

NATO leaders trace border of a new Europe inviting 3 countries

MADRID, July 9: NATO leaders have traced the borders of a new Europe by inviting Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join the western alliance, but doubts remain about their commitment to extend their zone of security and prosperity further to the east, reports Reuters.

US President Bill Clinton, who prevailed over European allies who wanted a broader enlargement, hailed the dawn of a new Europe that is undivided, democratic and peaceful.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was born in Czechoslovakia and whose family fled the Nazi German invasion, was particularly emotional about seeing her former homeland invited to join NATO following the fall of communist rule.

NATO leaders vowed in a communiqué their door would remain open to other former communist states and they would review the expansion process in 1999, giving a special mention to Romania and Slovenia as deserving cases.

Completing their embrace of former WARSAW pact adversaries and neutral states, the 16 leaders will sign a charter with Ukraine today and hold the first session of a Euro-Atlantic partnership council with 27 partner nations.

The jubilant Polish, Czech and Hungarian leaders embraced and raised clasped arms in triumph at the NATO summit conference centre after receiving their invitations to join the defence alliance that won the Cold War.

Ironically, two of them — Polish resident Aleksander Kwasniewski and Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn — were once communists, although both now espouse democracy and the market economy. Czech President Vaclav Havel was a dissident author jailed by a Soviet-backed regime.

French President Jacques Chirac, who with Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi had led the campaign to bring Romania and Slovenia into the first wave, said those states had been given a clear perspective.

Defection to new party Communists blast Gujral for not dismissing 3 ministers

NEW DELHI, July 9: Communists in India's ruling coalition today attacked Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral for refusing to dismiss three ministers who triggered a political crisis by defecting from his party, reports AFP.

The Communist Party of India (CPI), a member of the minority United Front government, and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), which supports it from the outside, said they would not compromise on the issue.

"We will see how adamant he is," said CPI-M head Harkishan Singh Surjeet following Gujral's comments that he would retain the three ministers in his centre-left coalition despite their defections to a new party.

Gujral's Janata Dal (people's party), the dominant partner in the already-fragile United Front coalition, split at the weekend when its then-president Laloo Prasad Yadav launched a breakaway faction.

The three ministers joined the new party. A fourth minister in Gujral's government, made up of more than a dozen parties, has hinted he might follow.

The break-up in the Janata Dal, which has raised fears of fresh political instability which could spark general elections, prompted the communists to ask Gujral to act over the three ministers.

The CPI-M's Surjeet warned: "We are adamant to see that they go. We will see how he retains the ministers."

CPI General Secretary A B Bardhan said although Gujral was free to choose his own ministers nobody whose party was not an official member of the United Front should be in the government.

This is an issue for the United Front to decide and not an individual, however highly placed," Bardhan said. "The United Front has 14 parties. The last word has not been said on the issue."

The CPI's Doraiswamy Raja went a step further and told AFP: "We are not happy with the functioning of the prime minister."

Today's attack was the most direct against Gujral by his left

Top rebel leader among 10 killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, July 9: A top Muslim separatist leader was among 10 militants killed in the troubled Indian state of Kashmir Tuesday, witnesses said here, reports AFP.

Residents in Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, claimed Asadullah Mir was killed by Indian troops while in their custody.

Mir carried a reward of 500,000 rupees (14,285 dollars) on his head and headed a forum of eight militant groups fighting Kashmir's merger with Pakistan.

Muslim insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir has claimed more than 20,000 lives since 1989.

"Asadullah's dead body with torture marks was handed over to the local police station by the special operation group," a witness said on condition of anonymity, referring to the military outfit deployed to fight rebels.

Police, however, said Mir died in a gun battle.

In separate incidents of violence across Kashmir, local sources said.

Police accuse ex-minister of conspiring to kill Chandrika

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, July 9: Police have accused a former government minister of conspiring to kill President Chandrika Kumaratunga, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

In a note to the Supreme Court on Tuesday, TV Sumanasekera, chief of the police Criminal Investigation Department, said he had information that former minister Sirisena Cooray held discussions with "notorious criminals" while planning the conspiracy.

The statement said the assassination was to take place during one of the president's frequent visits to her family home in Attanagalle, about 37 kilometers (23 miles) northeast of Colombo.

Cooray, a former housing minister, was arrested June 16 from his home in Colombo on the orders of the secretary of defense. The secretary cited emergency regulations to protect public order and national security.

Cooray's lawyers later filed a petition challenging his arrest and detention, and demanding 10 million rupees (dhs 17,400) as damages. The respondents in the petition were Defense Secretary Chandrabanda de Silva and the police chief Wickremasinghe Rajaguru.

