

International

BRIEFLY

3 N Korean fishermen rescued:

Russian sailors rescued three North Korean fishermen who spent 13 days drifting at sea in their small boat after its engine broke down, officials said Tuesday. AP reports from Moscow.

The boat was spotted by the Russian Volga-411 dry cargo ship on Monday evening 110 (176 kilometers) off the coast of the Korean Peninsula, said the report, cited by the ITAR-Tass news agency. The Russian ship was heading to the North Korean port of Wonsan to hand the fishermen over to authorities there, said Vyacheslav Bakanovich, duty officer at the Vladivostok rescue center in Russia's Far East.

13 die in road mishap in India:

Thirteen Indians died yesterday after being buried alive after a sand lorry overturned, the United News of India reported, AFP says from New Delhi.

The victims were all perched on the top of the vehicle when it crashed. Police officials said adding they were buried as the load of sand spilled out over the road. The accident occurred between the towns of Coimbatore and Mayanur in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

UK to rejoin S Pacific Commission:

Britain will rejoin the South Pacific Commission, which provides research and technical help for Pacific islands, International Development Minister George Foulkes said Monday, AP reports from London.

The previous Conservative government withdrew from the organization in 1995 because it felt the commission was concentrating on issues of little interest to Britain. Foulkes said Britain will rejoin the commission early next year because of its confidence in the work of the organization's new director-general, Bob Dun.

DPRK frees 2 ROK farmers:

North Korea released two South Korean farmers Tuesday, four days after they were seized by border guards in the demilitarized zone that divides the two Koreas, the United Nations said, AP reports from Seoul.

The two — a 66-year-old woman and her 41-year-old son — were set free after they admitted that they accidentally crossed the border into North Korea, the UN military command said. It said they appeared in good physical condition. The release was made after military officers from North Korea and the UN Command inspected the site where the two were apprehended last Friday, the command said.

Road mishap claims 11 in SA:

Eleven forestry workers were killed and 34 injured Monday when one truck smashed into the back of another near the farming town of Bulwer in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, police said, AFP reports from Johannesburg.

Police spokesman Captain Stephen Close said both trucks left the road after colliding, and one overturned, crushing and trapping the passengers beneath it. "It was chaotic, there were people all over the road," Close said. People died trapped underneath the truck.

90 suffer food poisoning in China:

Some 90 workers at a Hong Kong-owned plastic factory suffered food poisoning in a feast at a seafood restaurant in the Southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, it was reported yesterday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

At least 48 of 90 workers were hospitalised after suffering "vomiting and shock" following the banquet to mark the company's anniversary on Monday, the China-backed Ta Kung Pao daily said.

2 suspected Tigers held in Lanka:

