UNGA upgrades Palestinian delegation's status

UNITED NATIONS, July 8: The UN General Assembly voted Tuesday to upgrade the Palestinian delegation's status, drawing shouts of triumph from Palestinian official and dismay from Israel and the United States, reports AFP.

An overwhelming majority of the UN General Assembly voted to maintain the Palestinians delegations' non-voting observer status but to give it additional rights and privi-

A total of 124 countries voted in favour of the resolution while Israel, the Marshall Islands Micronesia and the United States voted against it and 10 countries abstained.

The Palestinian envoy to the United Nations Nasser Al Kidwa, hailed the vote as a new step on the path towards independence saying a small victory was achieved for Palestine to-

damage, AP reports from Manila.

said Tuesday, AFP says from Bogota.

hospital spokesman.

am north of Calayan island, about 600 kilometres north of

Japanese architect Nagao dead:

Yoriko Nagao, an architect who designed a futuristic complex of

buildings in Tokyo, has died of lung cancer after years of illness, a

hospital official said Wednesday. She was 52, AP reports from

Sunday. She was first diagnosed with cancer of the large intestine

6 killed in Colombia attack: At least

six peasants were killed and another six were missing after right-wing paramilitaries attacked them in eastern Colombia, officials

The victims were on a boat that was stopped by the paramili-

2 die in US chopper crash: A US Army helicopter crashed in the Bahamas Monday night during a test

flight, killing two women passengers and injuring three crew

The Pentagon would not say whether the women, both civilians,

were authorised to be aboard the UH-60 Blackhawk, which crashed

2 patrol agents shot dead in US:

A man fatally shot a mother and daughter in a pre-dawn attack at

their home, then ambushed a group of law officers trying to find

The gunman, Ernest Moore, 25, was shot four times in the shootour and died hours later 11 () Cop tan said Mike Swartz, a

Accompanied by officials, Egyptian President Hosni

Mubarak, center, listens to Al-Azhar Sheikh Mohammed

Sayyed Tantawi during a visit to mark the opening of the

1020-year-old mosque of Al-Azhar after its restoration

Tuesday. The restoration of the mosque costed 13 million US

at 7:30 pm near Georgetown, Great Exuma in the Bahamas.

him, killing two Border Patrol agent, AP says from Texas.

members, the army said Tuesday, AFP reports from Miami,

Nagao, who was born Yoriko Ebine, died in a Tokyo hospital on

located about 30 kilometres below the Luzon Strait.

in 1993, and the disease eventually spread to her lungs.

taries, according to regional official Rocio Lopez.

We hope that the United Na-tions will accept Palestine as a member state in the near future.... that shall be the big

victory, he added. 'It's an international recog-nition of Palestinian rights and the international legality of our cause, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's spokesman differences. Nabil Abu Rudenia said in Gaza

"It is an important and positive step on the path to a complete recognition of Palestine as an independent state covering all Palestinian territory in cluding Jerusalem", he told

But the White House was quick to slam the vote as shortterm political symbolism dam-

aging to the peace process.

It's very similar to similar misbegotten efforts by the General Assembly in years past to inject themselves in what is obviously a sensitive delicate and

difficult process, said White House spokesman Michael Mc-

McCurry said the vote preempted so called final status issues to be settled by Israel and the Palestinians and thus was "detrimental to the effort to help these parties bridge their

"It's got nothing to do with resolving the real issues that will bring peace in that region. It's got everything to do with short-term political symbolism, he said.

McCurry's comments came after the US state department criticised the decision calling it a 'mistake' that could harm the peace process.

We regret this decision, state department spokesman James Rubin said, adding: "We think this was a mistake, we think that this decision undermines the chances of bringing peace to

The Israeli Foreign Ministry said the UN decision contradicted the principles and spirit of the Middle East peace pro-

"This decision creates a negative precedent and contradicts principles of the peace process and the spirit of the Oslo Accords (on Palestinian autonomy)," the ministry said in a statement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinian attempt to seek recognition from the United Nations preempted agreed talks on the final status of the Palestinian Authority.

I am concerned with the Palestinian attempt to pre-empt final status talks. This was a clear violation of the Oslo Accord, he said at a press conference with visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem.



