

International

**BRIEFLY**



Chinese President Jiang Zemin shakes hands with Elizabeth G. Weymouth, special editor for US Newsweek and columnist for the Washington Post, before an interview in Beijing Wednesday. — AP/UNB photo

**Death toll in Indian cyclone 1,126:** The official toll in western India's Gujarat state reached 1,126 Thursday, a week and half after a cyclone struck, United News of India reported. AP reports from New Delhi.

Since the storm rushed in from the Arabian Sea and hit land June 9, the toll has been climbing steadily as bodies are pulled from under debris or float back to shore after having been swept away by a tidal wave churned by the cyclone.

**Blast claims 4 in Algeria:** A bomb exploded in a cemetery outside Algiers on Wednesday, killing four people and injuring four others, French radio reported, AP says from Paris.

The attack took place near Tipaza, a coastal town 70 km west of Algiers. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, reported on France Info radio.

**French PM begins US visit:** Calling France and the United States "serious partners" in good times and bad, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin began a three-day visit to the United States during which he will have talks with President Clinton and meet other officials, AP reports from Washington.

**Chernobyl N-reactor leaks:** Ukrainian authorities Wednesday said "slightly radioactive water" had leaked from the only still functioning reactor at the troubled Chernobyl nuclear plant, leading to its shutdown, AP reports from Kiev.

The reactor was stopped Tuesday, officially after a problem in a turbine, Fadim Gricenko, an official at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety said.

**3 die in Malaysian hostel fire:** Three students, including two sisters, burned to death and two others were injured when a blaze destroyed a girls hostel at a religious school in a northern town, a local daily said Thursday, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

The bodies of Hadzilah Zakaria, 16, and Yusrina Zakaria, 13, were found locked in embrace on the upper floor of the brick-and-wood building at the school in Tobair. The charred body of another student, Norfarahiyah Ayob, 13, was found by firemen on the hostel's lower floor, the New Straits Times said. Most students were asleep when the fire started at about 1.00 am Wednesday.

**Russia expels 80 for 'spying':** About 80 foreigners have been expelled from the Ulyanovsk region in central Russia for alleged espionage in the last 18 months, the ITAR-Tass news agency said Wednesday, AP reports from Moscow.

The industrial region on the Volga River attracts spies because of its many factories, research centers and formerly secret installations, the news agency said, quoting Gen Leonid Stepanenko, regional chief of the Federal Security Service.

**Menem to visit Britain in Oct:** President Carlos Menem will travel to London in October for a six-day state visit. The foreign ministry said Wednesday, AP reports from Buenos Aires.

The trip from October 27 — November 1 includes a working visit with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and a meeting with Queen Elizabeth II.

**No case against Arthur C Clarke:** Sri Lanka's justice minister said Thursday the government would not prosecute its most famous resident — science fiction writer Arthur C Clarke — after a British tabloid reported he had sexually abused children, AP reports from Colombo.

"There is not sufficient evidence to start prosecution," Justice Minister Lakshman Fernando said about the case sparked by a February report in the Sunday Mirror.

**Croatian war criminal extradited:** Dinko Sakic, a death camp official in Croatia during the Second World War, was extradited from Argentina in handcuffs Wednesday, escorted by Croatian police as he returned home to be tried for war crimes, Reuters reports from Buenos Aires.

The 76-year-old Croat was marched through Buenos Aires' Ezeiza Airport and put on a flight for Frankfurt, where he will board a connecting flight to Zagreb, the Croatian capital. Sakic, who ran Stara Gradiska concentration camp and was deputy commander of Jasenovac camp, lived in Argentina for 50 years.

**Purulia arms drop case:** Indian police official admits to 'guesswork'

CALCUTTA, June 18: The police official on whose report a former British army officer was charged with waging war against India said Wednesday he used "guesswork" in the sensational case related to a huge arms drop, reports AP.

Cross-examined by key accused Peter Bleach who is himself arguing his case, police officer Tapan Kumar Mitra said during a court hearing he believed a huge cache of Russian-made arms and ammunition had been airdropped from an aircraft in a remote village in West Bengal state in December 1995.

But he acknowledged he had not seen the plane, nor met anyone who saw it fly over the huge rural expanse and said he had described the arms as Russian-made in his police report on the basis of hearsay.

