

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat puts a pen back in the pocket of his uniform after Sheikh Yousef Salama, left, director of the Islamic Waqf, guardians of Islamic holy sites, showed Arafat maps reportedly showing Israeli expansion plans for Jerusalem, during a conference of Muslim officials called "Jerusalem in Danger" in Gaza City, tre takes any step which goes - AP/UNB photo. Monday.

Over 12 hurt in Pak bomb blast: yesterday in a vegetable market in Lahore, capital of Pakistan's Punjab province, police said, AFP reports from Lahore.

Three of the injured were in critical condition in hospital. they said. No one immediately claimed responsibility and police said an investigation was under way.

Gunmen free 13 in Guatemala: Thirteen US mission aries kidnapped Monday by heavily armed gunmen in Guatemala's northern Peten region were freed hours later, the defence ministry said. AP reports from Guatemala

The police chief of Flores, Peten, said by telephone that the missionaries from a group calling itself Nueva Vida, or New Life, were taken hostage by eight unidentified men at a ranch near the town of Sayaxche. The defence ministry said Monday night the group had been freed, but there were no immediate details on how that was accomplished.

Chinese cities hit by floods: Parts of Wuhan, a major industrial city along the Yangtze River in central China, are flooded and waters are expected to rise further as the river swells, state-run media reported Tuesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Torrential rains upriver have caused the worst flooding in 50 years in Changsha, another major city to the east, they Xinhua News Agency reported. It said some 200,000 people had been stranded, as parts of the city and much of its outlying suburbs were inundated. Losses were estimated at 4 billion yuan (dlrs 481 million).

Storms continue to sweep US: Thunderstorms and tornadoes swept through America's midwestern heartland from Nebraska to Indiana Monday after three days of blazing heat and storms killed at least 20 people across the region. Reuters reports from Des Moines. Iowa.

Tornadoes and winds of up to 80 mph battered lowa uprooting trees and knocking down power lines in and around the state capital Des Moines. A tornado hit the small town of Granger a few miles away, causing some injuries. Several towns in Illinois also reported damage. Ohio counted 11 deaths from weekend heavy rains which swamped homes, closed major roads and shut off power and water to thousands of residents.

5 die in Philippine shelling: At least five people were killed and 11 injured when suspected

defeated candidates fired more than 10 mortar shells at the Sulu provincial capital on Jolo island before dawn Tuesday. stopping a scheduled oath-taking by the re-elected provincial governor, the military said, AP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines

One shell landed near the residence of Gov Sakur Tan, injuring a provincial government employee. The shells also damaged

Ex-Peru first lady to run for mayor: Susana Higuchi, the former wife of Peru's President Alberto Fujimori, will campaign to become mayor of Lima, a spokesman of her group 'Harmoney 21st Century', said Monday.

an abandoned marine barracks.

probe to Mars, AP reports from Tokyo.

AFP reports from Lima. The group, which is currently seeking the necessary 100,000 signatures to be registered by the national electoral office, "is to put forward candidates in more than 40 districts of Peru's capital during the municipal elections, scheduled for October 11. Higuchi and Fujimori divorced in 1996 following marital

problems that began in 1992. Japan to launch Mars probe: Japan is set to join the select circle of interplanetary spacefaring nations with the scheduled launch this weekend of its Planet-B

If all goes as planned, the half-ton unmanned craft will begin beaming back photographs and experimental data from the Red Planet in October 1999. It will be the first effort by a nation other than the two former Cold War superpowers, the United States and Russia, to visit another world.

IAEA report reveals

N-tests in S Pacific no threat to people

PARIS, June 30: French in clear tests in the South Pacific over the past three decades have left "extremely modest radiation levels" that pose no threats to people, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Monday, reports AP.

A 2,000-page IAEA study compiled by dozens of scientists from 18 countries was requested by the French government after testing stopped in French Polynesia in 1996.