Road workers clear debris and repair track following a collision between two commuter trains which killed three people and injured three others near Moscow on Tuesday. The collision occurred near the Bekasovo railway station 80 kilometres southwest of Moscow. - AP/UNB photo

Secret Service employees to testify in Lewinsky's case

WASHINGTON, July 8: Se-Earthquake rocks N Philippines: cret Service employees must answer grand jury questions in A strong earthquake rocked remote northern Philippine islands the Monica Lewinsky investigabefore dawn Wednesday, but there were no immediate reports of tion, a federal appeals court declared, rejecting arguments The earthquake, with a magnitude of 5.2, struck at around 2:30 that agents' testimony would imperil presidents, and hand-Manila, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology ing prosecutor Kenneth Starr a said. The earthquake was tectonic in origin and the epicenter was

major victory, reports AP.

One of Starr's chief witnesses, meanwhile, learned Tuesday that she is the focus of a new grand jury inquiry in Maryland to determine whether her secret tape recordings of Ms. Lewinsky violated state law.

"I am not intimidated in any way," Linda Tripp declared after hearing the news.

In the US Court of Appeals case, a panel of three Republican-appointed judges rejected the Clinton administration's arguments that the Secret Service should be exempted from grand jury testimony under a new protective function privilege because such testimony could jeopardise a president's security.

"We do not think ... that the Secret Service has shown with compelling clarity that failure to recognise the proposed privilege will jeopardise the ability of the Secret Service effectively to protect the president," the judges ruled.

Judges Raymond Randolph, Stephen Williams and Douglas Ginsburg endorsed Starr's ar-

LONDON, July 8: Shock, sor-

row and renewed pleas for Nige-

ria to return to civilian rule

greeted the death Tuesday of the

nation's most prominent polit-

ical prisoner, Moshood Abiola,

his death on ill-treatment dur-

ing four years in jail and ha-

rassment by the military

General Kofi Annan, who met

with Abiola just a week ago and

who expected his imminent re-

lease from jail, called on Nige-

ria's new military leader, Gen

Abdulsalam Abubakar, to ful-

fill promises "to release all re-

maining political prisoners un-

conditionally and to define a

credible process for the demo-

cratic transition to civilian

rule within a reasonable pe-

1993 elections, suffered an ap-

parent heart attack while meet-

ing a visiting US State Depart-

Robin Cook said Nigeria had

tragic that he should die now at

this time of change and hope for

fighting back tears in a British

Broadcasting Corp TV inter-

view, said that "of all the condi-

tions he had, heart was not one

Abiola's daughter, Wuru,

lost its "symbol of democracy."

British Foreign Secretary

"It is therefore particularly

Abiola, presumed winner of

In New York, UN Secretary-

Opposition groups blamed

reports AP.

riod."

-AP/UNB photo of them."

ment delegation.

Nigeria," added Cook.

Abiola's death condoled

guments that Congress, and not the courts, should decide if such a new legal privilege should be created. In doing so, they upheld an earlier ruling by US District Judge Norma Holloway John-

The Clinton administration must now decide whether to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court, ask the full appeals court to hear the case or abide by the decision.

The Justice Department said in a statement it was concerned that "any action that could distance the Secret Service from the president increase the danger to his life and that of future presidents. We are reviewing whether to appeal, and hope to have a decision soon."

The appeals judges noted that Secret Service agents have given testimony in the past about the functioning of the tape-recording system in the Oval Office and some agents have disclosed observations from their protective experiences in books, apparently without causing presidents to distance themselves from their protectors.

Even if a protective privilege were in place, "conscience might impel a president to distance himself from Secret Service agents when engaging in wrongful conduct," the judges

"All our efforts have come to

But then Miss Abiola added

nothing because without his life

there is nothing else we can

"This is the wake up call for all

our leaders that we don't have

time. We must secure the future

had seemed in good health

when they met, the London

spokesman for a coalition of

opposition groups said Abiola's

health had been deteriorating

Gaddafi undergoes

hip surgery

leader Muammar Gaddafi has

undergone successful surgery

for a broken hip suffered when

he was exercising the Libyan

official news agency JANA said

Monday and doctors had said

he would be operated on shortly

Libyan doctors on a broken left

hip was successful", the agency

showed Gaddafi lying in bed in

a meeting room in the city of

Beida receiving heads of state

from African Muslim countries

to mark the birth of Prophet

Gaddafi, 56, broke his hip on

"The surgery carried out by

Libyan Television Monday

on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

TUNIS, July 8: Libyan

While Annan said Abiola

fight for," she said.

for all Nigerians."

for a long time.

afterwards.

