendly terms with both Iran and Russia. The Taliban, which runs the southern two-thirds, including the capital of Kabul, is closely allied with neighbouring Pakistan. The warring groups routinely accuse neighbouring countries of interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

BRIEFLY

Road mishap claims 62 in Sudan: Sixty-two people were killed and 30 seriously hurt in a highway pile-up south of Khartoum, Sudanese state-run television reported late Sunday, AFP reports from Khartoum. It said a pick-up truck tried to overtake another car near Kamlin, about 60 kilometres (60 miles) southeast of Khartoum, but collided with a passenger bus and a lorry travelling in the opposite direction. The truck and the bus caught fire, according to a witness, who said local people tried to put out the blaze with dust and water, knowing there was no fire station in the area.

Neeman new Israeli finance minister: In hopes of ending a political crisis, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday appointed his former justice minister, Yaakov Neeman, to take over the finance ministry, AP reports from Jerusalem. The crisis began last month when Finance Minister Dan Merriar resigned over a policy dispute with the prime minister and said he no longer had faith in Netanyahu. The top candidate for Merriar's post became Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, who said he would take over the Treasury if Netanyahu would bring him into a small circle of ministers who set policy in the peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

Fahd expands consultative council: King Fahd enlarged his consultative council at the end of its first four-year term and appointed new members on Sunday, in a limited campaign to widen participation in Saudi political life, AFP says from Riyadh. The new Council of 90 members contains only four representatives from Saudi Arabia's Shiite Muslim community — 20 per cent of the country's population. The speaker of the outgoing Council, Sheikh Mohammad ibn Ibrahim bin Jubair, was retained as well as his deputy, Abdullah bin Omar Nassif, according to the royal decree carried by the official news agency SPA.

Newspaper office attacked in India: A mob attacked a newspaper office in southern India, apparently irritated over a news report about a poster in the West Bank town of Hebron that insults the Muslim Prophet, Mohammed (SM), AP reports from New Delhi. Monday's newspapers reported that 40 men stormed into the office of The Asian Age in Bangalore, chopped off the guard's thumb and stabbed two journalists Sunday night. The mob then smashed and burned computers and office equipment before fleeing, the reports said.

Trial of Kim's son opens in Seoul: The graft trial of President Kim Young-sam's second son Hun-Chul, opened at the Seoul district criminal court yesterday, television showed, AFP reports from Seoul. Fonhap Television news showed a prison bus carrying Kim Hun-Chul, 38, through the gates of the court, and said the trial got underway at 10:00 am (01:00 GMT). Hun-Chul is charged with taking 7.4 million dollars from six businessmen, 3.6 million dollars of which prosecutors say he took in return for favours, he is also charged with tax evasion.

Road mishap kills 11 in India: Eleven people, including a child, were killed when a jeep carrying them collided with a private bus near Reengas in Sikar district of Rajasthan Sunday, PIT reports from Jaipur.

Rebels massacre 150 in Uganda

KAMPALA, July 7: At least 150 people have been slaughtered in western Uganda by rebels "the Sunday Vision" reported Sunday, says Xinhua. Local officials and residents said they have found 58 bodies of civilians in Ndugute sub-county, western Bundibugyo district. The Ndugute massacre was the worst brutality since mid-May when the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels invaded into the district, they noted. But they cannot determine the date when the rebels committed the outrage. The rebels also killed 30 civilians in Bunyanga and Busiga, 10 in Bugankere, 28 in Mirambi and 24 in Bundikahungu, they added.

Shooting, rioting, bomb attacks sweep Catholic areas of N Ireland

PORTADOWN, Northern Ireland, July 7: Shooting, rioting and a bomb attack on a west Belfast police station swept Catholic areas of Northern Ireland after soldiers and police forced a Protestant march through a Catholic neighbourhood, reports AP. Police said a small homemade bomb exploded outside the perimeter wall of the heavily fortified New Barnsley police station in west Belfast early Monday. At the same time, a gunman fired at the police station and officers returned the fire. Nobody was hurt. In violence on Sunday, the

Irish Republican Army admitted responsibility for shooting a policeman in the face in one of several gun attacks. In Portadown, 25 miles (40 kilometres) southwest of Belfast, men and youths pummeled soldiers with stones as they slowly withdrew from Garvaghy Road following the annual march there of the Orange Order, Northern Ireland's main pro-British Protestant fraternal group. The military responded with plastic bullets. Within minutes of the soldiers' departure at Portadown, militants hijacked two cars and burned them.

