

International

Three states advocate for elimination

UNSC renews sanctions against Libya

UNITED NATIONS, July 11: The UN Security Council renewed sanctions against Libya on Thursday but not before an unprecedented bid by Arab and African members to relax measures imposed in the wake of the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, reports AP.

Council President Peter Osvald of Sweden said the sanctions, which ban air travel to and from Libya, would remain in effect for another 120 days.

Those sanctions were imposed in 1992 after Libya refused to hand over suspects in the Pan Am attack and in the 1989 bombing of a French UTA jetliner over Niger.

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi has offered to send the suspects to a neutral country for trial but refuses to hand them over to British, American or French courts.

The sanctions have been

routinely extended with little debate every four months.

On Thursday, however, Egypt, Kenya and Guinea-Bissau for the first time formally requested moves aimed at eliminating the sanctions. They cited resolutions of the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity against the sanctions.

The three asked the council to convene a special meeting to consider three options: trying the suspects in a neutral country; trying them before Scottish judges at the International Court of Justice in The Hague; or establishing a special court to hear the cases.

In the meantime, the three asked the council to permit flights for religious, humanitarian and official missions.

They also asked the council to order the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs to investigate the impact of the sanctions on the Libyan people and on neighboring countries which traditionally trade with Libya.

France, Britain and the United States insisted on maintaining the sanctions. The British and the Americans also opposed any UN investigation on the humanitarian impact.

After a three-hour debate, Osvald ruled that the Libyans had not complied with the sanctions resolution and the sanctions would be extended.

"We do not believe it is right for the council to get into a negotiation with a member state over the implementation of its resolution, especially when the state concerned is harbouring two terrorist suspects," deputy British Ambassador Stephen Gomersall told the council.

But Egyptian Ambassador Nabil Elaraby, appearing with envoys from Kenya and Guinea-Bissau said Thursday's debate

marked a major shift in attitudes toward Libya.

"Today was not a routine review," Elaraby said. "For the first time in five years, proposals [were discussed] ... that seek justice, that call for holding a trial of the suspected persons, because without a trial, no one can say who committed this heinous crime."

Despite the decision to extend the sanctions, Libya's UN ambassador, Abu Zaid Dorda, considered the fact of a debate to be a diplomatic victory.

"From now on we can behave as though these sanctions were not there," he told reporters. "We have many, many options that we will study carefully with our Arab brothers."

A total of 270 people were killed in the bombing of the Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland. In the UTA bombing, 170 people died.

Eight killed as LTTE attacks police check-point

COLOMBO, July 11: Tamil Tiger guerrillas opened fire today at a police check-point in northeast Sri Lanka, killing eight people, including a pregnant woman and her two children local officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) staged the attack in Thoppur in Trincomalee district despite a security alert in the area officials said.

The woman and her two children were waiting to buy medicines at a nearby pharmacy when they were killed," said an official in Trincomalee town 260 kilometres (160 miles) north of here.

The eight people killed included two constables officials said adding that the civilians were killed when the Tigers surprised the constables.

At least 12 more civilians and two other constables were also wounded.

CEC declares official results in Albania

TIRANA, July 11: Albania's Socialist Party and its main ally, the Social Democrats, hold a crucial two-thirds majority in the country's Parliament according to official results of the recent elections, released late Thursday by the Central Electoral Commission, reports AFP.

Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano, who plans to be come prime minister, said that just with these two parties alone, the winning coalition had passed the limit required to vote a constitution.

By itself, the Socialist Party holds 99 seats. The total of all six left-wing parties in the coalition is 116 seats, out of a 155-seat Parliament.

The defeated Democratic Party of President Sali Berisha received 27 seats.

Under the system worked out for the June 29 and July 6 general elections, 115 seats were chosen by majority voting, while the remaining 40 were distributed by proportional voting.

NATO's enlargement

US rejects Canadian PM's allegations

WARSAW, July 11: The White House rejected Thursday allegations by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien that the United States had restricted NATO enlargement to three countries for domestic electoral reasons, reports AFP.

"I think Prime Minister Chretien knows that's not the case," US President Bill Clinton's national security advisor Sandy Berger said here.

Speaking in Madrid Wednesday in front of a microphone he apparently thought he was turned off, Chretien said the decision to limit the expansion was due to a lack of enthusiasm in the US Senate and the political clout of the Czech, Polish and Hungarian communities in the United States.



A model wears a snake-ornated fitted dress and a white cap during the presentation of Thierry Mugler's 1997-98 fall-winter haute couture collection presented in Paris Thursday.

Off the Record

All she did for an aspirin

DETROIT: An American Airlines flight made an unscheduled stop in Detroit on Thursday after a passenger said she needed an aspirin so badly she could kill someone, reports Reuters.