He said he had prepared a map, showing the places where the arms landed, on the basis of "guesswork."

Mitra said village people in the Purulia district of the state, where he was posted, told him they heard the droning of an airplane and a loud thud after which they discovered the arms.

Bleach and five Latvians have been in jail since their arrest for allegedly parachuting assault rifles, antitank missiles, rocket launchers, grenades and thousands of

rounds of ammunition from an AN-26 cargo plane.

The suspects have denied the allegations. If convicted, they could face life imprisonment or even death.

Police said the wooden crates containing arms and ammunition were meant for an insurgency against the West Bengal state government by a cult called Ananda Marg (Happy Path), based in Purulia town, near where the boxes were dropped.

Air force jets intercepted the cargo plane when it returned to India and arrested the six at Bombay airport.

**Washington, Seoul to hold working level talks in July**

WASHINGTON, June 18: The United States and South Korea will hold working-level talks next month on a possible easing of US sanctions against North Korea, senior US officials confirmed Wednesday, reports AP.

Seoul and Washington hold "exactly the same positions" on sanctions against Pyongyang, assistant secretary of State for East Asia Stanley Roth told reporters here.

**US offers to start new relationship with Iran**

NEW YORK, Jun 18: In a major overture after nearly two decades of distrust, the Clinton administration offered to start a new relationship with Iran — even including a role in Persian Gulf security — if it abides by international standards of conduct, reports AP.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright held out the olive branch, responding to openings from Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, in a speech delivered Wednesday to the Asia Society in New York.

"As the wall of mistrust comes down, we can develop with the Islamic republic, when it is ready, a road map leading to normal relations," said Albright.

Already, the Clinton administration has supported cultural and academic exchanges with Iran, and eased travel to the United States by many Iranians.

"We are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstanding," Albright said. "The Islamic Republic should consider parallel steps."

Specifically, Albright called for a halt in support for terrorism, and she criticized Iran's record on human rights. On the other hand, she praised Tehran's decision to acquiesce to any agreement Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat works out with Israel.

"Obviously, two decades of mistrust cannot be erased overnight," she said. "The gap between us remains wide. But it is time to test the possibilities for bridging this gap."

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Albright's offer was the suggestion Iran could be included in "Multilateral efforts to protect international security."

She said the United Nations and other multinational coalitions had countered threats to peace in the Persian Gulf War against Iraq in 1991 and in peacekeeping operations around the world.

"This global network has grown largely without Iranian participation," Albright said. "But Iran would be welcome if it is willing to make a constructive contribution."

In her remarks, Albright also credited Iran with already participating in efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan and with trying to improve relations with Saudi Arabia.

As another "sign of change," she cited an improvement in Iran's record in the war against drugs within its borders, and said Iran had received "high marks" from the United Nations to its treatment of more than 2 million and Iraqi and Afghan refugees.

However, Albright said, the

positive developments "must be balanced against the reality that Iran's support for terrorism has not ceased, serious violations of human rights persist and its efforts to develop long-range missiles and to acquire nuclear weapons continue."

Turning to other countries, Albright made these points:

- China: President Clinton on his visit beginning next week will express concern about preserving Tibet's heritage and stress political and religious rights. He will be saying things "the people of China cannot say and have not heard."
- South Korea: Hinting the Clinton administration would ease its sanctions against the communist regime in North Korea, she said, "We have agreed to coordinate closely" with Seoul on the issues. President Kim Dae Jung is calling for an easing of the sanctions to improve economic conditions on the Korean peninsula.
- Indonesia: Praised President BJ Habibie for promising new elections, releasing political prisoners and for his approach to debt and other economic problems. "It is not too early to reaffirm America's commitment to do all we can to help the Indonesia people," she said, announcing the US Embassy in Jakarta and other diplomatic offices were being brought up to full strength.

Rebel troops in Guinea-Bissau to meet meditation mission

BANJUL, June 18: The leader of rebel troops in Guinea-Bissau has agreed to meet a meditation mission led by Gambia's Foreign Minister Sedat Jobe, a Gambian presidential statement said late Wednesday, reports AP.

The statement said General Assumane Mane had agreed immediately to the proposal for talks with Guinea-Bissau President Joao Bernardo Vieira, in a message sent via private radio station.