29 feared dead as rebels shot down chopper in Colombia

BOGOTA, July 7: Leftist rebels are believed responsible for shooting down a helicopter that was flying soldiers to the site of an oil pipeline attack. All 29 people on board were feared killed, military officials said, reports AP. The Russian-made Mi-17 helicopter apparently caught fire in the air Sunday and exploded when it hit the ground near Saravena, 335 kilometres (220 miles) northeast of Bogota, the army said. The helicopter is totally destroyed. It's almost impossible to imagine there could be survivors, Col. Enrique Fadul, commander of the army's 2nd Brigade said in a telephone interview.

P RD candidate wins Mexico City mayoral polls

MEXICO CITY, July 7: Dealing a major blow to the country's ruling party, a leftist candidate has won the Mexico City mayoral race in the first election there in 69 years, according to a major exit-poll report, reports AP. Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas of the Democratic Revolutionary Party held a nearly 2-1 advantage over Alfredo Del Mazo of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party known as the PRI in Sunday's election, according to the exit poll sponsored by the Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry. "I feel very pleased, very content," Cárdenas told The Associated Press before stepping up and flashing a victory sign for

raucous cheering supporters. Meanwhile Mexico's oldest opposition party appeared to win two governor's races from the ruling party, expanding its power across the nation's north. The centre-right National Action Party won the governor's race in this economically important state of Nuevo Leon, according to exit polls cited by Mexican television networks. National action also captured the central state of Queretaro, winning 47.5 per cent to the ruling party's 36.4 per cent in a survey of selected precincts by the University of Guadalajara's polling unit. The poll had a margin of error of 4 percent age points.

Tamil political activities receive setback after MP's murder

Democratic political activity in Sri Lanka's troubled Northeast has received a setback with the murder of a Tamil MP, allegedly by Tamil Tigers. Shocked workers of Tamil parties have told their leaders that it would not be possible for them to carry on political work in the east after the July 5 killing of MP Arunasalan Thangathurai who belonged to the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). "They fear that the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) would kill anybody challenging its claim to be the sole representative of the Tamil people," said a senior TULF leader who did not want to be named. Thangathurai and four others were gunned down during a school ceremony in the eastern capital of Trincomalee. However, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and the People Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) said that they

would continue with political work in the north and east regardless of the murder. They have asked the government for additional security for party workers. The TULF leader said that Thangathurai was killed to "teach a lesson" to democratic Tamil parties not to cross the Tamil Tigers' path. He pointed out that the rebels were angered by a recent statement by another TULF MP, Anandasangari, in support of the army operation to open up a land route to Jaffna. Anandasangari had welcomed the ongoing military operation as it would help speed up rehabilitation and development work in the war-ravaged north. What Anandasangari said was that the land route would be beneficial to the "Tamil people," the TULF member said. "But the LTTE saw his statement as an open support to the military action against the rebels," he added. Anandasangari had also quipped at a recent Tamil party

meeting that the much-publicised rape and murder of Jaffna school girl Krishanti could have been the work of the Tamil rebels in order to blame the army. Thirteen army personnel are facing trial for the alleged rape and murder of Krishanti and three others. Meanwhile, TULF president M. Sivasthamparam, who was seriously hurt in a 1993 LTTE attack in Colombo which had claimed the lives of TULF secretary general A. Amirthalingam and former TULF MP A. Yogeswaram, issued a statement condemning Thangathurai's murder as a cowardly act. Although the LTTE has not issued any statement so far, the police believe that the rebel movement is behind the killing of the MP and four others. According to preliminary investigations, Thangathurai was attacked with grenades by two young men as he was getting into his car after finishing his speech at the school ceremony. — India Abroad News Service



Supporters of Mexico's Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) celebrate the victory of their candidate for the mayor of Mexico City, Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, over the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) candidate, Alfredo del Mazo, Sunday in Mexico City. The victory by veteran leftist Cárdenas is the biggest defeat to date that the PRI has suffered, which is the world's longest ruling party. — AFP/UNB photo

Troops-MILF clash leaves 23 dead in Philippines

MANILA, July 7: Twenty-three people were killed and several others wounded in the past two days in heavy fighting between government troops and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels in the southern Philippines, reports Xinhua. Citing a military report, the local newspaper Manila Bulletin today said that as of Sunday afternoon, the fighting in central Mindanao had resulted in the killing of 20 MILF rebels. Three government soldiers were also killed, while six others wounded since three army brigades, backed by tanks and helicopter gunships, mounted a fresh offensive against the MILF Saturday morning. The military report said the new offensive was launched after some 1,200 MILF rebels, consisting of attacking and blocking forces, launched a ferocious attack on four army detachments in the region.