Mohammad.

Australian defence expert warns

Indo-Pak tensions have brought world closer to N-war

SYDNEY, July 8: Tensions between India and Pakistan have brought the world closer to nuclear conflict that at any time during the cold war, an Australian defence expert warned today, reports AFP.

Professor Des Ball, who has advised numerous governments around the world and two former US presidents, said India has about 120 active nuclear weapons, twice as many as previously feared.

Most are aimed not at Pakistan, but at China, he said. But Ball said that unlike with the recognised nuclear powers, the commander control systems on the Sub-continent

are totally inadequate. "That really is the most disturbing aspect," he said. "If their commander control was better then one would be a little less worried, but I'm afraid their commander control is so abysmal that one really does have to be very concerned."

Ball told ABC radio that most of the nuclear crises he was familiar with - "and | worked as a consultant to a couple of American presidents on examining those crises" nuclear use was never that

"On the other hand, when you look at what's happened in

Ukraine's

Speaker

elected

ainian Parliament on Tuesday

elected a Speaker at its 20th

attempt appointing Olexander

Tkachenko, a member of the

leftist Selyanska Party, reports

Parliamentary Commission

charged with organising the

vote, told deputies that

Tkachenko, the only candidate.

had won the support of 232 of

the 314 deputies who voted. He

had required 226 votes to be

been elected as the Speaker of

the Verkhovna Rada", Myshura

been trying to elect a Speaker

since early May after an elec-

tion on March 29 in which left

wing parties made a strong

showing wining 40 per cent of

the seats in the 450 member

Failure to elect a Speaker

has stalled the passage of laws

that the government and presi-

dent Leoniad Kuchma hope will

country of 50 million people.

"Olexander Tkachenko has

Ukraine's Parliament has

elected.

told the assembly.

Parliament.

Valery Myshura, head of the

KIEV, July 8: The Ukr-

the India-Pakistan relationship, on three occasions in the last decade or so they got very close to using nuclear wepons." Asked how close they now are to deploying nuclear

weapons, Ball said India and Pakistan regarded them simply as another weapon to be used in a conflict, and any country which chose to use them would do so on a first strike basis.

Suu Kyi unhurt after long confrontation with police YANGON, July 8: Pro-

democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi returned home unharmed Wednesday after a nearly 24hour standoff with police on a road outside the capital, an act of defiance the military regime said could disrupt peace, reports

Suu Kyi, 53, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, arrived back at her lakeside home Wednesday morning following an overnight sit-in in her car after she was stopped some 80 kilometres north of Yangon. She rejected police orders to

go back until she was allowed to meet a member of her National League for Democracy, who was brought to the car Wednesday morning from further north in Min Hla township, NID sources said on condition of anonymity.

The trip flouted an unoffi-



cial ban on Suu Kyi traveling outside Yangon and was viewed by the government in a statement Tuesday as a bid to "create unnecessary and unwanted confusion, confrontation and collision."

Pakistan's Foreign Secy tells US audience

Sanctions are not in best US interests

NEW YORK, July 8: Pakistan's foreign secretary defended his country's nuclear tests Tuesday in a speech intended to explain Pakistan's reasons and the effects of resulting sanctions to a US audi-

ence, reports AP. Sanctions aren't in America's interest because they will lead to more instability in central Asia, Shamshad Ahmad told about 100 journalists, academics, business associates and foreign policy experts at the

Asia Society.

kick start stalled reforms in the The tit-for-tat tests this Tkachenko, 59, was Deputy Speaker in the previous parliament and has also been Ukraine's agriculture minister.

such as Japan and Australia cut off aid. Ahmad urged international efforts to resolve what he called

