

**BRIEFLY**



Tehran people watch the ablate of 50 tons of opium and other narcotics at Tochal in north of Tehran Thursday. Iran government destroyed drugs in a ceremony attended by President Mohammad Khatami, senior officials and foreign diplomats. — AP/UNB photo

**ROK police detains 350 workers:** Police detained 350 striking subway workers who set the tracks on fire Friday, bringing morning commuter traffic to a standstill in South Korea's second largest city, AP reports from Seoul.

Police in Pusan, a port city 350 km south of Seoul, said they planned to formally arrest union leaders accused of organising the illegal protest. The subway workers went on strike Friday and staged a sit-down on the subway tracks, demanding better working conditions and job security.

**19 missing as boat capsizes in China:** An iron barge capsized near the construction site for the massive Three Gorges dam in central China, leaving 19 people missing, an official newspaper said Friday. AP reports from Beijing.

Six people were rescued after the barge, piloted by a farmer, overturned Thursday three km downstream of the giant dam across the Yangtze River in Hubei province, the China Daily said. Most of the passengers were farmers going from one village to another to shop, it said.

**7 Thais die as ferry capsizes:** Seven people drowned after a ferry capsized in heavy rains and high winds near the famed resort island of Phuket, police said Friday. AP reports from Bangkok.

Newspapers cited survivors as saying that the ferry lacked safety equipment, including enough life jackets for the 17 people on board. One survivor stayed afloat by clutching a gas tank. The dead included a three-month-old girl, her mother and the vessel's skipper. The boat capsized Thursday about 30 minutes after leaving Phuket, 690 km southwest of Bangkok, for the neighbouring island of Phang-nga in the Andaman Sea.

**Dengue fever claims 17 in Vietnam:** An outbreak of dengue fever killed at least 17 children in a single province last month, the Thanh Nien (Youth) newspaper reported Friday. AP says from Hanoi.

Only one child died from the virus in the southern province of Dong Nai in the first five months of the year. But the number of fatalities soared last month, with speculation that the death toll could be even higher. The two provincial hospitals have admitted 2,200 children with dengue this year.

**Imelda insists on burying remains of Marcos at heroes' cemetery**

MANILA, July 3: Former first lady Imelda Marcos said Friday she will insist that the remains of her husband, dictator Ferdinand Marcos, be buried in a heroes' cemetery, a plan that has reopened old wounds and divided Filipinos, reports AP.

Facing loud opposition to the burial plans, President Joseph Estrada last week urged Imelda Marcos to follow the advice of the country's Roman Catholic bishops to bury her husband's remains in his northern Philippine hometown of Batangas.

Emelda on Friday resisted Estrada's suggestion. "Who will die for our country? Who will fight for our country if you will just put him in the backyard of his house?" she said.

The body of Marcos is on display in a glass coffin inside an air-conditioned crypt at his mansion in Batangas, about 410 km north of Manila. Marcos died in Honolulu in 1989, three years after a "people power" revolt toppled his 20-year rule, and his body was brought back to the Philippines in 1993.

Emelda says her husband's dying wish was to be buried at the heroes' cemetery which is reserved for former soldiers. Both former President Fidel Ramos and his predecessor, Corason Aquino, refused to let Marcos be buried at the heroes' cemetery because it could trigger clashes between his supporters and opponents.

Several weeks before taking office as the Philippines' 13th president last Tuesday, Estrada, a supporter of Marcos, announced he would allow Marcos to be buried there.

His announcement immediately drew widespread protests from groups that had opposed Marcos and threatened to erode the new president's popularity. Amid the protests, Emelda postponed the planned burial.

Estrada later asked her to bury her husband in Batangas. Emelda said her husband was a war hero and deserved to be buried at the heroes' cemetery. She also said there was no law prohibiting her husband's interment there.

"I'm just trying to do what is right," Emelda told reporters at her house in suburban San Juan, tears welling in her eyes. "And there is always a right time to do the right thing."

**Palestinians lift blockade of Jewish settlements in Gaza**

KFAR DAROM, Gaza Strip, July 3: Palestinians lifted their blockade of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip on Friday morning, ending a 12-hour standoff in which Israeli and Palestinian troops had scuffled, screamed accusations and pointed guns at one another, reports AP.

It was the most serious confrontation between the two sides in two years with Israeli troops bringing in armored personnel carriers and the Palestinians blocking roads with truck convoys.

At one point, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai appealed to the US Mideast peace envoy, Dennis Ross, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, for help in defusing the situation.