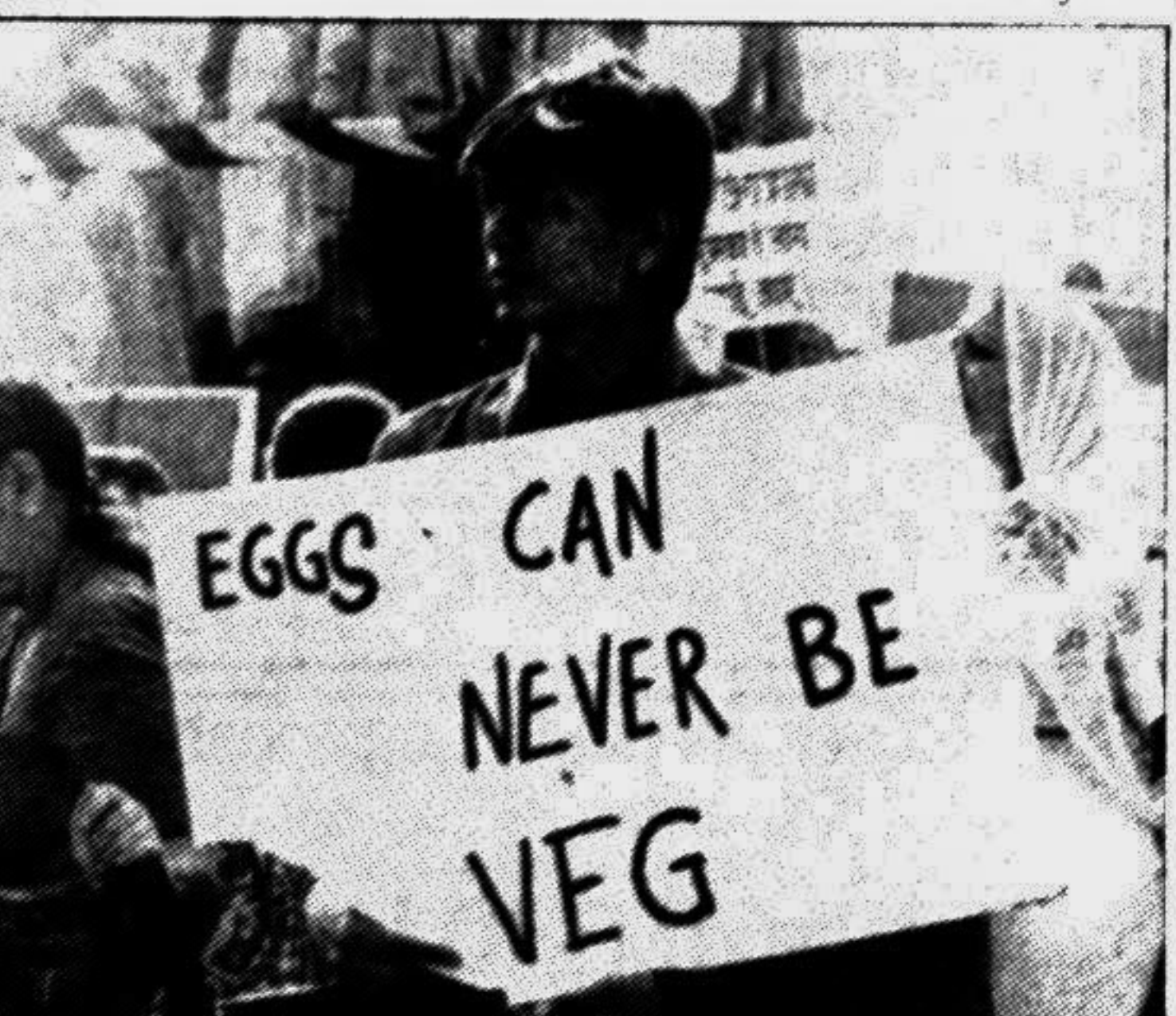
Police arrested two suspected Tamil rebel bombers, averting a possible bomb attack on Colombo, news reports said Tuesday. AP reports from Colombo.

The two men were questioned when they tried to buy a truck, similar to the one used by rebels to bomb the business district Wednesday, the island newspaper quoted a police officer as saying. That attack killed 18 people, wounded 105 others and set back the country's economy. The newspaper quoted a police chief Nimal Mediawaka as saying the two men could not properly explain why they wanted to buy a used truck.

UN to extend W Sahara mission:

The UN Security Council announced Monday it will extend by six months the mandate of a UN Mission in Western Sahara, AFP reports from United Nations.

The 15-member council asked the mission to proceed with the identification of qualified voters in a referendum on self-determination for Western Sahara, meeting a May 31, 1998 deadline for the task. Under accords struck in Houston, Texas last month, following three days of talks attended by Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria and Mauritania's referendum on self-determination of Western Sahara could come within a year.



Raj Dhulia, a businessman, holds a poster urging people to stop eating eggs, Monday. Raj is a member of the Jain community, a religious sect that advocates vegetarian food habits, and vehemently opposes cruelty to animals in any form. Since an egg represents the hope of life, even if it be an unfertilised one, Jains are opposed to their consumption. — AP/UNB photo

Gujral delays his Europe tour
BJP wins crucial vote of confidence in UP

LUCKNOW, India, Oct 21: A one-month-old Hindu nationalist government won a crucial vote of confidence in India's most populous Uttar Pradesh state today after opposition deputies walked out amid violence, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

The vote was carried through by the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) following the walk-out after several lawmakers were injured in violence that broke out in the assembly when it met to consider the vote.

Meanwhile, India's powerful Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, said on Monday it was preparing for a snap general election, a day after its coalition partner quit a key regional alliance.

But political analysts said a general election still appeared some time away because no single party seemed confident of outright victory.

A one-month-old government led by the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, was tottering after its coalition partner pulled out on Sunday, providing a possible opportunity for alliances to be reshuffled in the

hung federal parliament.

"We are all geared up for general elections," said Yashwant Sinha, spokesman for the BJP, India's main opposition party.

