



Spanish top-model Ester Canadas presents a black dress with pleated white swirl motifs and long white gloves by US designer Oscar de la Renta for Pierre Balmain, during the Autumn-Winter 1999/2000 haute couture collections in Paris on Wednesday.

— AFP photo

## BRIEFLY

### 14 killed in bus crash in India:

Fourteen people were killed on Thursday when a state-owned bus rolled down a hill in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, the United News of India reported, says AFP from New Delhi.

Nearly 40 others were injured, some seriously, in the accident near the state capital Shimla, officials said. The cause of the crash was not known.

### 9 traffickers killed in Iran:

Troops killed nine smugglers and seized six tonnes of opium and other drugs in a week of clashes with camel caravans in southeast Iran, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported on Wednesday. Reuters says from Tehran.

It quoted Brigadier-General Abouoia Pourshasb, chief of the army's ground forces as saying his forces also arrested 30 armed traffickers and seized 82 camels in the clashes near the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan in the past week.

### Cohen to visit Tokyo, Seoul:

US Defence Secretary William Cohen will visit Japan and South Korea next week amid escalating regional tensions over the China-Taiwan relationship and worries North Korea will launch a new long-range missile, Reuters reports from Washington.

Cohen will leave on Sunday for Tokyo and visit Seoul later in the week for meetings with senior officials, Pentagon officials said yesterday. He will also visit the former Soviet Republics of Georgia and Ukraine before returning to Washington on August 1.

### S Korean President to visit NZ:

South Korean President Kim Dae-jung will make a state visit to New Zealand, the first such visit since 1968, New Zealand Prime Minister Jenny Shipley announced yesterday. Reuters reports from Wellington.

Kim would make the visit after attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Auckland in September, said Shipley, who is currently visiting Seoul.

### Russian FM in Britain:

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov arrived in London on Wednesday to start his first diplomatic visit to Britain since the end of the Kosovo conflict, the Russian embassy said, AFP reports from London.

The visit had been set for May, but was cancelled on the order of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to protest NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

### Fayed sues 4 people:

Mohamed Al Fayed sued four people, claiming they tried to sell him bogus information about a supposed murder plot behind the car crash that killed his son Dodi and Princess Diana, court papers showed on Wednesday. Reuters reports from Los Angeles.

Fayed, millionaire owner of Britain's Harrods department store, claims the four tried to sell him forged CIA and British secret service documents about the fatal 1997 Paris car crash, according to papers filed in Los Angeles Superior Court.

## Japanese doomsday cult doctor jailed

TOKYO, July 22: A doctor in Japan's Aum Supreme Truth cult was sentenced to 18 years in jail Thursday for mailing a bomb to the Tokyo governor, planting poison gas in a railway station and trying to kill a lawyer, reports AFP.

The 30-year-old doctor, Masahiro Tomonaga, was sentenced by Tokyo district court presiding Judge Taka Nakayama after being found guilty of several attempted murders and breaching explosives legislation.

"You should deeply regret it and sincerely come to terms with it, as you have told the court," the judge said.

Tomonaga, who trained at Japan's elite Tokyo University, had denied the charges, saying he was under the control of sect leader Shoko Asahara, himself facing 17 charges including murder.

Asahara is accused of masterminding the March 1995 attack on Tokyo's subway in which followers spread the Nazi-invented Sarin nerve gas, killing 12 people and injuring thousands.

The doctor was one of the senior advisors in the cult known as the "emperor's secretariat."

Together with other doomsday cult disciples, Tomonaga tried to confuse police investigations into the sect after the subway attack by sending a parcel bomb to the then Tokyo government in May 1995.

The bomb exploded in the hands of the governor's secretary, who lost all the fingers on his left hand.

The doctor was "clearly" attempting murder in the parcel bomb case, said the judge.

In the same month, the doctor placed a device designed to

## Congress steps up campaign against Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, July 22: India's opposition Congress party has stepped up a personal campaign against Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for his handling of the Kashmir conflict, reports AFP.

Newspapers Thursday said the tactic was aimed at stealing Vajpayee's thunder during the upcoming general election campaign.

Concerned that the prime minister's Hindu nationalist BJP party will push India's success in ousting Islamic guerrillas from Kashmir as a major vote winner, Congress clearly feels it has no alternative but to try to pull the rug from under Vajpayee's feet, they said.

The finance, security and foreign policies of the country have to be decided by the prime minister. How can Vajpayee absolve himself of responsibility for the Kargil crisis?" said Pranab Mukherjee, a Congress leader.