Mars more similar to earth than moon

PASADENA, Calif., July 9: Mars is more similar to the earth in its composition than even the moon, startled scientists announced after studying the results of the first-ever robotic analysis of a martian rock, reports Reuter.

In addition, they said, they analysis went a long way towards proving that a meteorite believed to have come from Mars and thought to contain fossil evidence of ancient life did indeed come from the red planet.

What the mars pathfinder spacecraft's little rover, sojourner, found when it scanned a rock known as barnacle bill with its alpha proton X-ray spectrometer was that it was probably one third quartz in composition because of the amount of silica it contained.

I was just floored when it came out silica as I am still struggling with what the implications are. This is more like earth than our own moon, which has no quartz on it. Hap McSwen of the university of Tennessee, a participating scientist in the pathfinder science project, said yesterday.

The rover's analysis also revealed the rock's chemical fingerprints which Mcswen said were identical to the 12 meteorites found on earth that scientists believed originated on Mars billions of years ago.

So now we can say we have analysed 13 Martian rocks, he said during a press briefing at NASA's jet propulsion laboratory here.

One of the 12 meteorites examined — designated Alh80041 and discovered in Alaska — was examined with new techniques two years ago by scientists from NASA and Stanford University in California and was found to contain organic molecules and iron mineral compounds commonly associated with microscopic organisms.

Mcswen said there were three ways that quartz was formed by volcanoes, by a rock melting on impact and then cooling, or by water creating it from sediment.

All three were possibilities, he said, pointing out that there was a crater near the landing site and there was evidence, announced on Monday, that the area was scene of a catastrophic flood billions of years ago.

BRIEFLY

Russia test fires IBM missile: Russia successfully tested a new version of its Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile Tuesday, strategic forces commander General Vladimir Yakovlev said, AFP reports from Moscow.

The test was carried out at the Plesetsk Military Base in north-western Russia, Yakovlev told Interfax. The latest missile, developed since 1993, would upgrade Russia's Soviet-era stock. "The development programme for the Russian strategic forces is going ahead as planned despite the army's poor financial situation. Russia will remain one of the principal nuclear powers in the 21st century," Yakovlev was quoted as saying.

Indo-Pak govts renew rail deal: India and Pakistan governments have agreed to renew the India-Pakistan rail agreement for a further period of three years from July 8, 1997 to July 7, 2000, PTI reports from New Delhi.

The India-Pakistan agreement on rail communication was concluded on June 28, 1976, for three years. Since then it has extended from time to time with modifications for consecutive periods of three years each. The modified agreement of 1991 was extended for a period of three years in July 1994.

ROK RC offers more aid to DPRK: South Korea's Red Cross said Wednesday that it will offer more food aid for hunger-stricken North Korea, AP reports from Seoul.

Under an agreement struck in May, the South Korean Red Cross is already delivering 50,000 tons of food, mostly corn, to the North. In that accord, Seoul promised to consider more aid. On Wednesday, South Korea's Red Cross said it will propose talks with its North Korean counterpart, probably later this month, to discuss more food aid. South Korean Red Cross officials said they still have 5.5 billion won (6.2 million dollars) in unspent cash donations for the North. More donations have been promised by South Korean church and charity organisations, they added.

8 prisoners killed in Turkey: Eight Turkish prisoners were killed and 11 injured overnight in rioting in an Istanbul prison to protest against poor conditions, NTV television reported early yesterday, AFP reports from Ankara.

Police stormed the city's Metris jail early yesterday to end the rioting while firefighters intervened to put out a fire started by the prisoners in one of the buildings, the source said. It was unclear how the victims had died, but NTV, citing rescuers, said most of them had suffocated to death in the fire.

Air crash claims 3 in Indonesia: A small aircraft of the Indonesian domestic airline Merpati Nusantara Airline (MNA) crash landed on the eastern island of Ambon yesterday killing its crew of three, MNA said, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The plane crashed on landing at Pattimura Airport, Ambon this morning and the three people on board, pilot, a flight officer and a technician, all died, "a official of the MNA public relations office said.

Blast kills 17 in Brazil: At least 17 people were killed early Tuesday in a fiery crash of two tanker trucks on a motorway in the northern state of Para, police said, AFP reports from Brasilia.

Several people were injured and others were not accounted for, police officials contacted by telephone said. The blast occurred when a fuel truck tried to pass another tanker carrying 24 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, which had stopped after catching fire.

US envoy to Bosnia replaced: The nomination of career diplomat Richard Kauzlarich, US ambassador to Azerbaijan, to be ambassador to Bosnia was announced Tuesday by President Clinton, AP reports from Washington.