Pathfinder beams back enough information to change views about Mars

PASADENA, California, July 7: Just three days after bouncing onto the red planet, the Pathfinder mission already has beamed back enough information to change the way scientists here view Mars, reports AP. On Sunday, officials at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory said Pathfinder's dramatic photos indicate that large amounts of water once swept across the planet's bleak, rock-strewn surface. "There have been multiple events of flooding" in the Ares Vallis plain where Pathfinder touched down Friday and started beaming back images, said researcher Ronald Greeley. Unlike the landing site of the US Viking project 21 years ago, Ares Vallis includes numerous "round rocks, transported by water," Greeley said. That many of these rocks are leaning in the same direction is evidence that the same water current affected them, he noted. More signs of water are located on a Martian hill, Greeley said. The hill appears to have

different "layers" that could be sediment deposited over successive eras or "terraces cut by erosion." These are "all indicative of water activity," he said. Matthew Golombek, the project's chief scientist, said the landing site contains rocks and boulders with "a large variety of texture, fabric, colours, shapes and sizes." "We have everything we could possibly imagine," said Golombek, noting that the photographs so far have revealed a valley, hills, the edge of a crater formed by the impact of a meteorite, and what appears to be a mountain in the distance. On Sunday, the six-wheeled robot Sojourner began exploring the landing site, covering a distance of two metres (6.6 feet). Sojourner is set to examine the Martian sand and head toward a grey rock with bumpy appearance similar to that of a ship's hull encrusted with shells. The rock has been dubbed

"barnacle bill" after the title of a traditional song. Scientists are also interested in another nearby Martian stone at least one metre (3.3 feet) in height. They have christened it "yogi" after the cartoon bear. Among the other items that have caught the eye of scientists are a whitish run on the side of hill and a large rock standing out on the horizon. As Sojourner rolls across the Martian landscape, Pathfinder continues to collect data on meteorology and the atmosphere, and snaps more photos. NASA said it expects the probe to collect and transmit data for at least a month. The robot is designed to operate for about a week. But on Sunday scientists expressed hope that both devices would run even longer. Overcoming some glitches, the rover touched Martian soil for the first time Saturday. The device gently rolled off Pathfinder's rear ramp at 10:59 pm (05:59 GMT Sunday), leaving neat track marks in the dust. NASA officials at the laboratory clapped and cheered as they received confirmation of the event on a planet millions of kilometres (miles) away.

This black-and-white mosaic picture shows the Mars Pathfinder rover Sojourner (in foreground) and the Martian surface with tags indicating the different names given the rocks on Sunday. Some of the names given to Mars' rocks are "Barnacle Bill," "Flat Top" and "Yogi." — AFP/UNB photo

US special forces, CIA prepare secret plan to capture Karadzic

LOS ANGELES, July 7: United States special forces and the CIA have prepared a secret plan to capture former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic, the Los Angeles Times reported on Sunday, reports Reuters. Quoting US intelligence sources, the Times said the plan was a response to Washington's growing concern that Karadzic was a major threat to long-term peace in former Yugoslavia. Officials told the Los Angeles Times that President Bill Clinton had not formally approved the plan and that he hoped increased diplomatic pressure would prompt the Bosnian Serb government to surrender Karadzic peacefully. The newspaper said planning under special forces and the Central Intelligence Agency directorate of operations began last year to capture Karadzic

Mission manager Richard Cook declared Saturday "a great day", adding that he felt as if he were "in heaven." NASA administrator Daniel Goldin told NBC television that the rover was unlikely to encounter Martian life resembling the "little green men" of science fiction fame. "We have clues that indicate there might have been fossilised life on Mars, and by life, I'm not talking about little green men and women," he said. "I'm talking about bacteria-sized life. We have a very good sense that there could be life, but we won't know for a while."

The Pathfinder spent seven months hurtling across 497 million kilometres (308 million miles) to get to its destination at 17:07 GMT Friday, some two hours before its first Martian sunrise. The robot, which cost 25 million dollars to build, is named after Sojourner Truth, a freed slave who preached on emancipation and women's rights in the 19th century.