

International

Pakistan denies defector's claim about planned attack against India

NEW YORK, July 2: If Iftikhar Chaudhary Khan is telling the truth, Pakistan has nuclear weapons aimed at targets in India and has considered a first strike against its neighbour, reports AP.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was too early to assess the significance of Khan's defection or verify his claim to be a former assistant to Dr Altaf Hussain, director of the Khushab Nuclear Research Centre in Pakistan.

Khan said he wrote a protest letter and was fired in late April. He received threats, he said, and left Pakistan in May before nuclear tests conducted that month by both India and Pakistan.

never invited to top-secret meetings," Mubarakmand was quoted as saying. "They don't even know what happens in those meetings."

Khan showed reporters a Pakistani passport with a stamp that Wildes said signified high-security clearance, and a photocopy of what he said was Khan's ID card from the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission.



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan poses with African leaders, left to right, Sierra Leone President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, Nigeria's military ruler, Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar, and Liberian President Charles G Taylor, in Abuja, Nigeria, Wednesday. The four met to discuss regional security and cooperation.

Environment should not be sacrificed for growth in China: Clinton

GUILIN, July 2: Amid the craggy limestone peaks of Guilin, US President Bill Clinton said Thursday that the environment should not be sacrificed for economic growth in China, one of the most polluted countries on Earth, reports AP.

He said that if Guilin wants tourists to come, you have to have a clean environment. If you want a strong economy, you have to produce healthy children. So at some point we have to see these things together.

that causes pollution is about one-third of vehicles transportation, about one-third in buildings, housing and office building, and about one-third in factories," Clinton said.

With the end of the Cold War, Clinton said, "America has this role which is temporary — it won't last forever — as the only superpower in the world."

India may soon buy sophisticated Russian missile batteries

MOSCOW, July 2: India may soon buy sophisticated Russian missile batteries to counter Pakistan's Gauri ballistic missile, Itar-Tass news agency reported, quoting an official of state arms exporter Rosvooruzheniyeh, reports AFP.

Jayalalitha yet to decide on staying with Vajpayee govt

NEW DELHI, July 2: Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee couldn't be sure of support from a key ally Thursday, just as parliament prepares to vote on his first budget, reports AP.

government. The clashing public statements reflect the debate among Jayalalitha's supporters about how far to push Vajpayee.

Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata party argues it would be difficult to topple Jayalalitha's enemies without being able to show a legally acceptable reason, and because dismissing an elected state government would require approval of the parliament — in which the governing coalition lacks a majority.

20 die as bus catches fire in Turkey

Up to 20 people died and another 20 were injured when a bus caught fire after plunging into a ravine in southeastern Turkey late Wednesday, the Anatolia news agency said yesterday, AFP reports from Ankara.

2 Americans, 4 Thais held in Cambodia

Two Americans and four Thais have been arrested in Cambodia in a massive drug haul involving more than three tonnes of marijuana, police and diplomats said yesterday, AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

Indonesian soldier jailed for killing

A military court sentenced an Indonesian soldier to 10 years in prison Thursday for killing an East Timorese civilian, AP reports from Dili.

Heat wave hits Greece

A heat wave was hitting Greece on Wednesday with temperatures in many parts of the country soaring to 39 degrees and state services are remain on alert to deal with any problems stemming from the hot weather, Xinhua reports from Athens.

2 children die in Guam fire

Two young children were killed and a 3-month-old boy was seriously injured when a fire swept through an overcrowded apartment, AP reports from Tamuning.

Swedish actor Jaerrel dies

Swedish actor Stig Jaerrel has died at the age of 88 in hospital in Monaco, television news bulletins reported, AFP says from Stockholm.

UN to take key role in talks to end conflict in Colombia

BOGOTA, July 2: The United Nations has offered to take a leading role in any negotiations to end more than three decades of internal conflict in Colombia, authorities said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

President-elect Andres Pastrana welcomed UN involvement after officials handed him a document drafted by UN experts outlining issues they consider key to ending the violence.

This is the first document in which there is a conciliation among all of the armed groups and that is a very important element, Pastrana said after a two-hour meeting with UN officials here.

Delhi's roads, the most dangerous

NEW DELHI, July 2: The national capital has the dubious distinction of accounting for the maximum number of road accidents in India, according to India Abroad News Service.

While New Delhi's population has topped ten million, it has more vehicles than three other metros — Calcutta, Mumbai and Chennai — put together. By the latest estimate, Delhi has three million vehicles and adds 200,000 every year.

As many as 69 per cent of the persons killed in road accidents in Delhi are pedestrians, the report says. With a high rate of 46.12 per cent accidental deaths, Delhi ranks the highest among the four major metropolitan cities.

One killed as Hezbollah rebels attack Israeli, Lebanese positions

TYRE, Lebanon, July 2: Hezbollah guerrillas attacked Israeli and allied Lebanese militia positions across southern Lebanon Thursday, wounding four people. A Lebanese man was killed in Israeli shelling that followed, reports AP.

The guerrillas attacked 16 positions with rockets and machine-gun fire in pre-dawn raids, Lebanese security officials said. Two Israeli soldiers and two allied South Lebanon Army militiamen were wounded and flown to Israeli hospitals, the officials said.