The testing had made France a virtual pariah on the world stage, especially to nations of the South Pacific, a region it led and shaped for 200 years. Australia and New Zealand.

Talks to ban chemicals open

MONTREAL, June 30: Delegates from 100 countries began negotiations on Monday aimed at producing the first global treaty eliminating the use of certain long-lasting toxic chemicals, reports AP.

The five-day meeting, sponsored by the UN Environment Programme, is the first of five scheduled negotiating sessions aimed at drafting a treaty to eliminate 12 so-called persistent organic pollutants, or

POPs. The targeted chemicals, known as the "dirty dozen," include pesticides such as DDT and industrial chemicals such as dioxin and PCBs. The chemicals have been linked to cancer. birth defects and other genetic and developmental abnormalities in people and animals.

as well as several tiny islandstates claimed the atomic tests could have harmed the fragile environment. The last tests ending early in 1996 drew especially strident protests from these nations as well as environmental groups.

France maintained the tests caused no lasting harm and requested the independent analy-

The study, released Monday, said radioactive material in the earth and sea around Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls was "at generally very low concentrations," and "of no radiological significance."

The study — which will be presented to a June 30-July 3 congress in Vienna of government officials and scientists — found that lingering nuclear contamination was unlikely to damage the natural environ-

ment. IAEA officials said they arrived at their conclusions by studying marine life and vegetation, and water and air sam-

But the study also said there were four small zones in remote areas with excessive plutonium levels as a result of earlier atmospheric tests in the 1960s.

IAEA spokesman David Kyd said there would be no danger posed to human life even if there was a "catastrophic scenario" such as a landslide under lagoons where explosions were

carried out. France exploded at least 123 nuclear bombs in the volcanic rock underneath Mururoa Atoll between 1975 and 1996 and

tht under nearby Fangataufa

Chief minister of Kashmir threatens

agitation SRINAGAR, June 30: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) chief Farooq Abdullah yesterday threatened to launch an agi-tation if Article 370 of the Constitution, guaranteeing special status to the state was changed by the Vajpayee government,

reports PTI. "National Conference has neither entered into any agreement with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition government at the centre that we will support it for every right or wrong step, nor are we slaves of BJP, Abdullah told a youth national conference workers' rally at Sher-i-Kash-

mir Park in heart of the city. "I have clearly told BJP leadership that if they construct a temple at the site of the Babri Masjid, we will snap our ties with them," Abdullah said.

He said his government would cooperates with the centre for every step which is beneficial for the state and its people. "At the same time if the cenagainst the interests of the state and its people, we will confront it "he added.

US opposes move in UNSC to

condemn Israel

WASHINGTON, June 30: US State Department objects to a move in the UN Security Council to condemn Israel for expanding Jerusalem's administrative authority to Jewish settlements on the West Bank, reports AP.

With US mediators trying to get Israel and the Palestinians to end a 16-month stalemate in peace talks, "the last thing we need is action by the parties or anybody else that raises suspicions and makes it even more difficult to get the process back on track," spokesman Lee Mc-Clenny said Monday.

Prompted by Bahrain, an Arab emirate in the Gulf, the council is due to take up the Jerusalem issue on Tuesday.

'Any action in the Security Council on this matter would be counterproductive," McClenny

The US official also opposed a move by the Palestine Liberation Organization in the General Assembly to be treated as a nonvoting nation. Currently. the PLO has observer status.

Pak foreign secy discusses nuclear ambitions with US officials

WASHINGTON, June 30: Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed discussed his country's nuclear ambitions with senior US officials here Monday as Washington sought to step up its dialogue with Islamabad, reports AFP

"We have a strong interest in keeping all our lines of communications open with both India and Pakistan," said State Department press office director Lee McClenny.

"We don't wish to isolate either country," he said.

Ahmed met with deputy secretary of State Strobe Talbott before holding a working lunch with under secretary of state for political affairs Thomas Pickering.