It said shelling had ceased since the mission arrived in Bissau, and the Gambians were very optimistic that a negotiated and lasting solution could be found.

**Holbrooke to replace Richardson as US envoy to UN**

WASHINGTON, Jun 18: Richard Holbrooke, who brokered the Bosnia peace agreement in 1995, will be nominated to replace Bill Richardson as the US ambassador to the United Nations, a senior US official said Wednesday, reports AP.

Richardson has been tapped to be the next energy secretary, the officials said, adding that a formal announcement would be made Thursday.

Holbrooke left the State Department shortly after the conclusion of the Dayton peace accords that ended the war in Bosnia to join the private sector.

He was called back to government service, however, to mediate between Greece and Turkey in the dispute over Cyprus.

**Protest against protests in Jakarta**

JAKARTA, June 18: It was a protest against all the protests, reports AP.

Holding aloft banners, about 70 people rallied outside the Defence Ministry in Jakarta Thursday to complain about a swell of demonstrations in recent weeks.

"There are so many protests and we're all fed up. We have to stop this," said Andi Chandra Nam, a protest organizer.

Rallies with a range of causes have flourished since authoritarian President Suharto quit last month, his authority shaken by riots and student protests. Police say an average of 16 mostly peaceful protests are now held daily in the capital.

The anti-protest demonstrators say they support new President B J Habibie's agenda of democratic reform. However, they appealed to the military to put an end to the public clamor. They did not suggest how.

**British nanny convicted of killing baby returns home**

BOSTON, June 18: A pair Louise Woodward, convicted of killing a baby in her care, flew home to Britain Wednesday in the closing chapter of a saga that transfixed millions on both sides of the Atlantic, reports Reuter.

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Woodward is expected to fly with her father Gary by private plane from London's Heathrow Airport to Manchester, north England, and then home by car to Elton.

Meanwhile, the family of the dead baby, Matthew Eappen, had a small court victory Wednesday when US District Judge William Young issued a temporary restraining order forbidding Woodward from spending any profits she might make from the case.

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**Potential nuclear arsenal 'India's bigger than Britain's, Pakistan's weak'**

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Last month's rival nuclear tests by the South Asian neighbours, who have fought three wars in the last 50 years, heightened fears of a new nuclear arms race that could ultimately spread to other aspiring nuclear nations.

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Its special report on the tests was written mainly by WPS Sidhu, a specialist on South Asian security issues who did his doctoral thesis at Cambridge University on the development of India's nuclear doctrine and now works at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York.

According to Jane's India's nuclear weapons programme is primarily based on weapons-grade plutonium reprocessed from fuel taken from the CIRUS and Dhruva research reactors located at Trombay.

Based on the fissile material produced by the two reactors, India's stockpile is now estimated at between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons, the magazine said.

By contrast, Pakistan's arsenal is now estimated at between 6 and 12 nuclear weapons, it said.

But India also has commercial nuclear reactors to produce electricity, which also produce plutonium. While this plutonium is not considered ideal for use in nuclear weapons, Britain has successfully made nuclear weapons from it, and there are indications that Indian scientists attempted "a similar feat" in the two tests conducted May 13, Jane's said.

"Although they do not appear to have been entirely successful, the information gathered from these tests would go a long way in giving India the ability to build weapons from reactor fuel, it said.

According to one estimate, if India's commercial reactor fuel was taken into account, the country would possess enough fissile material to build at least 390 nuclear weapons, as many as 470 weapons, Jane's said.

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Palestinian women comfort an unidentified weeping girl at the home of Abdel Majid Turki, in the West Bank city of Hebron, Wednesday. A makeshift memorial already marks the spot where Turki fell, fatally clubbed by a teenaged Jewish settler in a passing van. — AP/UNB photo

**To make N Ireland peace agreement to work Blair stresses IRA disarmament**

LONDON, June 18: Prime Minister Tony Blair emphasised Wednesday that Irish Republican Army (IRA) disarmament was "essential" to making the Northern Ireland peace agreement work, reports AP.

Blair offered his assurances to opposition Conservatives and the north's pro-British Protestant politicians on the eve of a House of Commons vote to approve early paroles for convicted IRA and pro-British militants.