In Israeli artillery and mortar shelling that ensued, a Lebanese man was killed in the village of Yater, said the officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity.

Off the Record

Parental rights

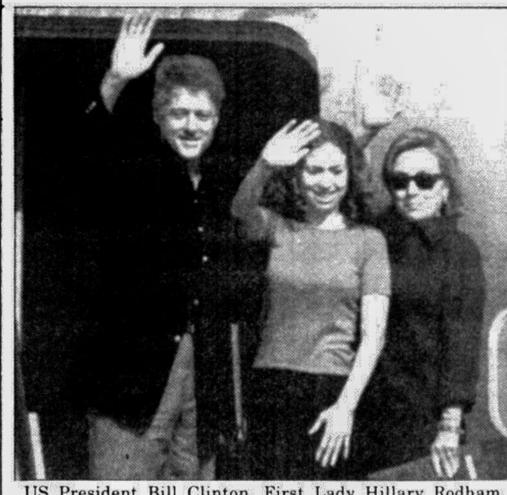
LONDON: British men who father children outside marriage are to be given the same parental rights as married fathers under proposed law reforms, the Guardian newspaper reported Thursday, says AFP.

Caring mother at her teens

MANCHESTER, England: A girl of 12 has become one of Britain's youngest mothers after having a baby by her 13-year-old boyfriend, it was reported Thursday, says AFP.

Jiang inspects China's military base in HK

HONG KONG, July 2: President Jiang Zemin today inspected China's biggest military base in Hong Kong, striding along a red carpet in front of troops shouting "how are you comrades," reports AFP.



US President Bill Clinton, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and daughter Chelsea wave goodbye as they board Air Force One at Shanghai Airport Thursday. Clinton will spend Thursday touring Guilin before flying to Hong Kong in the evening.

Florida fire renders 10,000 homeless, closes roads, destroys businesses

SCOTTSMOOR, Fla, July 2: Florida's fires drove about 10,000 people from their homes on Wednesday, closed roads, damaged or destroyed a dozen homes and businesses and gave firefighters their worst day in a month, authorities said, reports Reuters.

The most fires were in Brevard County, west of the Kennedy Space Centre, where fire fronts 15 to 20 miles (24 to 32 kms) long forced evacuation of the tons of Scottsmeer and mims.

moving unbelievable fast and they've burned at least 10 homes that we know of. These fires are moving so fast they don't burn all the vegetation as they move through. They're able to double back and burn the same area twice.

Three firefighters were injured in Brevard county on Wednesday, one with serious burns, authorities said. A Sheriff's deputy was severely injured when a resident deliberately ran the deputy down trying to get back to his home so he could retrieve a fishing boat, authorities said.

evacuation orders. It borders on Daytona Beach, also threatened by the uncontained fires. "The fire is literally at people's doorsteps," said Len Cieszenski of the Volusia County Emergency Management Centre.

The Ormond Beach municipal airport was closed, but the Daytona International Airport remained open, officials said. The fires have burned about 20,000 acres (8000 hectares) in the county out of a total of 260,000 acres (104,000 hectares) scorched across the rain-starved state since June 1.

Hillary urges Chinese women to value their daughters

SHANGHAI, July 2: US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton urged Chinese women Tuesday to value and respect their daughters so that they can move themselves, their families and their country forward, reports AFP.

per in the 20th century. "That message is even more compelling in 1998 as China enters the 21st century," the First Lady said.

US spent over \$5.8t on N-weapons since 1940s

WASHINGTON, July 2: The United States has spent more than 5.8 trillion dollars on nuclear weapons since 1940s, and still spends more 35 billion dollars a year on its nuclear arsenal, a study by the Brookings Institution has found, reports AFP.

London's Royal Opera House in severe financial crisis

LONDON, July 2: London's Royal Opera House is at the centre of an intractable financial crisis that could force this venerable institution to back down a notch and privatise if it wants to avoid closing down altogether, reports AFP.

to try to get the institution out of its financial and administrative mess by appointing Sir Colin Southgate, 59, then head of the London music giant EMI, as chairman.

problems. His appointment followed a bad year that saw two chief executives and the entire Opera Board resign after a parliamentary report complained of wasted public funds.

According to Southgate, even if all the performances at the Royal Opera once it is renovated are sold out and huge private donations pour, in the opera would still need 15 million dollars more per year to function.

It is backed in this by the powerful Parliamentary Committee for Cultural Affairs which already got rid of the opera's last chief executive.

Zeroal appeals for unity in Algeria

ALGIERS, July 2: President Liamine Zeroal appealed for unity in Algeria Wednesday hours after the latest in a long-standing series of outrages killing four people and wounding 14 when a bomb exploded south of the capital Algiers, reports AFP.

Atomic audit

study by Brookings scholar Stephen Schwartz, was billed as the first attempt to do a comprehensive accounting of the cumulative cost US nuclear weapons programme.

Neither can we hope to prevent other countries from acquiring nuclear weapons if we do not fully comprehend the forces that have driven our own programme and affect it still.

The study put the cumulative cost of US nuclear weapons from 1940 to 1996 at 5.8 trillion dollars in constant 1996 dollars.