A State Department official said the meetings with Ahmed. the number three official in the Pakistani Foreign Ministry, was the "kic-off to a seniorlevel dialogue.

The United States is pressing Pakistan and India to give up their nuclear ambitions following a series of tit-for-tat nuclear blasts in May that western leaders fear could set off a dangerous arms race in South Asia.

President Bill Clinton has slapped sanctions on India and Pakistan following the nuclear blasts and warned the two governments that they will not be recognised as nuclear weapons states.

Estrada sworn in as Philippines president

MALOLOS. Philippines. June 30 : Joseph Estrada, 61 was sworn in today as the 13th president of the Philippines. report AFP.

The former movie star and college dropout was sworn in by Supreme Court Chief Justice Andres Narvasa to serve a sixyear term.

When taking the oath of office. Estrada placed his left hand on the some Bible used 100 years ago by the revolutionary general Emilio Aguinaldo, the first president of the Philippine Republic.

"I. Joseph Estradaodo solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously fulfill my duties as president of the Philippines, preserve and defend its constitution, execute its laws, do justice to everyman, and consecrate myself to the service of the nation. So help me God," Estrada said.

He later signed the oath using the same pen used by Aguinaldo.

The oath-taking was done inside the historic Barasonain Church, where Aguinaldo had been sworn in at the height of the war for independence against Spain.

Estrada's wife Luisa, their three grown children, his mother Mary, and his siblings and grandchildren were at his Violence leaves 6 more dead in Karachi

3,000 additional policemen to be deployed

KARACHI, Jun 30: The Sindh provincial government on Tuesday ordered an additional 3,000 police into this violent city after another night of relentless bloodletting left six people dead, the authorities said, reports AP.

The violence shut down entire neighbourhoods of Karachi on Tuesday. Rival factions of a militant ethnic group waged fierce and bloody battles in several parts of the city, said eyewitnesses and police officials. Sindh Chief Minister Liaqat Jatoi said 3,000 additional po-

licemen were being deployed in Karachi from elsewhere in the province. They will arrive with their armoured personnel carriers to patrol some of the hardest hit areas of the city, like Korangi in the east and Liagatabad in central Karachi. In both these neighbourhoods gunmen with automatic

firing relentlessly at each "Many people are getting out of here and moving in with rel-

rifles have been perched on

rooftops for the last two days

atives in other parts of the city. at least until the shooting stops," said Mohammed Idrees, a resident of Liaqatabad, who

was contacted on telephone. In the past 24 hours, police, eyewitnesses and hospital officials say 23 people have been killed in ethnic bloodletting.

In a statement issued Tuesday. Jatoi ordered his police force to put an end to the month-long bloodletting that has terrorised Karachi and left more than 200 people dead. He gave policemen a 48-hour dead-

lier threatened to give paramilitary Rangers, who have been assisting the Karachi Police Force, sweeping powers of arrest and detention, if the violence persists. The combatants are rival

The federal government ear-

factions of the Mohajir Qami Movement, a militant ethnic group representing Indian Muslims who came to Pakistan in 1947. The movement accuses successive governments of discriminating against mohajirs

or refugees, who settled in southern Sindh province, mostly in the major urban cen-

In recent years the movement has resorted to violence to back its demands for equal access to education and government jobs.

As well the movement has split into at least three different factions, all of whom are heavily armed, and who routinely wage violent territorial battles for control of areas of Karachi. In Liaqatabad overnight

Tuesday a bloody gun battle raged for several hours leaving two people dead, one a small boy caught in the crossfire, said police and residents in the area.