"The momentum generated by the events in Uttar Pradesh will sink the central government deeper into its internal contradictions," he told Reuters.

Licking its wounds, the BJP has angrily hit out at Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's centre-left coalition government, which was formed to keep the BJP from power when it emerged as the single largest party after polls in 1996.

BJP leaders said they would launch a major offensive against the ruling 15-party United Front when the federal parliament opened for the winter session next month.

"We are hurt that the BSP has violated its agreement with us. But we are in the process of finding new friends," said Sinha, a former finance minister.

AFP adds: Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral has delayed his European tour because of a political crisis in the most populous state, offi-

cialists said today.

Gujral, due to leave this morning for Germany and France before attending a Commonwealth summit in Scotland, put back his departure to the evening following the Uttar Pradesh crisis, a spokesman for the prime minister's party said.

A coalition ruling the northern state, regarded as the political heart of India, faced a confidence vote after one of the partners withdrew.

Commentators have warned that the crisis could provoke a political shake-out in New Delhi, where Gujral presides over a minority multi-party coalition.

Gujral's delayed departure would mean rescheduling a meeting with business leaders in Germany, officials from the External Affairs Ministry said.

The Prime Minister who came to power exactly six months ago, will also present India's case for a UN Security Council seat to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Jacques Chirac of France. He will then travel to the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh from October 24-27.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, right, meets with South African President Nelson Mandela at the Qubba Palace in Cairo Monday. Mandela is on a two-day visit to Cairo. He will also visit Tunis and Libya. — AP/UNB photo

Russia names Zavarzin as representative to NATO

MOSCOW, Oct 21: Russia named a former peacekeeping general as its first military representative to NATO on Monday, an important and symbolic step towards closer cooperation between Moscow and the Western alliance, reports Reuters.

Russian news agencies quoted Defence Minister Igor Sergeev as saying during a visit to a military academy that Lieutenant-General Viktor Zavarzin would probably be introduced to NATO officials during a visit to Brussels later this week.

"We know he will be appointed but we cannot confirm it officially because we have not seen any official documents yet," a Defence Ministry spokesman said by telephone.

Under the NATO-Russia founding act signed in Paris in May, Russia has the right to set up a mission at NATO headquarters in Brussels with a civilian and a senior military representative.

The Ministry spokesman said Zavarzin had been deputy

head of the Moscow headquarters for military cooperation amongst former Soviet states since April this year.

Before working in Moscow he headed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force in Tajikistan, where a civil war raged for four years until a peace deal was signed, in June. The CIS groups 12 former Soviet republics, although Russians effectively ran the peacekeeping force.

Russia's accord with NATO's 16-member states was hailed as the start of a new era between the former Cold War enemies and gives Moscow a voice but not a veto in NATO affairs, it is intended to help minimise Kremlin concerns about the alliance's eastward enlargement, although Moscow remains wary.

NATO has offered membership to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland — all Moscow's former Warsaw Pact allies.

Defence specialists know little about Zavarzin beyond

his posts agency published a biography of the general which showed his background was in the mechanised infantry.

NATO officials have been anxiously awaiting news of who Moscow would send as its military representative to the alliance in Brussels and pressed Sergeev at a meeting in the Netherlands early this month to name the officer.

Some had feared discredited former Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, a key figure in the Chechen war, would be appointed.

"We're glad it's not Grachev," said one NATO military man. "That would have been a comedy of errors."

Moscow is likely to name its permanent diplomatic representative, or ambassador to NATO soon.

Diplomatic and NATO sources have homed in on Sergei Kislyak, who heads the Russian Foreign Ministry's arms control department, as likely choice, and one that would suit Brussels because of his experience.

'Chandrashekhra failed to provide enough security to Rajiv'

NEW DELHI, Oct 21: The Congress Party today accused former Prime Minister Chandrashekhra of having failed to provide adequate security cover to Rajiv Gandhi despite being aware of an alleged plot by various terrorist outfits to eliminate him, reports PTI.

In his argument before Jain Commission, AICC counsel RN Mittal alleged that it was a gross misconduct on the part of Chandrashekhra as prime minister to remain quiet even after he was informed about the alleged conspiracy hatched in London by militant groups to kill Rajiv.

Citing depositions of various key witnesses before the one-man panel probing the conspiracy behind Rajiv's killing, Mittal said evidence and media reports show that the plan to kill Rajiv was chalked out by terrorist groups in an alleged bid to keep Chandrashekhra in power.

