

BRIEFLY

HIV in advanced stage in India:

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) epidemic has reached an advanced stage in India, with Maharashtra and Manipur continuing to have the highest rates of infection, PTI reports from New Delhi.

Latest consolidated data from all the surveillance centres under the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) indicates that one in every ten persons from high-risk groups are infected with the AIDS-causing HIV virus in Maharashtra and Manipur.

The overall AIDS situation is worsening, NACO has warned. As on May 1997, a total of 3.03 million samples from high risk groups and clinically suspected cases of AIDS were screened in various surveillance centres in India.

Jet crash claims 3 in Indonesia:

A newly repaired Casa-212 commuter aircraft operated by Indonesia's Mergati Nusantara Airlines crashed on a distant eastern island killing its three crew, the official Antara news agency reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The report said the aircraft, flying without passengers, crashed 270 metres (yards) short of Ambon's Pattimura Laha Airport, about 2,400 km (2,488 miles) northeast of Jakarta, while making an approach on Wednesday morning.

It said the aircraft was returning to Ambon after seven days stranded on the distant island of Tual after its left engine had to be repaired.

ROK denies having list of spies:

South Korea's intelligence agency said yesterday that it was investigating statements by top-level North Korean defector Hwang Jang-yop that there were many spies planted in the South. AFP reports from Seoul.

But the agency denied press reports that Hwang, the North's top *Juche* (self-reliance) ideologue, had brought with him a list of South Koreans collaborating with Pyongyang.

Evacuation from Cambodia to begin:

Australia will on Friday begin the evacuation of hundreds of Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders from strife-torn Cambodia. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer announced yesterday. Reuter reports from Cairns.

Downer also said Australia was reviewing its 32 million Australian dollars (24 million US dollars) annual aid and military assistance to Cambodia.

Cholera claims 19 in Sumatra:

A cholera-related disease has killed at least 19 people in two provinces on the western Indonesian island of Sumatra, a report said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

Muntaber, which causes serious diarrhoea and vomiting killed 10 people and infected 253 others in Sangir, west Sumatra.

The disease killed nine people and infected 147 others in the neighbouring province of Jambi, the Republik Daily said.

8046 rly officers punished in India:

Railways have punished 8046 officials last year for various malpractices during 1995 following vigilance inquiry against their conduct. PTI reports from New Delhi.

The vigilance organisation conducted 31060 preventive checks and investigated 3954 complaints against malpractices during 1996. The vigilance officials also scrutinised the malfunctioning of base kitchen and catering. Major areas of vigilance inquiry covered mass contact area such as passenger reservations, booking offices, booking and parcel offices, trains, platforms and booking of luggage, parcel and goods.

India-Japan defence talks held:

India and Japan yesterday discussed regional and global security issues and defence and bilateral cooperation, PTI reports from New Delhi.

A Japanese delegation led by the Parliamentary Vice Minister of defence, Katsumi Asano met the Minister of State for Defence, NVN Somu. Earlier, he held talks with the defence secretary, Ajit Kumar. The Japanese minister also addressed the United Services Institution Wednesday on security perspective of Asia Pacific region and the Japanese defence policy.

Amnesty to Lankan army deserters:

Sri Lanka's army commander Thursday announced an amnesty for military deserters who return to their camps within the next 11 days, a senior military official said, AP reports from Colombo.

"This decision is consequent to a number of requests by the parents of deserters and some deserters themselves," said Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe, the military spokesman.

Scientists looking for different Martian rocks similar to earth

PASADENA, Calif. July 10: The Mars rover carefully sidled up to another newly discovered "rock star" on Wednesday, nosing close to a boulder nicknamed "Yogi" that scientists hope will deliver more clues about the red planet, reports Reuter.

"We are looking for different rocks so we can get a better idea of Mars' total composition," said mission scientist Matthew Golombek at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory here.

"We have lots of different rocks on earth and we would expect to find the same thing on Mars," he said.

"Yogi", named after the cartoon character yogi bear because of what some scientists call its bear-like appearance, will be the second Martian rock that the little six-wheeled buggy has probed following the Pathfinder spacecraft's landing in the Ares Vallis basin of Mars last Friday.

Its first target, the pock-marked-looking "barnacle bill" yielded a stream of information which surprised scientists by showing that Mars, far from being alien, is instead a lot like earth.

In the quest to expand the available data, the rover will also be sent to two other nearby rocks, "Casper" and "Scoobie doo" — also dubbed after cartoon characters to examine them with its alpha proton X-ray spectrometer.