In a separate incident in Korangi, gunmen in a car sprayed bullets at four young men sitting outside of a restaurant. Two of the dead were members of a breakaway faction of the Movement and the other two were members of the youth wing of the radical rightwing religious party, the Jamaat-e-Is-

Clinton hails emerging new China

SHANGHAL June 30: US President Bill Clinton, turning his attention Tuesday to dramatic changes in communist China, hailed an emerging new China "that is more prosperous. more open and more dynamic,

reports AP. In this high-rise capital of banking and trade, Clinton pursued his dialogue with the Chinese people in a morning roundtable with community leaders. Then he was facing a form of communication popular in America: a radio talk

I hope that you will help us to understand what is going on and to speak with us frankly and openly," the President said at the roundtable, which covered a number of technical and social issues but generally steered clear of politics. What we want is to build the

right sort of partnership and friendship with the Chinese people over the long run into the 21st century," Clinton said. Part of the President's mes-

sage was that the "dynamic forces of change propelling the booming economy in Shanghai, China's high-rise financial capital, can spread prosperity throughout China. "Everyone understands there

is a new China emerging in the world that is more prosperous, more open and more dynamic," he said in a joint appearance with his wife.

Clinton flew here late Monday from Beijing where he addressed students at Peking University. He urged political reforms and was challenged pointedly but politely — by the youthful audience about America's own human rights record, arm sales to Taiwan and US

perceptions of China. Clinton denied the widespread suspicion here that the United States is trying to contain China. "I'm not hiding another design behind a smile.

State-run television sent out Clinton's university speech live after trying — but failing _ to get an advance look at his address. The American side did suggest beforehand that Clinton would not bring up again the sensitive subject of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, as he did in a televised news conference Saturday with President Jiang Zemin.

Shanghai's dazzling lights and bustling downtown were, a dramatic change from the bureaucratic capital of Beijing.

CPI (M) offers support to Congress to form non-BJP govt

CALCUTTA, June 30: Close on the formation of the Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha, veteran CPI (M) leader Jyoti Basu today offered party's issuebased support to the Congress for formation of a non-BJP government at the centre, reports PTI.

Talking to newsmen here, Basu even assured of giving an undertaking to the President in this regard.

Basu's offer to the Congress assumed significance as it came close on the Congress president Sonia Gandhi's statement ruling out support to any party of front in the event of collapse of the Vajpayee government.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Samjwadi Party had recently floated the Morcha as an alternative front to the ruling BJP coalition. The octogenarian chief min-

ister said that his party was

ready to give at undertaking to the president that it would not vote against the Congress in parliament during the confidence vote.

The state Congress openly voiced its opposition to Basu's suggestion and said that it would urge the AICC not to take support to form a government at the centre.

WBPCC general secretary Pradip Bhattacharya said it would not be wise to take Marxist support because in the past "the ditched many governments, including that of Morarji Desai. Meanwhile. Trinamool

Congress made it clear that it would never support a government at the centre propped up by both Congress and Trinamool leader Sudip Bandopadhyay. MP. charged

both Congress and the with

joining hands and said that the

enemy. He alleged that the Congress

CIP(M) was his party's "main

had failed to emerge as an alternative to the Left Front in West Bengal in the past 22 years "as it had always reached understanding with the Marxists." Bandopadhyay said that last

week's assembly by-elections again proved that the Congress and the "had come together to defeat the Trinamool Congress candidates," charging the Marxists with being "a non-believer in democracy." Meanwhile, the state BJP

General Secretary Rahul Sinha ridiculed Basu's offer of support to the Congress to oust the Vajpayee government at the centre.

He alleged that the was "scared" of its "misdeeds being exposed by the centre" and was "desperate" in joining hands with the Congress.

UNSC call to complete Angolan peace process

UNITED NATIONS, June 30: The UN chief and Security Council members mourned the death of the UN Angolan envoy. urging the government and rebels to intensify efforts to complete the peace process that Alioune Blonding Beye helped loster, reports AP.

"I am sure that all African leaders, as well as the international community, will join me in this appeal so that Maitre Beye will not have perished in vain," Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Monday. A charter plane carrying

Beye, 59, two pilots and five other members of the UN observer mission for Angola crashed Friday night east of Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Beye was travelling in the region seeking support for the peace process from African leaders, Annan

Annan, speaking in Vienna,

called the Mali-born Beye "a dedicated and dynamic peacemaker, and a great son of Africa whom the Angolans dubbed 'the Messiah of Peace."