After all-night negotiations, a compromise was reached just before dawn Friday. The confrontation began

with a seemingly routine argument over the use of a road. About two-thirds of the Gaza Strip is controlled by the Palestinian Authority, but Israeli troops patrol near Jewish settlements and control several access roads.

On Thursday afternoon, Palestinian Supplies Minister Abdel Azziz Shaheen demanded that Israel allow a convoy of 22 Palestinian cars to use a coastal route it controls.

Israeli soldiers allowed Shaheen to use the road because as a Cabinet Minister he has special privileges, but he ordered the other motorists to turn back, for reasons that were not immediately clear. Shaheen insisted that all cars be allowed to pass. Palestinian police rushed to the scene and a confrontation with Israeli troops quickly ensued. The two sides angrily pushed each other and pointed their weapons at

one another. At Kfar Darom junction, near the Jewish settlement of the same name, Israeli troops stationed three APCs in the middle of a road linking two major Gaza Strip cities. Hundreds of vehicles were brought to a standstill for hours.

In retaliation, Palestinian police ordered dozens of trucks to block access roads to Jewish settlements. Israel, in turn, sealed off the Gaza Strip.

As the standoff dragged on, army bulldozers hauled in sand to form extra military positions along the road, and Palestinian police crouched in the fields just a few dozen meters (yards) away.

Under a compromise reached early Friday, the Palestinians agreed to move the trucks from the settlement roads while Israel allowed Shaheen and his convoy to drive along the coastal road.

Right-wing ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet accused the government of caving in to the Palestinians.

Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh said the Palestinians were mistaken if they believed they could wring concessions from Israel with the threat of violence.

"If the Palestinians want to advance their cause, the only way to do so is around the negotiating table. The use and the threat of violence, such thuggish behavior, will get them nowhere. On the contrary, it will only lead them to failure," said Naveh.

There has been sporadic friction between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police in recent months. However, the recent standoff was the tensest since September 1996, when scores of people were killed in gunbattles between Israeli and Palestinian troops.

**UNSC extends sanctions on Libya**

UNITED NATIONS, July 3: The Security Council decided Thursday to extend sanctions against Libya, saying it hadn't complied with UN demands to turn over two suspects in the 1988 Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, reports AP.

The decision, made after a periodic review, was another setback to Libya, which has been pushing to have the six-year-old sanctions lifted based on Col. Moammar Gaddafi's offer to send the suspects to a third country or an international tribunal for trial.

US and British governments insist they be tried in the United States or Scotland, as required under a 1992 council resolution which imposed an arms and aviation embargo to force Gaddafi to hand over the suspects.

"The problem here is not six years of sanctions, but six years of Libyan obstruction in efforts to bring to justice those responsible for 270 deaths of people from 27 different countries," said Nancy Soderberg, a deputy US representative.

China and Russia, who are also permanent council members, have called for more flexibility in considering Libya's proposals.

But council president, Sergey Lavrov of Russia, told reporters the council "could not agree that necessary conditions exist to change the sanctions regime."

**Missile fired by US jet damaged gas storage depot in Iraq**

BASRA, Iraq, July 3: An anti-radar missile fired by a US warplane over southern Iraq Tuesday slightly damaged a gas storage depot, a United Nations inspection team found, reports AFP.

The F-16 fighter fired the missile after four patrolling British Tornados reported being illuminated and tracked by radar from an Iraqi surface-to-air missile unit.

A spokesman for the United Nations Observation Mission on the Iraq-Kuwait Border (UNIKOM) said Thursday a team had been sent to verify an explosion in the vicinity of the gas depot near Umm Qasr, inside the demilitarised border zone.

There were "no injuries, no structural damage as far as we can ascertain," spokesman Abdullah al-Zubair Rijal said. "There was slight cosmetic damage to a storage building and two broken windows in an adjacent building."

The team had found "a fresh impact crater surrounded by many pieces of sharpnel and missile debris," the spokesman said.



President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, left, meet with Hong Kong's Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa Thursday night just after their arrival. Clinton will advance America's business interests in Hong Kong before returning to the US Friday. — AP/UNB photo

**Nigeria to free all political prisoners including Abiola: UN**

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, July 3: Dozens of Nigerian political prisoners are released and freedom is promised for the rest. Powerful Western nations discuss warmer ties. Even Moshood Abiola, the country's best-known prisoner, is expected to walk free soon, reports AP.

Nigeria's isolation, nursed along by five years of brutal military rule, is being pushed aside as the junta's new leader reaches out to the country's opposition and the outside world.