After the plane landed, police took the passenger into custody for questioning by agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said Barbara Hogan, a spokeswoman for Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The passenger was identified as a 29-year-old California woman whose name was not released. Authorities could not be reached for comment late on Thursday on whether she had been released or would be charged with a crime.

Flight 2074 had taken off from Chicago on its way to Newark, New Jersey, when the woman said, "Boy, have I got a headache. I need an aspirin before I kill someone," Hogan said.

American Airlines spokeswoman Mary Frances Fagan said the woman made threats against a flight attendant that went beyond on-off hand comment about her headache.

Transmission of HIV via mouth is rare but possible!

ATLANTA: A woman apparently became infected with the AIDS virus from a deep kiss with a man who had bleeding gums and canker sores — the first reported case of HIV transmission through a kiss, the government says, reports AP.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention emphasized Thursday that the virus was transmitted via the man's blood, not his saliva. There are no reported cases of people becoming infected with the AIDS virus through saliva.

Both the man and woman had gum disease and poor oral hygiene. He had bad breath and hairline growths on his tongue, a symptom that sometimes plagues people with the AIDS virus, the CDC said.

Her gum disease had weakened and thinned her gums, making it easier for the virus to get into her blood, the agency said.

The man's gums often bled when he brushed and flossed his teeth. The couple usually had sex and kissed at night after he brushed, the CDC said.

The couple said they always used a condom during sex. They said it once, but that was before the period the CDC believes she was infected. The couple also had oral sex but denied having contact with blood or semen.

"We think it's highly unlikely that's how it was transmitted, but we cannot definitively rule it out," said Dr Scott Holmberg, a CEC epidemiologist.

Dilemma with tallest

CHICAGO: This city can once again brag that it's home to the world's tallest building, reports AP.

SORT OF.

After all, Kuala Lumpur and New York can make the same boast.

The International Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat announced Thursday that the 110-story Sears Tower is once again the tallest skyscraper in the world. That is, if you measure from the ground to the roof 1,450 feet (442 metres), or from the ground to the highest occupied floor 1,431 feet (436 metres).

The council said the twin Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, which took over the world's tallest title last year, are the highest — if you measure from the ground to the top of their spires, which are considered part of the structure 1,483 feet (452 metres).

And the World Trade Centre in Manhattan is the tallest if you measure all the way to the top of their antennas, 1,728 feet (526 metres) into the sky.

That could help repair the bruised ego in Chicago, a city that loves to refer to itself with superlatives.

Even so, Dr R Shankar Nair of Chicago, the chairman of the tall buildings council, didn't find the issue too serious as he explained the new categories to reporters standing next to giant steam vents on the Sears Tower roof, where tourists aren't allowed.

Indian scientist warns

Earth can become lifeless like Mars

NEW DELHI, July 11: A leading Indian scientist Thursday warned earth could become as lifeless as Mars" if the ozone hole was allowed to grow unchecked, reports AFP.

Nirupama Raghavan, Director of New Delhi's Nehru Planetarium, said "the threat is very real, of course, it will not happen tomorrow but could take place over several years if we are not careful."

As the US Pathfinder probe continued to beam back pictures from Mars, Raghavan said the ozone hole over earth was the result of "modern habits."

Chlorofluoro carbons used in home appliances like refrigerators and fire extinguishers do not react with anything here but reach the stratosphere and break up the ozone concentration, she said.

"There is a daily increase of the ozone hole, that means carbon dioxide and other terrible skin diseases if it keeps on expanding at the present rate," Raghavan said a "planet-sized ozone hole over Mars," through which ultraviolet rays pass freely appeared to have sterilised the whole planet.

"We should learn a lesson from this that if we continue making our ozone hole bigger and bigger, as we are doing at present, life on earth will meet the same fate."

The presence of dried-up waterbeds and earth-like rocks on the Martian surface emboldens our faith in the possibility of existence" at least primitive life, at one point of time.

She said, "greenhouse gases have made Venus so hot that even lead could melt here unfortunately, here on earth, with increasing pollution and destruction of forests we are heading for the same fate."

Pakistan tries to ease Russian worries about Taliban

ISLAMABAD, July 11: While in Moscow, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub said he tried to ease Russian worries about Afghanistan's Taliban militia and whether it wanted to export its rigid brand of Islam to Central Asia, reports AP.

Ayub, who spoke to reporters upon his return to Pakistan on Friday, said Russia feared both the fervor of the Taliban soldiers and their radical interpretation of Islam. Russia also worries that the Taliban rulers have ambitions to convert the majority Muslim Pashtun tribe and are mostly Sunni Muslims.

The Taliban, by comparison, are from Afghanistan's majority Pashtun tribe and are mostly Sunni Muslims.

The Taliban control the Afghan capital of Kabul and roughly two-thirds of the countryside. The alliance runs the northern one-third of the country.