The crash came just days before the Security Council's July 1 deadline for the former rebel movement UNITA to hand over their strongholds to government control. Failure to do so would results in sanctions that would freeze UNITA's foreign bank accounts and ban diamond exports, which give the movement hundreds of millions of dollar each year.

America's UN ambassador, Bill Richardson, said Monday after the council met on Angola that Beye's death was a terrible loss for the peace process.

"I just hope it's not going to bring an outbreak of hostilities." Richardson said "I think we have to redirect our efforts to get both sides talking again."

Serb forces battle to regain Kosovo village from rebels

BELACEVAC, Yugoslavki, June 30. Serb forces battled to regain control of a Kosovo mining village captured by ethnic Albanian separatists, forcing thousands of villagers to flee as government forces steadily attacked the area from three sides Monday. Villagers said they expected the Serbs to take the area, reports AP.

Police and heavily armed government forces began their attack early Monday, and by evening had advanced within 200 meters of Belacevac, 10 km west of Kosovo's capital. Pristina.

The Serbs were trying to retake the Belacevac open-pit mine, which fell to the ethnic Albanians' Kosovo Liberation Army last week. The mine is strategically important because it supplies coal to the nearby Obilic power plant, which provides electricity for most of Kosovo.

Monday's fighting came as international envoys urged the two sides to seek a diplomatic solution.

The European Union agreed Monday that the Kosovo militants must be included in negonations for peace in the region. Meeting in Luxembourg, the foreign ministers issued a statement urging "all those in a leadership role in the Kosovar Albanian community" to commit to dialogue to resolve Kosovo's problems.

In the hills around Belacevac Monday. Serb police snipers were posted, tiring on men running water and biscuits to KLA fighters camped in the woods surrounding the villages.

Albanian sources claimed the area was completely scaled off and that government forces also attacked civilians in surrounding villages, killing an 8year-old child and trapping and unknown number of villagers in their homes. Other fled into the forests surrounding the village, where they were preparing to camp for the night.

The Serbs' Media Centre said armed Albanians had seized control of the mine's administrative buildings and were firing at police, who fought back with tear gas.

Aid workers may leave Kabul if

KABUL, June 30: Several international aid groups threatened Tuesday to leave the beleaguered capital if the Taliban religious army forces them to relocate to abandoned dormitories once used by students of the war-damaged technical insti-

after sanctions from overseas.

announced the Taliban decision to relocate an estimated 38 international aid groups into the Soviet-built dormitories within the next one month.

didn't want to be identified saying they still were negotiating with the Taliban, warned that several humanitarian groups will leave Kabul.

sewage facilities. The situation is very critical we want to help the poor people of Kabul, but we have made it clear that we do not want to move and we will stop our operations," said one aid worker,

The Taliban decision to relocate the aid groups was made where they have imposed a harsh version of Islamic law. that bans women from working and girls from going to school. It also requires men to grow a beard, publicly beating any

The aid groups were holding emergency ineetings in the Afghan capital on Tuesday to try to map out a course of ac-

It wasn't immediately known whether the latest Taliban order also applied to the International Red Cross and the United Nations, It's also not known how many people would be affected.

ordered them to relocate both their offices and their homes to the dormitories. Another AP report from Is-

lamabad says: Physicians for Human Rights slammed the United Nations Tuesday accusing the world body of selling out women and girls in an agreement with Alghamstan's Taliban religious army that "denies immediate access to healthcare and education for women in Afghanistan.

Since taking control of Kabul in 1996 and consolidating their hold over 85 per cent of war-weary Afghanistan, Taliban troops have imposed a harsh version of Islamic law. They have shut down schools for girls, reopened

schools for boys, they have

thrown women out of work.

in May accepted that access to

healthcare and education for women and girls will need to be

- AP/UNB photo.