The death of Gen. Sani Abacha less than a month ago has meant far more than a new military ruler for Nigeria. It is shaping up as the start of a seminal change for this oil-rich but poverty-racked West African nation.

Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, the career soldier who stepped into power after Abacha's death, has signaled that his rule will be different from his predecessor's freeing prisoners, meeting Abiola and welcoming visiting diplomats.

In his biggest move to date, he has approved the release of all Nigeria's political prisoners, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced Thursday. Those freed will include Abiola, the accord winner of 1993's annulled presidential elec-

tions. Furthermore, Abubakar is vowing to remain in power only briefly. He insists civilians will run Nigeria after October 1.

But just how — and even if — Nigeria moves toward democracy will be the real test of Nigeria's new leader.

The October 1 transition schedule is a deeply flawed inheritance from Abacha, whose manipulation of it made it clear he intended only to transform himself into a nominally civilian president.

Now, with less than three months until the handover date, it seems improbable that a candidate independent of Nigeria's governing class — the military — could win free elections. A schedule change is rumoured, but nothing definite has been announced.

Soldiers have ruled Nigeria for all but 10 years since it gained independence from England in 1960.

Generations of generals have grown rich through the elaborate system of corruption and graft that governs nearly every financial arrangement in Nigeria. If Abubakar wants the military to give up power, he will have to stand down plenty of Nigerian officers who have not yet had their chance to gather their fortunes — or who don't believe their fortunes are quite large enough.

The problems also transcend money. The Nigerian military is largely made up of Hausa-Fulani northerners while the democracy movement is mainly led by southern Yorubas.



Lt Colonel Zheng Jinlai, a member of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) examining Thursday a piece of the US manufactured HARM missile at Umm Qasr, Iraqi government claimed that a US jet fired it into the Iraqi-Kuwaiti demilitarised zone on Tuesday. — AP/UNB photo

**Over 200 killed since June 1  
Violence grips Karachi**

KARACHI, July 3: The tortured bodies of four men were among seven victims Friday of bloody ethnically related violence terrorizing the southern port city of Karachi where thousands of police and paramilitary soldiers patrol, reports AP.

In armored personnel carriers and in jeeps mounted with machine guns, Rangers and police wear bullet-proof vests and carry automatic rifles on their rounds through troubled central and eastern neighborhoods.

On Thursday two policemen and two Rangers were among the 11 who died that day.

The combatants are members of splinter groups of the Mohajir Qami Movement, which represents Indian Muslims who settled in Pakistan in 1947.

Since June 1, more than 200 people have been killed in street violence between three different factions of the movement. Many of the dead were caught in the crossfire, police said.

The fight is between rival factions of a militant ethnic party battling over control of neighborhoods in Karachi. The worst hit neighborhood

in recent days has been central Liaqatabad area, where rivals have taken up position on rooftops and fire relentlessly at each other.

Five of the victims Friday died in Liaqatabad. Four were tortured and their bodies abandoned in vehicles parked in the troubled area.

Police officials who found the bodies said there was evidence that they had been tortured. Their faces were bruised and battered. They died from gunshot wounds.

The fifth person was shot by a rooftop sniper.

The fifth person was shot by a rooftop sniper. The other two victims died in the eastern Korangi neighborhood in separate incidents.

The federal government is threatening to give Rangers sweeping powers of arrest and detention if the violence continues unabated.

The provincial government of Sindh, of which Karachi is the capital, is resisting. So far the provincial police department has deployed an additional 3,000 men to patrol the streets.

**Hong Kong activists accuse Clinton of double standards**

HONG KONG, July 3: Hong Kong's activists today accused US President Bill Clinton of double standards for failing to honour a spoken pledge to meet and talk with protesters, reports AFP.

Activists from the Action Committee for Defending the Diaoyu Islands were disappointed after Clinton did not speak to protesters who kept up an all-night vigil outside the hotel where the US President was staying.

"We're disappointed as he did not keep up his word. He has a double standard saying different things at different places," said Lo Chau, spokesman for the group.

The group is trying to defend Chinese sovereignty over the Japanese-occupied Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea.

They have protested against revised guidelines issue between the US and Japan, under which Japanese forces could provide logistic support to US operations in the region.

Lo said Clinton was asked by a student at Beijing University on Monday what he would do if he were confronted by protesters as Chinese President Jiang Zemin was during his tour of the United States in November.

Clinton replied he would go and talk to the protesters to try to understand their complaints.