The Sojourner had been originally scheduled to scan "Yogi" shortly after its landing, but photographs from the lander craft showed the front of the rock sitting in a hollow, perhaps formed when it was deposited there, either by a flood or being blasted from a nearby volcanic eruption millions or billions of years ago.

This, explained Golombek at

a media briefing, could mean that if the rover was to venture to that part of the rock it might slide into the hollow and bump its solar panels against the rock, depriving its batteries of valuable energy from the sun.

So the Sojourner spent much of Tuesday taking high resolution, close-up pictures of "yogi" to determine where it should place its spectrometer against the rock, where it would bombard the surface with protons.

The device, which explores the chemical make-up of rocks by measuring the changes in protons as they bounce back, is intended to determine the rock's composition.

"From what we can see from

the photographs, this is a totally different rock from "Barnacle Bill" and probably with a somewhat different composition," Golombek said.

Instructions were to be sent to the microwave-oven-sized rover early on Wednesday telling it to take its measurement on the left-hand side of the rock, Golombek said.

While the earthbound scientists are quite confident the rover is performing its appointed tasks, they generally have to wait a full day to confirm it, Golombek said.

That is because they have restricted themselves to two sessions daily of sending commands and downloading data

from the spacecraft, mostly late at night and early morning Pacific daylight time, when the sun is shining on Sojourner and sending power to its solar cells.

It takes about 10 minutes, 25 seconds for a signal to travel between the two planets.

Jeff Johnson, a US geological survey scientist on loan to NASA, said close-up, high-resolution pictures of "Barnacle Bill" taken by the rover and sent to earth on Tuesday night indicated that it was a homogeneous rock and not a mixture of particles and was more likely to have been formed by a volcanic eruption rather than from sediment.



This Wednesday photograph taken by the imager mounted on the Sojourner rover looks back at the Pathfinder from its position on the Martian surface. — AFP/UNB photo

India blames Pakistan for train blast

NEW DELHI, July 10: Pakistan was blamed by Indian authorities Wednesday for a bomb blast which left 36 people dead and around 70 injured in the frontier state of Punjab, news agencies reported, says AFP.

Kashmir. In New Delhi, Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal urged the government "to make it abundantly clear to Pakistan" that it should end "hostile interference" in Punjab and Kashmir.

The Press Trust of India quoted Director General of Police PC Dogra as saying Tuesday's explosion could have been the handiwork of Pakistani intelligence agents.

Dogra gave no evidence to back up his allegations after the devastating blast near the town of Bhatinda in the northern Sikh-majority state.

No group has claimed responsibility, although suspicion has fallen on Sikh militants as well as Muslim separatists from neighbouring

The United News of India said Badal's call was made in a meeting with Home Minister Indrajit Gupta and in a message to Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral.

Badal said central and state governments "had enough information" that some recent bomb blasts "were engineered from across the border."

He said the heavy duty explosive RDX was probably used by the bombers who had placed it in the middle of a train compartment.

UN members urged to shun Hun Sen's military junta

UNITED NATIONS, July 10: Cambodia's UN ambassador on Wednesday urged UN member states to shun the "military junta" of Cambodia led by Co-Prime Minister Hun Sen, reports AFP.

Speaking at a news conference, Prince Sisowath Sirirath also urged the association of South East Asian nations to "Review the admission of Cambodia into its distinguished association."

Meanwhile, ASEAN foreign ministers opened an emergency meeting in Kuala Lumpur, today to decide whether to admit Cambodia this month as scheduled after factional fighting broke out there.

The Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) talks began after ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh urged the ministers to put Cambodia's membership on hold

junta of Cambodia, they are not the representatives of Cambodia," said Sisowath.

Sisowath issued an appeal from Prince Ranariddh, who urged the international community to impose economic sanctions against Cambodia, and called on the association of South East Asian nations to

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Peace talks fail, fighting continues in Congo

BRAZZAVILLE, Republic of Congo, July 10: Peace talks aimed at ending weeks of bloodshed that has ruined much of the Republic of Congo's capital fell through Wednesday when one party refused to attend, report AP.

Representatives of President Pascal Lissouba and his rival, Gen. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, has agreed to meet on Wednesday in an attempt to negotiate a lasting truce.

But a spokesman for Sassou-Nguesso, the former military dictator ousted by Lissouba, said the meeting was poorly planned and his side would not attend.