Kauzlarich would replace Ambassador John Menzies. He has had a number of Washington assignments related to European affairs and also has had overseas assignments in Israel, Ethiopia and Togo.

Int'l beer festival opens in China: An international beer festival opened yesterday in this coastal city in east China's Shandong province, Xinhua says from Qingdao.

Some 20,000 people, including 40 beer producers from both at home and abroad, attended the opening ceremony.

HK leader inspects Chinese troops for 1st time

HONG KONG, July 9: Hong Kong's leader Tung Chee-hwa inspected Chinese troops Wednesday for the first time since they took up posts inside the former British colony, reports AP.

Tung's 75-minute rain-soaked visit to Stonecutter's Island, a former British naval base in Hong Kong's famous harbor, gave journalists a first glimpse of how it's changed, now that a Chinese navy unit is based there.

The first indications was a red banner stretched across the entrance, proclaiming a "warm welcome" for the People's Liberation Army in phrases standard on mainland China but completely new for Hong Kong.

"I represent all Hong Kong people to warmly welcome you," Tung echoed as he addressed the troops from the land, navy and air units of the People's Liberation Army or PLA.

Under a Chinese-British agreement that laid down the terms of the July 1 change of sovereignty, China gives Hong Kong considerable autonomy but is responsible for its foreign affairs and defense.

It has stationed more than 4,700 troops in Hong Kong, and has not said if it will send more. The British garrison numbered about 9,000 several years ago but was reduced as the handover neared.

Two guided missile vessels, two patrol vessels and two troop carriers were moored at Stonecutter's Island. PLA officers refused to say how many troops were stationed at the base, or even how many paraded for Tung's inspection.

The close-lipped attitude contrasted with the departed British military, which assigned public relations officers to mingle with reporters and answer questions.

The Chinese military ignored requests to send an officer over to answer reporters' questions, although some individual soldiers responded to queries.

The PLA has no public relations office, either on the mainland or in Hong Kong. During the week since the handover,



A man inspects Tuesday the rails damaged by swollen water near the spot where an express train (background) en route from Vienna to Warsaw derailed Monday near Suchdol nad Odrou. Workers at the spot are still not able to remove the damaged train as the area is still flooded after several days of heavy downpour. — AFP/UNB photo

Hun Sen's forces take grip on capital Int'l operations to evacuate foreigners gather pace in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, July 9: International operations to evacuate hundreds of foreigners from Cambodia gathered pace early today as factional fighting between the rival prime ministers spread out of the capital, reports AFP.

Second prime minister Hun Sen, now in control of Phnom Penh, responded to widespread calls for an end to the conflict by telling other nations to stay out of Cambodia's affairs.

His arch enemy, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, vowed from Paris to form a resistance movement against what he described as a "coup d'etat."

Hun Sen's forces took a grip on the capital Monday after two days of bitter fighting that left at least 16 dead and was followed by looting and widespread chaos.

On Tuesday, Thai military a-130 transporters carried out eight flights to Phnom Penh's badly damaged Pochentong airport to pick around 700 Thais and 100 other foreigners.

A special civilian flight took out 136 Malaysian nationals and another two flights to Kuala Lumpur were planned today, Malaysian officials said.

Early today, a Philippine military plane left Manila for Bangkok en route to Phnom

Penh to evacuate Filipinos. Philippine officials said up to 110 nationals out of the total of 500 in Cambodia have sought refuge at the Philippine mission in Phnom Penh.

Taiwan made plans to evacuate about 500 of its nationals.

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DRRK crew man killed as Tigers seize vessel

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, July 9: A North Korean crew member was killed when Tamil rebels hijacked a cargo vessel off Sri Lanka's northern coast, military officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

The North Korea registered "Moran Bong" was returning from Point Pedro harbour when rebels in boats approached it around midnight Monday, officials said.

Details of the slain crew member were not immediately available, but officials said he was killed when the rebels were boarding the vessel.

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Clashes between Shi'ite pilgrims, forces leave 30 dead in Iraq

DAMASCUS, July 9: At least 30 people were killed in clashes between Shi'ite pilgrims and security forces near Karbala in southeast Iraq, an Iraqi Islamist group said on Tuesday, reports AP.

The pilgrims were travelling to the tomb of the Imam Hussein in Karbala for an annual Shi'ite festival on Thursday, according to a statement from the Damascus-based organisation for Islamic action.

The clashes erupted after police set up inspection points on roads leading to Karbala and forced the majority of pilgrims to return to their homes, the statement said, without saying how many people attempted the pilgrimage.

More than 30 bodies and a large number of injured people were spotted, many of whom were taken to an unknown location, it said.

The authorities also pressured inhabitants of Karbala not to welcome the pilgrims by cutting off electricity and water and preventing food supplies arriving, the statement said.