The Congress statement said the government had the "information but not the will to act."

"It is perhaps for this reason that Vajpayee has consistently refused to inform the nation as to when he personally came to know of the infiltration," it said, adding the delay cost the nation "many brave and pre-

cious lives."

More than 400 Indian soldiers died in the 10-week conflict, according to official figures.

India's staggered general elections will begin on September 4 and end early in October.

BJP party president Kushabhai Thakre insisted Thursday the government would not make the Kashmir "victory" an election issue.

"But if the Congress decided to make it a poll issue then we will counter the Congress with a set of questions on Kashmir," Thakre was quoted as saying by the United News of India.

## World pressure mounting on India to open talks: Pak FM

ISLAMABAD, July 22: Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said Wednesday that international pressure was mounting on India to resume a dialogue with Pakistan on a settlement to the festering Kashmir dispute, reports AFP.

The pressure has started intensifying on India to resume the dialogue," he said, following Pakistan's agreement to defuse the crisis by securing the withdrawal of Islamic militants from Kargil in Indian-held Kashmir.

The pressure will continue to increase in coming weeks, Aziz said as he wound up debate in parliament on the government's Kashmir policy.

"The nation will see that it was the Kargil issue that forced India into meaningful dialogue in the next few weeks and resolve the Kashmir issue," he said.

Aziz said a joint statement issued after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's July 4 meeting with US President Bill Clinton, where Sharif promised the withdrawal -- was complete and the second part -- arranging talks -- was now in the process of implementation.

He said Pakistan was interested in "meaningful and purposeful" dialogue. "The dialogue should not be for the sake

of dialogue, it should not be an exercise in futility."

He rejected Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh's assertion that by backing intrusion into Kashmir Pakistan had "betrayed India's trust" and hampered talks.

The real trust between India and Pakistan had never existed throughout the past 52 years, so the question of betraying it does not arise," Aziz said.

He accused New Delhi of repeatedly damaging chances of building mutual trust by using "force or coercion" to resolve any issue that arose between the two neighbours.

A settlement of the Kashmir dispute could not be delayed and "peace in the region cannot remain hostage to India's designs and wishes," he said.

Aziz reiterated Pakistan's call for third-party mediation, arguing that India and Pakistan were not communicating effectively.

"We talk of peace, they talk of aggression, we talk of freedom and self-determination (for Kashmiris) and they talk of regression -- so there is a vast difference in the languages we speak."



Motorcycles lead a motorcade with Barnstable County Medical Examiner trucks carrying the bodies of John F. Kennedy, Jr., his wife Carolyn Bessette Kennedy and her sister Lauren G. Bessette as they leave the Coast Guard Station on Wednesday in Woods Hole, MA. The bodies were recovered from the crash site of the small plane flown by John F. Kennedy, Jr. off Martha's Vineyard and were being taken to the Barnstable County Medical Examiner office for autopsy. Accompanying the bodies were Sen. Edward Kennedy and his sons Edward Kennedy, Jr. and Patrick Kennedy.

— AFP photo

## US 7th Fleet monitors China-Taiwan tension

MANILA, July 22: US naval forces in the Pacific are monitoring the tension between China and Taiwan, the 7th Fleet commander, Vice Admiral Walter Doran said Thursday, but stressed Washington favoured a peaceful solution to the crisis, reports AFP.

There is "nothing particular, nothing exceptional," about the Japan-based fleet's movement in the region, he told reporters aboard USS Blue Ridge, the fleet's command ship which arrived here Thursday.

In 1994, a year before the Tokyo subway attack, Tomonaga collaborated with the cult leader by pouring Sarin nerve gas onto a car belonging to an anti-cult lawyer, Taro Taki-moto, who was unharmed.

Washington had sent a naval battle group through the Taiwan Strait when Beijing held war games near Taipei's shores in March 1996.

However, he said his fleet, which covers a "huge area of

responsibility" from the international dateline to the eastern shores of Africa is also keeping watch on military movements.

The fleet is the largest of the forward-deployed US fleets, with about 53 ships, 350 aircraft and an estimated 60,000 naval and marine personnel.

"We keep watch and we keep track and we monitor what is happening, particularly military activities in that entire area," Doran stressed.

Doran's comments follow an appeal by US President Bill Clinton for Taiwan and China to calm the tension. Clinton, who has reaffirmed the one-China policy, said a military confrontation was "unthinkable."

In the public domain, we all very much want and support the situation being solved very peacefully," he added.

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