Physicians for Human Rights The group called it a "betrayal of international human rights standards and of the female population

The UN disagreed. A spokesman in neighbouring Pakistan, Rupert Coleville said it was a significant step

forward to get the Taliban to

commit in writing to education

for girls and equal access to

healthcare for women. Coleville said agreeing to "gradual" equal access was "only realistic in a country where women haven't ever had access to education in large

parts of the country." The agreement, he said "is a negotiating process ... we never pretended that it was some dramatic breakthrough." He also said the UN wasn't ready to abandon it.

The Taliban promised a "number of specific measures ... to show the principle of equal access in both sectors," he said. But since signing that agreement on May 13 the Taliban appears to have backtracked.

Two weeks ago the Taliban shut down more than 100 privately run schools that were quietly education thousands of children, including girls. The Taliban also shut down voca tional schools that were giving women a trade and a means of earning money.

France to donate to new programme to prevent AIDS dia, and twice as many next GENEVA State "59 Propose

will donate several million dol lars to a new UN programme to prevent unborn children and infants from contracting the AIDS virus from their mothers, Health Minister Bernard Kouchner said today, reports

The programme announced Monday by the head of the United Nations AIDS Agency, Peter Piot, will target around 30,000 women in 11 countries, mainly in Africa, over the next 18 months, UN AIDS head said here.

Kouchner said France would release some five million francs (830,000 dollars) this year and 20 million francs [3.3] million dollars) in 1999.

Between 300 and 500 women and their children would be aided this year in Congo, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Uganda, Victnam and possibly Cambovide funds and partnerships were being sought with Austria. Italy and Luxembourg. Kouchner added that France was also continuing its efforts to establish an international

solidarity fund so that sufferers

in developing countries can en-

Kouchner said that the Eu-

ropean Union would also pro-

joy the benefits of the latest powerful but expensive treat-The UN programme announced by Piot will include offering treatment with AZT. the drug which boosts the AIDSstricken mothers, immune systems, to cut the chances of transmitting to their babies the Latian Immuno Deficiency

Virus HIIV) that leads to AIDS

alternatives to breast-feeding.

as well as access to testing and

Off the Record

'UFO sightings warrant closer look'

WASHINGTON: Scientists from around the world have concluded that some witness accounts of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) warrant a closer look, according to a report released

Monday, reports AFP. It may be valuable to carefully evaluate UFO reports to extract information about unusual phenomena currently unknown to science, the scientists concluded after hearing reports from specialised researchers, a statement issued by Stanford University said.

"Although UFO reports date back 50 years the information gathered does not prove that either unknown physical processes or alien technologies are implicated," the university said. Some of the events the scientists reviewed could have been

caused by rare natural occurrences, but the panel "found that some of the phenomena related to UFOs are not easy to explain in this fashion."



Pakistani para-military forces officers patrol near the nuclear explosion site in Chaghai, 330 km north of Quetta, Pakistan, Monday. Pakistan detonated six underground nuclear tests last month in retaliation of India's. Pakistani government is facing financial hardship

UN slammed over girls' edn, healthcare

forced to relocate to dormitories

tutes, reports AP. Radio Shariat on Monday

Western aid workers, who

The Taliban cited security

reasons for the forced reloca-

The dormitories, seven cement block buildings, are set among rocket-ruined buildings. all victims of relentless fighting between rival Islamic factions that took control of Kabul from the communists in 1992. While electricity is avail-

able, it's not clear whether the

dormitories are equipped with

either running water and

who wouldn't given his name.

in southern Kandahar, where the religious army is headquar-The Taliban control roughly 85 per cent of Afghanistan

man who shaves.

Aid workers said the Taliban

forced them to wear the all-enveloping burqua and publicly beat women who defied them. An agreement signed between the UN and the Taliban

This the Boston based said was unacceptable.

Afghanistan.