"We denounce the unpreparedness of these negotiations

and we deplore that President Pascal Lissouba will not sign a formal cease-fire," an unidentified spokesman for Sassou-Nguesso told national radio Wednesday.

Presidential spokesman Christophe Moukweke called Sassou-Nguesso's refusal "shameful and painful."

Both men had verbally agreed to respect a cease-fire that was to have begun Saturday, according to Brazzaville Mayor Bernard Kolelas, but fighting raged through the weekend and again this week. Gunfire could be heard throughout the capital Wednesday.

The power struggle between Lissouba, who was elected in

1992, and Sassou-Nguesso has evolved into a battle over Lissouba's presidential term.

According to the constitution, his term is to end August 31. Elections were planned July 27. Fighting broke out on June 5 when Lissouba sent his troops to disarm Sassou-Nguesso's private Cobra militia, claiming it was necessary to ensure a peaceful campaign.

Sassou-Nguesso said Lissouba was just trying to foment unrest so he would have an excuse to delay the election and prolong his term in power. Since the fighting began, Lissouba has sought to have parliament vote to extend his mandate.

Repression rises in two yrs: Suu Kyi

BANGKOK, July 10: Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi said today repression has increased and the political and economic situation in her country has worsened in the two years since she was released from house arrest.

"I'd have to say that repression has increased on the past two years," Suu Kyi told Reuters in a telephone interview on the second anniversary of her release from six years of house arrest.

"The economic situation has certainly not improved, and neither has political freedom in any way improved," she said in the brief interview that was cut off when the telephone went dead.

US orders most embassy staff to leave Cambodia

WASHINGTON, July 10: The United States ordered out all but 20 of its diplomats in Cambodia Wednesday and urged more than 1,000 other Americans to leave, saying the US government can't guarantee their safety, reports AP.

The State Department also condemned reported political assassinations and mass arrests of opponents of coup leader Hun Sen and called on both sides to halt fighting and honour the 1991 Paris peace accords that ended civil war in Cambodia.

UK won't accept Abacha's 'planned victory' next yr

LONDON, July 10: Britain said today it would not accept a victory by Nigeria's military ruler General Sani Abacha in planned civilian-rule elections next year unless flaws in the poll process were remedied, reports Reuter.

"At the moment it is flawed," Tony Lloyd, Foreign Office Minister responsible for Africa, told the Financial Times in an interview.

"We know that the process of establishment of political parties has been so one-sided as to guarantee that there will be one serious candidate... (resulting in) the transition of General Abacha to president Abacha. We cannot accept that."

The Financial Times said Lloyd did not close the door on Nigeria's transition programme but made clear a wider registration of parties was one of the reforms necessary.

Fighting resumes between troops, peacekeepers in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, July 10: Soldiers of the military regime that recently ousted the country's democratically elected president battled with Nigerian peacekeepers Wednesday, military sources said, reports AP.

Heavy mortar fire could be heard at Lungi International Airport, where several thousand Nigerian peacekeepers are based. Nigeria, as head of the 16-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has demanded that Maj Johnny Paul Koroma, who led the May 25 coup, restore President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah's government to power.

Bosnian Serbs on alert as pressure grows for arrest of Karadzic

PALE, Bosnia-Herzegovina, July 10: Bosnia's most wanted man, Radovan Karadzic, is increasingly isolated in his corner of Serb territory, threatened by a Serb power struggle and by international pressure for his arrest. But nabbing him still won't be easy, reports AP.

Townpeople — speaking on condition of anonymity — say the Bosnian Serbs' indicted wartime leader is taking precautions: He sleeps in different houses to avoid nighttime raids. He surrounded his own house with minefields.

Karadzic also reportedly has bolstered his already tough and loyal security detail in Pale, the town east of Sarajevo where he has made his stronghold.

Two brigades of special forces — roughly 500 men, all war veterans, well-equipped and trained — patrol the forest behind Karadzic's one-story house in this ski village, and the house itself. Nearby, reserve police units and a corps of the Bosnian Serb army are on call. In addition, every Serb here is armed — and no one seems eager to give up Karadzic.

"Whatever he is like, no one will let the Americans arrest him," said Dusan Saric, a 46-year-old Pale resident. "It's a matter of pride."

The new attention President Clinton and other US officials are paying Karadzic is giving people a case of the jitters in Pale.

Nearly everyone here has an

opinion on what the United States might do to capture Karadzic, when, and whether many people would be killed.

