



Taliban fighters on their Russian made vehicles rush to the front-line, 20 kilometres north of Kabul Sunday. After heavy fighting, Taliban took control of Shebergan city from warlord Rashid Dostum's forces in the north of Afghanistan Sunday.

Mazar-e-Sharif tense as Taliban troops closing in

ISLAMABAD, Aug 3: Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan was described as tense Monday, a day after Taliban fighters captured a nearby town and claimed to be closing in on their enemies' stronghold from two directions, reports AP.

Seven expatriate Red Cross workers fled out of Mazar-e-Sharif to the Afghan capital of Kabul Sunday, leaving behind a handful of Afghan staff, Schaffner said. Their departure was routine, he said. The Red Cross has been overseeing projects in Mazar-e-Sharif from Kabul because the security in the northern town has long been considered unpredictable.

Taliban fighters briefly held Mazar-e-Sharif last May but retreated after street battles, mostly with Hezb-e-Wahadat fighters, that left several hundred Taliban fighters dead. It is believed that as many as 2,000 Taliban soldiers who were taken prisoner in that fighting were later massacred.

50 suspected Tamils arrested Police thwart LTTE plan for attacks on Colombo

COLOMBO, Aug 3: Sri Lankan police arrested 50 suspected Tamil rebels in citywide raids last week, claiming to have thwarted a plan for terrorist attacks on the capital, a state-run newspaper reported Monday, reports AP.

The arrests were made last Monday, two days before the opening of a seven-nation regional summit, said the Daily News. Colombo police confirmed the arrests, but declined to give details. Following the interrogation of four Tamil rebel suspects, arrested earlier, police picked up 50 suspects in raids on boarding houses, construction sites, restaurants and jewelry shops, the Daily News said.

King Fahd hospitalised

RIYADH, Aug 3: King Fahd appeared weak, tired and in a wheelchair in a Saudi television broadcast of his admission to hospital for medical test yesterday, reports AFP.

Japanese PM wants to visit Russia: Japan's new prime minister wants to visit Russia as early as November to discuss a territorial dispute that has blocked the two countries from signing a formal peace treaty to end World War II, a news report said yesterday.

Fidel Castro in Granada: President Fidel Castro arrived Sunday at the Point Salines Airport, which was begun by Cuban workers and completed by the United States after its 1983 invasion, AFP reports from St George's.

2 killed on Tajik-Afghan border: Russian troops guarding Tajikistan's southern border killed two suspected drug smugglers and captured four more men in a shootout, officials said yesterday, AP says from Moscow.

8 shot dead in Colombia: At least eight people were shot dead and four wounded Sunday in Colombia's main oil port in what could be another attack by the country's far right, police said.

Shell blast kills 3 in Vietnam: Three people were killed and two others were seriously injured when a war-era artillery shell exploded in the central province of Ha Tinh, local police said yesterday, AP says from Hanoi.

Philippine military frees 5 Saudis: The military has released five Saudi Arabian men suspected of having trained Muslim guerrillas in the southern Philippines after authorities found no evidence to support the suspicion.

Flash floods leave 100 dead in South Korea: Seoul, Aug 3: Flash floods have left more than 100 persons dead or missing around South Korea's popular Mount Chiri resort, officials said today as thousands of rescuers scoured the area, reports AP.

Clinton-Lewinsky intimacy emerges

WASHINGTON, Aug 3: Another photograph emerged Sunday showing President Bill Clinton and a smiling former White House intern Monica Lewinsky embracing, reports AFP.

Butler begins crucial talks with Iraqi officials

BAGHDAD, Aug 3: UN arms inspection chief Richard Butler began crucial talks with Iraqi officials in Baghdad today on the last two months of weapons inspections in the sanctions-hit state, the official INA news agency said, reports AFP.

Hun Sen's party leading in 8 provinces: Cambodia's Election Commission agreed Monday to recount votes from certain areas in last week's general election, reports AP.

Ex-French marine's high-speed driving maybe a factor in Di's car crash

LONDON, Aug 3: A French former marine was quoted on Sunday as saying his high-speed driving might have been a major factor in the car crash which killed Princess Diana last year, reports Reuters.

Cross-border artillery fire continues Sharif warns India to stop being 'irresponsible'

LAHORE, Pakistan, Aug 3: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif brought the nuclear issue into the Kashmir dispute Sunday, and warned India to stop being "irresponsible" as the rival forces continued their cross-border artillery fire, reports AFP.

Triggering the clashes and said the shelling was not in the interests of the two nuclear states. "India must remember that there are now two nuclear states in the South Asian Sub-continent, their new status demands of them greater responsible attitude," he said.

Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan, administered Kashmir, and six people were killed in the Nikroun, Shahkot and keil sectors.

The exchanges had stopped for a few hours during Sunday night but began again in the morning. They said two more deaths in Indian territory had been recorded, taking the total to 34, while 56 people have been reported on the Pakistan side since Thursday.

Unanswered questions on Rajiv murder Cong to step up pressure for independent probe

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: India's main opposition Congress Party today vowed to step up pressure for an independent probe into unanswered questions in the 1991 assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, reports Reuters.

Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a Sri Lankan Tamil woman suicide bomber at an election rally in May 1991 in the southern Indian town of Sriperumbudur, but the Congress has repeatedly called for a wider probe.

Fighting intensifies in Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, Aug 3: Fighting intensified Sunday in Kosovo as Serb forces unleashed a wave of new attacks on villages in the centre and west of the separatist province, while rebel leaders urged the international community to react, reports AFP.

Serb and Ethnic Albanian sources reported clashes in the central Drenica and western Djakovica regions of Kosovo, leaving around 10 dead and sending thousands of others fleeing from their homes.

Sunday's fighting, after a day of relative calm Saturday, appeared to give the answer. An AFP correspondent saw Serb forces shelling the villages of Kelecka and Nekovec, in central Kosovo, sending thousands of inhabitants fleeing to the nearby hills. The shells fell at a rate of one every 15 minutes into the valley on the road between Pristina and the western town of Pec.



Serb policemen advancing through the bush during fighting against ethnic Albanian militants of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the village of Prilep, some 80 km south-west of Pristina Sunday. Police trying to secure Pec-Djakovica road, one of the strategic road in Kosovo frequently attacked by Albanian rebels.

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Special amnesty for political prisoners in ROK

SEOUL, Aug 3: South Korea is considering releasing a large number of political prisoners in a special amnesty to be announced by President Kim Dae-Jung on August 15, officials said today, reports AFP.

Off the Record

World's strongest man: BUDAPEST: "man-mountain" contestants from nine countries heaved and hoed, grunted and groaned, and in the end, Riku Kiri of Finland emerged the winner Sunday in the In-Kal Cup "strongest man" contest, reports AP.

Khatami transforming Iran into a nation ready for democracy

TEHRAN, Aug 3: In the year he has been president, Mohammad Khatami has led a nation trying to make the difficult transition from autocracy to democracy against the wishes of the powerful hard-line clergy, reports AP.

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