Gunmen kill 4 students in Pakistan

LAHORE, Oct 21: Unidentified assailants in eastern Pakistan kidnapped six students, killing four and wounding two in what police on Tuesday called a religiously-motivated attack, reports AP.

The suspects kidnapped the six young men on Sunday from the Sunni Muslim clerical schools in the Punjab city of Multan, 260 kilometres south of the capital Lahore, police said. The students travelled there to attend a religious conference, police said.

The kidnappers took the students to a remote shack next to a canal and opened fire, police said. Two students leapt into the canal and escaped with light injuries. They are helping police find the kidnappers, authorities said.

Burkina Faso grants refuge to Lissouba

OUAGADOUGOU, Oct 21: Ousted Congolese President Pascal Lissouba arrived in Ouagadougou Monday night from Lome after Burkina Faso granted him indefinite refuge for "humanitarian reasons and African brotherhood," reports AFP.

Lissouba, in Burkina Faso since Saturday, had gone to Togo to "try to explain the situation that we have just lived through in the Congo" said a member of the Lissouba entourage.

Burkinabe Foreign Minister Ablassa Ouedraogo said Lissouba was "free to go where he wants and consult with whosoever he wants to."

Hun Sen orders TV, radio to cut back his coverage

PHNOM PENH, Oct 21: Cambodian strongman Hun Sen has ordered radio and television broadcasters to cut back coverage of his often lengthy speeches to prevent listeners and viewers from becoming bored, reports AFP.

"Beginning today, please do not broadcast the speeches of the second prime minister in full," Hun Sen's cabinet said in a statement published by local newspapers today.

Please only select the important parts of his speeches for the news on your radio and television stations," it said adding if there were occasions when entire speeches should be aired, broadcasters would be notified.

Off the Record

Fergie slams Buckingham Palace

LONDON: Britain's former Duchess of York "Fergie" yesterday denounced Buckingham Palace for leaking to the press a letter she wrote to Prince Charles amid reports the royal family are attempting to discredit her, reports AFP.

The letter, printed in the top-selling Sun newspaper was sent after the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, last month at which Fergie joined the rest of the royal mourning party.

The letter which The Sun said was long and rambling and very emotional was one of three sent to Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Margaret and Charles.

In it Fergie was reported to have apologised for past behaviour and "begged forgiveness" from the royal family.

The paper also quoted a senior royal official saying the letters were seen as an attempt by the Duchess to "worm her way back into the royal family and smooth the path for a possible reconciliation with Prince Andrew."

But a friend of Fergie who did not want to be named said the letter had been written "quite naturally" in the days after the funeral.

"It was quite appropriate for her to say something like I'm here for you" to her former brother-in-law and for her perhaps to express regret about what had happened over the years.

Her spokesman added that the letter was "quite appropriate" in the days after the Princess's funeral, and Fergie had been "taken aback" by suggestions she was attempting to return to the royal fold.

She had no idea who the source of the story was, but it was "deplorable" that the existence of a private letter should be leaked. The Sun said it had been passed the letter by a Buckingham Palace source.

Policemen form criminal gang!

MOSCOW: Talk about family business. Three brothers, all of them senior Russian police officers, went on trial Tuesday on charges of extortion and forming a criminal gang, a news report said, reports AP.

The suspects — chief inspector of the southern Stavropol region police Capt Vitaly Adrienko, Maj. Alexander Adrienko, and anti-drug unit officer First Lt. Igor Adrienko — are accused of repeated extortion of large amounts of money from local residents, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

At least 26 people are believed to have been victims of the suspects.

Two-hearted boy

PITTSBURGH: In a rare procedure, doctors attached a second heart to the diseased heart of a 7-year-old boy, making him one of the youngest recipients of a 'piggyback' transplant, surgeons said, reports AP.

The hearts are connected side by side — like Siamese twins — at the valves and chambers. Blood is pumped by whichever heart chamber is strongest at that moment.

The boy, identified only as Christopher, was moved Monday from intensive care to a private room after the surgery Wednesday.

"He thinks he's going to live to be 100," his father said.

Christopher will have two heartbeats at different rates for the rest of his life, his doctors said.

The boy needs the additional heart because he has cardiomyopathy, a disease that stiffened the walls of his own heart, restricting blood flow and causing the blood to back up and build pressure in his lungs.