The renewed international attention comes as a NATO-led international force prepares to

New Delhi to employ private detectives to spy on bureaucrats!

NEW DELHI, July 10: The New Delhi city administration plans to employ private detectives to spy on corrupt bureaucrats, newspapers reported today, reports AFP.

The spooks will keep an eye on various departments in the city government and report directly to the capital's Chief Minister Sahib Singh Verma, The Times of India said.

"I have spoken to two private detective agencies," Verma was quoted as saying. He added it was part of measures to curb growing corruption.

But the announcement was not received kindly by city officials.

The Times quoted one unidentified bureaucrat as calling the scheme "stupid and saying that the Chief Minister had been badly advised."

pull out of Bosnia's in a year's time, ending its mission to enforce the peace accord that ended Bosnia's three and half year war.

Although formally out of power because of war crimes indictments as an alleged leader of genocide, Karadzic pulls strings and stays in control of the 49 per cent of Bosnia that is in Serb hands.

His aides refuse to allow refugees to return home, or cooperate in knitting the Serb republic and a Muslim-Croat federation together as one country. There is a widespread fear among foreign powers that unless Karadzic is sidelined, the entire international effort will unravel when the peace force leaves next year — leading to new fighting.

Clinton said Wednesday that the international force could arrest Karadzic and other war crimes suspects if it seems the effort would be worth the risk.

However, he declined to comment on persistent reports that a raid is being planned, and that units might be formed to capture Karadzic for trial before an international tribunal at The Hague, Netherlands.

Top US military officers say they have no orders for a military operation to capture Karadzic and other indicted war crimes suspects. International military officials fear any attempt to grab Karadzic would bring violent Serb retaliation.

Lasting peace in Cambodia a mere impossibility?

From the start, peace in Cambodia was never the sole goal of the long negotiating process which produced the 1991 Paris Accords. Broader interests were at stake.

In the end, those interests became paramount, prompting the United Nations and the major powers to accept a power-sharing role for Hun Sen which paved the way for the current crisis.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the presence of Vietnamese forces in Cambodia was a serious threat to regional stability in Southeast Asia and an impediment to any international effort to rehabilitate Cambodia devastated after nearly two decades of civil war.

With a pro-Vietnamese government installed in Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese launched a major offensive in 1983 against Khmer Rouge guerrillas in northwestern Cambodia and clashed with Thai troops along the border.

Meanwhile, little could be done for the Cambodians as long as Vietnam remained there. None of the major Western countries could normalise relations with Cambodia, or provide desperately needed economic aid as long as Vietnamese troops propped up the government there.

For the Vietnamese, Cambodia had become a drain on scarce resources as Hanoi's troops failed repeatedly to crush the Khmer Rouge. China openly supported the anti-Viet-

namese resistance.

But Vietnam could not afford to withdraw unless it was convinced that a militantly anti-Vietnamese government would not seize power in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh.

Enter international diplomacy. The goal was to find a formula under which the Vietnamese would leave without major security concerns and be replaced by a Cambodian government with a modicum of legitimacy.

After a series of talks in Paris, Vietnam began withdrawing its troops in December 1988. The following September, Vietnam announced that all its soldiers had left Cambodia.



French model Laetitia Costa presents a short silvery link dress with a beige tulle coat Wednesday in Paris during the Paco Rabanne 1997/98 Fall/Winter high fashion collection. — AFP/UNB photo



US President Bill Clinton responds to questions at a press conference in Madrid, Wednesday, at the end of a two-day NATO Summit at which a NATO-Ukraine Charter was signed, and Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were invited to join the alliance. — AFP/UNB photo

UNSC calls for peace talks in Afghanistan

UNITED NATIONS, July 10: The Security Council called for all sides in the Afghan conflict to stop fighting and resume peace talks under UN auspices, reports AP.

In a statement read by its president, Ambassador Peter Osvold of Sweden, the Council urged all sides "to return to the negotiating table immediately and to work together toward the formation of a broad-based, fully representative government that will protect the rights of all Afghans."

Afghanistan has been ravaged by factional violence since the occupying Soviet troops were expelled in 1989. The Taliban religious army controls the southern two-thirds of the country. An anti-Taliban coalition, led by ousted defense chief Ahmed Shah Massoud and Uzbek warlord Malik Pahlawan, controls most of the north. In his statement, the Security Council said it "is deeply concerned at the continuing discrimination against girls and women and other violations of human rights." The Taliban, which seeks to impose its strict version of Islamic law, has banned women from work and girls from school.