The Conservatives and the Ulster unionists, the major Protestant party that supported the April 10 agreement, last week registered their opposition to the proposed legislation, which would allow more than 400 imprisoned members of the IRA and two pro-British gangs, the Ulster Defense Association and Ulster Volunteer Force, to be freed by mid-2000 if their truces hold.

Since then, lawmakers have been considering, and rejecting, a trove of proposed amendments authored by Conservatives and Ulster Unionists that would more bluntly link any paroles to the gradual disarmament of the IRA, UDA and UVF.

"We will look very, very carefully at any amendments that are tabled, Blair said in an appeal for hard-liners from other parties to support his overwhelming Labour Party majority in Thursday's deciding vote.

"But they cannot rewrite the agreement," he said in reference to those seeking to tighten up the paroles legislation.

Disarmament "is and remains an essential part of that agreement," Blair said.

The Financial Times news-

paper of London reported Wednesday that Padraic Wilson, the IRA commander inside Northern Ireland's Maze prison, had said in an interview that the IRA would consider discarding its weapons under international supervision.

The agreement, supported by the IRA-allied Sinn Fein party, specifies this should happen by mid-2000, though it doesn't link this deadline with paroles.

Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, on Wednesday called IRA disarmament "a dead-end issue."

"I think far too much attention has been paid to this issue. From the beginning, this issue has been hyped up by the Ulster Unionist Party," said McGuinness, a reputed former IRA commander, in response to the Financial Times report.

**Separatists reject talks with Belgrade**

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, June 18: The death toll in Kosovo climbed higher Wednesday as NATO pressed ahead with its plans for military action while waiting for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to end his bloody crackdown against separatists, reports AP.

As frantic diplomatic efforts continued to try to resolve the crisis in the troubled Serbian province, so too did the killings.

At least 10 Albanians died in two separate border shootouts on Kosovo's frontier with Albania, Tirana protested that one of its nationals had been killed by Yugoslav forces, and three Serbians died elsewhere, according to various sources.

Meanwhile, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian officials rejected talks with Belgrade as long as Serbian special forces are stationed in the province, and asked NATO to intervene.

In Russia, where President Boris Yeltsin met Milosevic Tuesday, the foreign ministry announced a diplomatic mission to Kosovo in the next few days.

Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Afanasevsky said he would go to Kosovo, while fellow Deputy Minister Alexander Avdeyev would travel to Albania and Macedonia.

Yeltsin, in a call to Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, called for international pressure on the Kosovo Albanian leadership so they "put an immediate end to terror and violence," a Kremlin statement said.

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**Bloodletting continues Gunmen kill two more in Karachi**

KARACHI, Jun 18: The relentless bloodletting in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi continued Thursday when gunmen shot and killed two more people, including a retired policeman, the authorities said, reports AP.

As well dozens of police who drove into a central neighbourhood in armor plated buses to investigate reports of firing were attacked by gunmen, they said. Three policemen were wounded.

The relentless killings, most of them involving rival factions of an ethnic party, has left nearly 100 people dead since the last one month.

The combatants are rival groups of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), which claims to represent Indian Muslims who settled in Pakistan after 1947, when Pakistan was created as a separate homeland for Muslims of the Asian Subcontinent.

Most of the immigrants settled in southern Sindh province and now dominate the cities of Sindh, including the provincial capital of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and home to 14 million people.

Since Tuesday 14 people have been killed in Karachi, including two members of a government-run anti-corruption committee. Two car bombs also rattled the city on Wednesday, injuring one person.

No one has taken responsibility for any of the killings and so far police officials say they haven't made any arrests.

The killings on Thursday involved a butcher who was shot by two assailants shortly after he opened his store.

His death sparked small riot in the Korangi neighborhood where he worked. About 500 people took to the streets burning tires and demanding better police protection, according to eyewitnesses.

Nearly in a central neighbourhood of Karachi, police responded to a report of guns being fired. When they arrived in the area, the gunmen opened fire on them. Two more armored trucks, packed with policemen, came into the area and also were attacked, police said.

Three policemen were injured.

The government has arrested dozens of militants from both factions of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement but it has had little success in curbing the violence that has wracked this southern port city for several years.

**Senior US official says Syria trying to restart peace talks with Israel**

WASHINGTON, Jun 18: Syria is making a serious effort to re-start peace talks with Israel that were suspended over two years ago, a senior US official said Wednesday, reports AP.