"An economically destabi-

lized Pakistan will not contribute to peace and stability in central and west Asia." Ahmad said. "An economically unstable Pakistan is certainly not in the interests of the United

Calling his country America's "most sanctioned strategic ally," Ahmad defended Pakistan's decision to test the devices as a right to protect itself against aggression from neighboring India, which exploded nuclear devices two weeks before Pakistan did.

spring raised fears of a nuclear arms race in South Asia and resulted in US sanctions against both countries. Other countries,

the root of the tensions between India and Pakistan - the disputed territory of Kashmir. Muslim rebels have been

fighting a separatist war in India-controlled Kashmir since 1989. India and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir since they won independence from Britain 50 years ago. India has two-thirds of the territory and Pakistan the rest, while both claim all of Kashmir.

In a speech that cited references to nations' security by Theodore Roosvelt, Woodrow Wilson and Thomas Jefferson, Ahmad listed what he said were repeated threats by India before and after New Delhi tested five nuclear devices on May 11 and

"In fact, we were left with no other option," Ahmad said. "We were advised to take the moral high ground for the sake of nonproliferation and thus forfeit our right to exist as a free Ahmad rejected India's offer

for a "no-first use' pact on nuclear weapons, saying no such pact has ever worked.

'Corpse Flower' blooms in Atlanta garden ATLANTA, July 8: A bloom-

dollars.

ing but far from fragrant specimen of the world's largest flower, a rarity with the nickname "Corpse Flower," was pollinated at a Botanical Garden in Atlanta on Tuesday after a cross country dash by a curator at the garden, reports Reuters.

Ron Gagliardo, curator of tropical plants at Atlanta Botanical Garden, used pollen collected last month from a giant Amorphophallus titanum that bloomed at Fairchild Tropical Garden in Miami to pollinate the blossom that opened on Saturday.

The amorphophallus titanum or Titan arun, is known as much for its unpleasant scent of decaying flesh as for its extreme rarity and size - the flowers grow some six to seven feet tall.

The flower had bloomed in the United States only five previous times in history before the blossoms opened within the last few weeks in Florida and

Georgia. The Curator was in Denver and when he heard of the development early on Sunday and raced to the airport, begging ticket agents for a seat on any flight back to Atlanta.

Gujral sees opportunity for progress in Indo-Pak talks

dian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral sees a more "solid" opportunity for progress in the forthcoming India-Pakistan talks since the nuclear tests have ruled out the prospects of war, reports India Abroad News Service.

Now that both countries have exhibited nuclear capability "there is all the more reason to talk more solidly since the tests rule out the prospect of any armed conflict," Gujral told IANS during a stopover here on his way to New York.

The leaders of the two countries meeting later this month on the sidelines of the SAARC summit in Colombo can draw lessons from Europe which has seen peace because both sides during the Cold War had the nuclear deterrent, Gujral said. The tests can have a positive angle "and I look at it from that an-

But Gujral, who is a member of the eminent persons group being sent by the U.N. to inquire into the situation in Algeria. said too much should not be expected too soon. "A qualitative

gle," Guiral said.

tween India and Pakistan is bound to be very gradual and slow" and the improvement "will be a process, not an event," he said.

During his tenure as Prime Minister, Gujral said, he and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met four times. the last occasion being in Dhaka in January. "Every time Nawaz Sharif and I met, we were able to broaden areas of cooperation," he said. The issue of Jammu and Kashmir remains to be sorted out, he said, but "that will take some time." It is important at this time to see that "the process does not get

damaged," Guiral said. About newspaper reports of a planned Pakistani nuclear strike against India, Gujral said "I take this with a pinch of salt." Such stories are "floated from time to time," he said, though "who is behind it is difficult for

me to say." Gujral said he had recently seen speculative reports in the media about India's conditions for signing the Comprehensive

LONDON, July 8: Former In- improvement in relations be- Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The issue "needs a lot of internal discussion," he said. "It would be a good idea if the Prime Minister were to discuss this with party leaders and with the foreign affairs standing committee."

The issue "should be sorted

out inside before any initiative is taken on this," Gujral advised. He said India's foreign policy had been traditionally backed by consensus and to think of a partisan foreign policy can do damage to the country's external relations, he stated. Guiral said recent state-

ments by the U.S. calling for a Chinese role in helping resolve issues in the subcontinent were "ominous." Such a proposal, he said, "smacks of a division of areas of influence, which is a very dangerous thing."