In May when the Taliban briefly swept through northern Afghanistan and for 72 hours controlled 90 per cent of the country, Afghanistan's northern neighbours went on high alert.

However, no date has been set for the meeting, nor has all the groups battling for power in Afghanistan agreed to attend.

China upgrading medium-range missiles

WASHINGTON, July 11: China is upgrading its medium-range missiles with smaller more accurate systems that can target India, Japan, Russia, Taiwan and other parts of East Asia, The Washington Times daily said, reports AFP.

The daily obtained a secret report by the national air intelligence centre making public for the first time details about China's Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) nuclear forces.

China is currently converting 40 CSS-2 reentry capable launchers at six sites to handle new mobile CSS-5 Mod 1 launchers and missiles said the report based on satellite photographs.

Mission controllers will just pull the rover forward and try again, like a student driver practicing parallel parking.

Sojourner has 1st mishap on Mars, but working well

PASADENA, California, July 11: Pathfinder mission controllers said Thursday the Sojourner rover sustained no damage and continued operating smoothly after the kind of parking lot auto mishap you'd barely notice on Earth, reports AP.

At the time of the mishap, Sojourner was trying to plant its rock-analyzing alpha proton X-ray spectrometer on Yogi. The instrument ended up testing atmosphere instead, so controllers said they would try again Thursday night to make the measurement.

Results of Pathfinder's ingeniously simple magnetic properties experiment, released at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory during the Pathfinder, science team's daily briefing suggest the iron that makes Mars' soil red may be magnetite, a rare mineral on Earth.

No worries, though.

Mission controllers will just pull the rover forward and try again, like a student driver practicing parallel parking.

In this photo released by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, Thursday, the Sojourner rover takes a photograph of the Martian landscape with the Mars Pathfinder in the background (L). The Sojourner began its study of the Martian rock dubbed Yogi. Scientist report that communications with Sojourner and the Mars Pathfinder are so good that data are moving three to six times faster than planned.

— AFP/UNB photo



President Nelson Mandela (R) of South Africa laughs as British Prime Minister Tony Blair gestures Thursday during a visit at Downing Street in London. It is the first time the two leaders have met since Labour swept to power on May 1 and Downing Street said the informal meeting was expected to last an hour, and would mainly concentrate on South Africa. — AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Senate okays Tenet as CIA chief

A Senate panel unanimously recommended acting CIA director George Tenet for promotion to the agency's top post Thursday, ending months of uncertainty about leadership of the nation's spy service, AP reports from Washington.

The Senate Intelligence Committee voted 19-0 in closed session to support Tenet's nomination. The Senate was expected to confirm the nomination by week's end.

"I talked to him about 20 minutes ago. He feels good about it," said Sen. Richard Shelby, Republican of Alabama, the committee chairman. "He's glad it's over with."

Samper's aide jailed for 6 yrs.

Colombian President Ernesto Samper's financial director in the 1994 election campaign was sentenced Thursday to six and a half years in jail for laundering drug money, justice officials said. AFP reports from Bogota.

Juan Manuel Avella, was found guilty of laundering drug money through the presidential election campaign and forging documents.

Avella is the third official from Samper's presidential campaign convicted on such charges.

American jailed for spreading HIV:

An American rap artist was sentenced to 14 years in prison Thursday on 17 counts of attempted manslaughter by infecting Finnish women with the AIDS virus, AP reports from Helsinki.

Stephen Thomas, 36, of New York City, was arrested in January on charges of endangering the women by having unprotected sex with them without warning them he had HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Five of 17 women involved in the case have since tested HIV positive.

After closed proceedings, the Helsinki District Court announced that it found Thomas guilty of attempted manslaughter because he had concealed that fact that he was HIV positive from the women.

10 die as boat sinks in Aegean Sea:

Ten people drowned and about 25 others were missing and feared dead after a boat smuggling illegal Iraqi refugees from Turkey to Greece sank in the Aegean Sea Thursday, the Anatolia news agency reported, AFP says from Ankara.

The Turkish Coast Guard rescued six Iraqis and recovered the bodies of 10 others after the boat carrying up to 40 people sank for an unknown reason between the Turkish coast and the Greek island of Chios, it said.

The boat with mainly women and children aboard sailed off from Turkey's Aegean port of Karaburun, 300 kms southwest of Istanbul, last night but overturned and sank shortly afterwards.

5 Japanese rescued from sea:

Five crew members on a mid-sized Japanese freighter were rescued after their ship sank following a collision with an empty chemical tanker early Friday, maritime safety spokesman said, AP reports from Tokyo.

The accident occurred in the Pacific Ocean at around 4:20 am (1920 GMT Thursday) about 47 kilometres south of Cape Inubo, about 100 kilometres east of Tokyo.

ETA threatens to kill hostage:

The armed Basque separatist group ETA said Thursday it would kill a hostage it had kidnapped earlier in the day if the Madrid