"We could understand if he did not speak to any protesters in China, but this is Hong Kong, which is still a democratic place," said Lo. "It is a shame for a country which is proud of its democratic tradition," he said. "We will continue our protest until he leaves Hong Kong."

**Parliament adopts bill on medical exam of Yeltsin**

MOSCOW, July 3: In a law aimed at Boris Yeltsin, parliament's lower house passed a bill Friday that would require the Russian president to undergo a medical exam if he failed to work full-time for more than four months, reports AP.

Many of Yeltsin's Communist opponents in parliament claim that a series of illnesses in recent years has left him physically unfit to hold office.

Also, parliament planned to revive a related bill under which the Supreme Court would determine whether a president should be removed from office because of poor health.

The Russian constitution says a president must step down if he suffers a "lasting inability to exercise his powers." But it does not explain the process for removing a president on these grounds, and the new bill is intended to fill the gap.

**Don't attack Serb civilians, Albanian PM urges rebels**

TIRANA, July 3: Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano urged ethnic Albanian separatist guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) on Thursday not to attack Serb civilians in the troubled Serbian province, reports Reuters.

The KLA, which is fighting for independence for Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority, has taken nominal control of at least a third of Kosovo.

"We, the Albanian government, during our contact at different levels with our partners in Kosovo, have asked that acts of violence on civilians of other ethnic groups be avoided," Nano said in a statement.

Otherwise, governments in Europe and North America would take a negative view of what Nano called "this Albanian popular movement".

Human rights watchdog Amnesty International on Tuesday condemned the fighting between Serb security forces and Kosovo Albanians, which it said had led to serious human rights abuses.

Amnesty accused both sides of targeting civilians during the upsurge in violence, saying excessive use of force seemed to be the norm for both.

Serbs were targeting civilian areas with artillery, mortars

and other weapons while Albanian guerrillas had also attacked innocent people indiscriminately, the human rights group said.

The fighting killed more than 250 people and sent 10,000 ethnic Albanians fleeing to Albania, putting a huge strain on the most impoverished area of Europe's poorest country.

**2,000 Kashmiris leave border village to escape Pak firing**

NEW DELHI, July 3: Heavy firing of Pakistani forces had forced more than 2,000 villagers in Indian-held Kashmir to move to safer areas. Homes and fields were damaged and three policemen and four civilians were killed in the last few days, a government official said Friday, reports AP.

Mushtaq Ahmad Lone, junior interior minister in the Kashmir state government, said many more villagers were fleeing to leave their homes in Dwar, about 200 km northwest of the state capital Srinagar.

**UNDP lauds China's record of human development**

BEIJING, July 3: The United Nations Development Programme on Friday praised China's poverty alleviation and rising life expectancy, but warned of growing income disparities as a result of the shift to market economy, reports AP.

The UNDP released its 1997 index of China's human development — an average of income, life expectancy, and education levels — showing China now firmly in the ranks of countries with medium-range human development.

"China has compiled an admirable record of promoting human development, with falling poverty rates and improvements in the health and educational status of the population," Kerstin Leitner, resident representative of the UNDP in China, told reporters.

At the same time, she cautioned that the Asian financial crisis could slow China's future development plans by hindering job creation.

China now faces the further

challenge of maintaining a healthy growth rate in a less favourable regional environment, while spreading the gains of reform more widely over its huge and diverse population and preserving its threatened natural environment," she added.

**Hun Sen denies he is a 'monster'**

ROLANG KEN, Cambodia, July 3: Accused of using violence and fear to win elections July 26, Cambodian leader Hun Sen presented a softer side Friday as a sentimental songwriter and insisted he is no "monster," reports AP.

The US Embassy meanwhile issued a warning for US citizens to take special precautions during the anniversary July 5-7 of the bloody street battles and looting that accompanied Hun Sen's ouster of his co-prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, a year ago.

Rapid economic growth has persisted since market reforms in 1978 but China's human development measured in terms of life expectancy and school enrolment has grown more slowly, the UNDP study found.

This is partly due to less rapid growth in life expectancy in the 1980s and 1990s following a surge in the years from 1949 to 1979. Also, school enrolments in rural areas have suffered as peasants are forced to pay higher school fees.

Social inequalities are likely to grow as a result of massive layoffs from state-owned enterprises, which have eroded traditional safety nets of state-provided housing, food and medicare, and will increase urban poverty.

The study also warned that disparities between rural and urban areas have shot up, largely due to the central government's increasing demand that local governments shoulder more of the burden of education and healthcare costs.