Such a formulation has not come for the first time, he said. Previous U.S. defence secretaries had spoken of such proposals in Beijing in 1995 and again earlier this year. "I had protested against this at that time," Gujral said.



An Indonesian woman is helped out of a cooking oil distribution centre in Jakarta after she passed out from waiting in the long lines to receive cooking oil Tuesday. Indonesia's worst economic crisis in decades has caused prices of staple foods to rise rapidly and shortages and - AP/UNB photo distribution problems are increasing.

Mahathir's book launched by Thatcher

KUALA LUMPUR, July 8: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's new book on Malaysian politics and economics has been launched by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in London. according to news reports, reports AP.

"The Way Forward", containing five essays, was written before the current economic downturn that is threatening to push the Southeast Asian nation into recession.

"Dr Mahathir's excellent essays contain many of the right answers, not quite all. You'll have to read my book for those,' Thatcher quipped at Tuesday's launch in a London hotel, the national news agency reported. Mahathir was not present at

Both leaders are known for tough and often controversial policies. Thatcher, as prime minister, promoted privatisation, while Malaysia under Mahathir has been pushed along a fast high-tech track with dazzling projects.

Australian senate passes Aboriginal Land Rights Law

CANBERRA, July 8: Australian Parliament's Upper House Senate today formally passed the government's Aboriginal Land Rights Reforms, averting a race-based snap election that could have boosted populist MP Pauline Hanson, reports Reuters.

The bill passed the hostile senate with the support of independent Brian Harradine, who last week stuck a compromise on its terms with Prime Minister, John Howard, and fellow independent Mal Colston.

The 76-seat Senate voted 35-33 in favour of the bill winding back aboriginal rights to government pastures leased to farmers.

Aborigines say Howard's bill is a racist "modern-day dispossession" of their rights and land 210 years after white settlers first arrived and began their conquest of this vast island continent.

16th century painting lost in church fire

METZTITLAN, Mexico, July 8: A candle apparently sparked a fire in one of Latin America's oldest churches, destroying a 17th-century painting revered by Catholic faithful, reports

The Temple of the Holy Kings, dating to the 1500s, suffered minor damages Tuesday in the early morning fire.

The parish priest saw smoke coming out of the church and immediately ordered the bells to be sounded, summoning parishioners to help put out the blaze. They were unable, however, to rescue the image of the Virgin del Carmen and the child Jesus, which was painted in 1690 by the artist Spinoza.

The government news agency Notimex said a candle apparently started the fire. Metztitlan, in the central

state of Hidalgo, is 120 kilometres northeast of Mexico City.

Republicans criticise Clinton over remarks about Taiwan

WASHINGTON, July 8: After some initial grudging praise for President Bill Clinton's China trip, his Republican foes unleashed a barrage of criticism over his remarks about Taiwan, reports AP. US Senate Majority Leader

Trent Lott rushed to prepare a Senate resolution to "repair the damage that has been done." The White House and con-

gressional Democrats derided the latest Republican outburst, insisting nothing Clinton had said in China last week signaled a switch in US-Taiwanese relations. Causing the commotion were

comments by Clinton in Shanghai laying out what he called the US-Chinese "three noes" policy: no support for an independent Taiwan, no recognition for a separate Taiwanese government, no backing of Taiwan's entry into international organisations. "He was counterproductive

on what he said on Taiwan. Lott said, adding his voice to that of other conservatives who have suggested Clinton's comments altered US commitments to the island.

Although other US officials have made identical statements in the past, Clinton's public reiteration of the three noes was the first by a US president. Some leaders in Taiwan called the remarks a concession to Clinton's Chinese hosts, and said it will further isolate Tai-

Taiwan is the seat of the Nationalist Chinese government that lost the mainland to the communists in 1949. China considers it a renegade province. Rep Christopher Cox,

chairman of a special House committee looking into the administration's satellite deals with China, complained that Clinton's comments about the island on June 30 also suggested that the United States supported its eventual peaceful reunification with the mainland.