"Syria has been casting around for other options," said Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East Martin Lindyk at a State Department press conference.

"They have recently been expressing great interest in trying to get the negotiations resumed," he added.

Peace negotiations between Israel and Syria, which is also the main powerbroker in Lebanon, have been suspended since February 1996.

Damascus is seeking to reopen talks with Israel, partly because of the Israeli offer to withdraw from Lebanon and because it is worried about a possible alliance between Turkey and Israel, he added.

Israel's offer to pull out of south Lebanon was "unwelcome

news" to Damascus because "the Syrians saw in it an effort to take the Lebanese card out of their pocket," said Lindyk.

He said that in Damascus's view, a Lebanese-Israeli deal would reduce prospects for a return to Syria of the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau that Israel captured in the 1967 war.

Visiting Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri said Tuesday that Lebanon and Syria were prepared to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel within three months if talks resume from the point where they were suspended.

Syria and Lebanon have repeatedly insisted that understandings reached during previous talks be upheld by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in particular those providing for the return of the Golan Heights.

Netanyahu has offered to restart talks with Syria from scratch.

**Off the Record Castro offered same service as Lenin**

MOSCOW, The embalmers who preserved the body of Lenin for display in a mausoleum in Red Square have offered the same service to Cuba's Fidel Castro, Interfax news agency reported Wednesday, reports AP.

"We are prepared to respond positively to the Cubans if they ask us to preserve Castro's body," said Yuri Denisov-Nikolski, deputy director of the Herbal Medicine Institute's research centre.

He denied reports that Cuban authorities had already approached the institute.

There was no indication how Castro, who will be 72 in August and is reportedly ailing, felt about the offer.

**'Citizen Kane' voted best US film of all time**

LOS ANGELES: "Citizen Kane" Orson Welles' masterful 1941 story of power and empty glory, was named the best American feature film of all time, followed by "Casablanca." "The Godfather," "Gone With the Wind" and "Lawrence of Arabia," reports AP.

"The Wizard of Oz," "The Graduate," "On the Waterfront," "Schindler's List," and "Singin in the Rain" were named the sixth through 10th greatest movies by the American Film Institute's panel of movie industry leaders.

Unveiled Tuesday in CBS special amid much hype and promotional tie-ins, these films headed the film institute's tally of the top 100 movies of the past century, selections culled from the responses from a group of 1,500 people asked to participate. They picked from a ballot of 400 movies selected by the film institute.

The top 10 films covered a range of genres and eras, and among the surprises was the impressive placement of Steven Spielberg's Holocaust film "Schindler's List," released in 1993.

The next recent film on the list was Martin Scorsese's "Raging Bull" from 1980, at No. 24, followed by "E.T." from 1982. The time period spans the years 1896, when the first commercial films were shown in New York, to the 100th anniversary in 1996, by the ballot of 400 films begins with "Richard III" from 1912, the earliest known surviving silent feature.

Most of the movies in the top 100 were dramas. In addition, there were 11 comedies, eight musicals, nine war movies, eight westerns, four science fiction films and four horror movies. Two were animated features, both from Disney, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (No. 49) and "Fantasia" (No. 58).

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"This makes the potential Indian nuclear arsenal bigger than that of Britain and in the

same league as the French and the Chinese," the magazine said.

According to estimates by the Washington-based National Resources Defense Council, at the end of 1996 Britain had 260 nuclear weapons, China had 400 and France had 450.

Jane's Intelligence Review said India is also developing land, sea and air systems to deliver nuclear weapons.

India's Sukhoi Su-30 fighters can already deliver a nuclear payload to Pakistan and deep into China, but their range and flight time will be "substantially enhanced" when it takes delivery of six Ilyushin Il-78 refuelling tankers ordered from Russia early this year, the magazine said.

But India's two nuclear-capable missiles, the Prithvi and the Agni, are expected to be the mainstay of its nuclear delivery system, Jane's said. While the Agni is still in the development stage, India's Prithvi force is considered to be in the range of 20 to 50 missiles, it said.

The magazine said there are reports that a surface ship launched version of the Prithvi could become operational as early as 2001. India's Defence Research and Development Organisation is also working on a submarine-launched missile called Sagarika, which could become operational by 2010, Jane's said.

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