His parents have known since his infancy that he eventually would need a transplant. Doctors decided his lungs were under so much pressure that they could collapse after a single transplant, when the donor heart is weakest. By staying in place, the old heart backs up the new one.



A devotee to the Sri Mariamman Hindu Temple runs across hot burning coals in Singapore Monday. The annual event attracted more than 2,000 male devotees who made the walk over the coals. — AP/UNB photo

Appointment of judges
Pak PM-CJ tussle takes new turn

ISLAMABAD, Oct 21: A showdown looms between Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the country's Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah in the wake of a brewing row over the appointment of judges, legal experts said yesterday, reports AFP.

The tussle took a new turn as Shah wrote to President Farooq Ahmed Leghari on Saturday invoking a constitutional provision laying down that "all executive and judicial authorities shall act in aid of the Supreme Court."

Shah has reportedly requested the president to use his authority to "end the deadlock" between the government and the Supreme Court. Simultaneously, the Chief Justice decided to hear in his chamber corruption complaints against Sharif from two associates of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, who have alleged abuse of powers in giving a wheat freight contract.

"Invoking of Article 190 of the Constitution by the Chief Justice is a clear indication the crisis has deepened," a senior

advocate, Karim Malik, told AFP in Lahore.

A number of other lawyers, quoted by prominent local daily The News, echoed similar fears.

The row centres on recent recommendations by the Chief Justice for the government to elevate five High Court judges to the Supreme Court, that will have raised its strength to 17 from the existing 12 judges.

The government first issued a notification fixing the number of judges at 12 but withdrew it as the controversy gained momentum. It later said the strength of the highest court would be determined by parliament.

"But the government has not so far made the appointments recommended by Shah, while a rift has surfaced now among judges of the Supreme Court giving a new twist to the whole affair."

Seven judges on Friday requested a full court meeting of the 12 judges to discuss issues related to the tussle between the government and the judiciary. The request was rejected by Shah.

US announces tougher immigration regulations

WASHINGTON, Oct 21: The US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) on Monday released tougher criteria for would-be immigrants to join relatives already in the United States, which will go into effect from December 19, reports AFP.

The new regulations, part of a 1996 Immigration Reform Law, stipulate that any immigrant to the United States will have to be sponsored by a relative — US citizen or not — already living in the United States.

The sponsor will have to show earnings at least equal to 125 per cent of the government set poverty level currently pegged at 20,062 dollars for a family of four.

The sponsor will also have to show three years of taxable income and assume financial responsibility for the new arrival until that persons can show 40 quarters of work or become a US citizen or leaves the country, the INS said at a press conference.

"Some people who would have been eligible to immigrate prior to December 19 will not be able to meet the threshold" said Paul Virtue, an INS official.

New immigrants will be in-

eligible to receive federal anti-poverty assistance, such as food stamps, income supplements or subsidised healthcare.

After five years, the new immigrant will be allowed to request such aid but the sponsor's revenue will be added to the immigrant's to calculate eligibility for assistance, which will likely deprive the immigrant of the aid.

A new immigrant receiving federal assistance by mistake will face expulsion and the sponsor could potentially be ordered to pay back the amount of the aid and even a 5,000 dollar fine, the INS said.

Immigrants allowed to join relatives in the United States totalled 594,0604 in 1996 or 65 per cent of all legal immigrants to the United States.

The INS said that number should stay constant over the next few years.

But critics of the law say the financial criteria will have dire consequences for would-be immigrants from Mexico and Central America, who will disproportionately be affected by income-based rules.

According to the National Immigration Forum, a pro-

immigrant group, 57.1 per cent of immigrants from Mexico and Central America earn less than the 20,062 dollars required and 27.9 per cent of US citizens fall beneath that line, the forum said. Those who want to dramatically reduce legal immigration are trying to achieve through the back door what they couldn't accomplish through the front door, according to Forum executive director Frank Sharpy.

"This is law implies that Americans who work hard, but earn low wages — tax paying law abiding Americans — find they are unable to sponsor spouses, children and parents, merely because they aren't wealthy enough," he said.

Other critics of the law have said the measure could have the opposite effect to that desired by Congress and increase illegal immigration.

Legal immigration to the United States has surged recently. Nearly 915,000 people moved to the country legally in 1996, 27 per cent more than the year before.

Sixty-five per cent of these immigrants came to the United States to join family members.

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