"All international organisations should intervene to prevent these serious violations," the group said, calling on the UN Security Council to implement resolution 688 concerning human rights in Iraq.

Bomb attack on train in Punjab Police searching for clues

BHATINDA, India, July 9: Police raided the hideouts of Sikh separatists in Punjab on Wednesday to look for clues in the bombing of a train that killed 36 passengers and injured 70 others, the state police chief said, reports AP.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Tuesday's blast near the Punjab province town of Bhatinda, 275 kilometres (172 miles) north-west of New Delhi. Punjab was the scene of a 10-year secessionist revolt by Sikh militants who wanted to carve out an independent homeland. The rebellion was crushed in the early 1990s, but sporadic violence continues.

State police chief Pooran Chand Dogra refused to give details of the raids, saying it could prejudice the investigation. He said police are working on various clues after it left a small railroad station near Bhatinda. The train had halted there to give way to another express, he said in an interview.

The blast occurred soon after the five-car Ganganagar-Ambala commuter train with 500 people on board left Bhuchou, 15 kilometres (nine miles) east of Bhatinda, he said.

Train guard Surjeet Singh said the train was moving slowly when the blast occurred. Thousands of people thronged the Bhatinda District Hospital, hoping that their

loved ones had escaped the blast.

Twenty persons were in critical condition at the hospital, police and doctors said.

Workers arranged the dead bodies in a ward that had been hastily converted into a makeshift morgue. Relatives of victims complained of mismanagement at the hospital, saying ice blocks to preserve the bodies were brought in only late at night. Among the dead were 11 women and 11 children, a doctor said.

Bhatinda businesses were closed Wednesday to mourn the dead, many of whom were from this prosperous town.

Netanyahu to visit Japan in August

TOKYO, July 9: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is to make an official visit to Japan in August accompanied by Israeli business leaders, the Israeli embassy said today, reports AP.

Netanyahu is scheduled to meet Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko during his four-day visit beginning August 24 at an embassy official said.



Skeletal remains labeled by scientists "No. 2," which are said to be those of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, are seen on an examining table at the Japanese Hospital in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Tuesday. In statements made to the press earlier this week, Jorge Gonzales, head of the Cuban Institute of Legal Medicine, said he is almost certain that these remains, found along with others in central Bolivia, are those of the legendary guerilla leader. — AFP/UNB photo

Experts dust off bones believed to be those of 'Che' Guevara

LA PAZ, Bolivia, July 9: Drawing closer to a conclusive identification, experts Tuesday dusted off bones believed to be those of Cuban guerilla leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara and began matching them to medical records, reports AP.

Aided by medical records provided by relatives and the Cuban government, forensic specialists and anthropologists examined the bones at a tightly-guarded clinic in the city of Santa Cruz, 550 miles (880 kilometers) east of the capital, La Paz.

Family members and former comrades of the guerillas hovered outside the clinic awaiting the results, which are expected this weekend.

Remains believed to be those of the Argentine-born Guevara and six fellow rebels were discovered a week ago in Vallegrande, 150 miles (240 kilometers) west of Santa Cruz. The skeleton believed to be Guevara was found in a horizontal position alongside six other skeletons piled atop each other.

The teeth and structure of facial bones on one skeleton heightened hopes of Cuban Argentine and Bolivian experts that they had at last found Guevara's remains.

But the telltale sign for most of the experts is that Guevara's skeleton was found without its hands. After a Bolivian officer executed Guevara in October 1967, the rebel leader's hands were severed and taken to Cuba.

The skeleton also was covered with a jacket and did not have any socks. Photographs taken of Guevara after he was killed show him in the same state.

Minister of Human Development Franklin Anaya said the government has decided to hand over the guerillas' remains to their family members.

Guevara's body will reportedly be flown to the Cuban capital, where a ceremony will

be held in his honour.

Experts believe the other remains are those of Chang Navarro from Peru; Simon and Aristeto Reynaga from Bolivia; and Alberto Fernandez, Rene Martinez and Orlando Pantoja of Cuba.

CIA-backed Bolivian special forces seized Guevara and other rebels on October 8, 1967, near Vado del Yeso, in a remote jungle area 250 miles (400 kilometers) southeast of the capital.

Guevara was executed by a Bolivian officer outside a schoolhouse in La Higuera. His body was then flown 300 miles (480 kilometers) away to Vallegrande, where it was dumped in a common grave along with the bodies of the other guerillas.

According to a Bolivian military doctor, Guevara was shot nine times.

Che was a charismatic doctor who fought with Fidel Castro to overthrow Cuban ruler Fulgencio Batista in 1959.