

BRIEFLY

Fishermen stranded in Russian lake:

About 1,000 ice-fishermen were stranded Sunday on drifting floes in Europe's largest lake and villagers set out in boats to rescue them, the news agency ITAR-Tass reported. AP reports from Moscow.

The report, citing the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations, said a rescue helicopter also was sent to the scene at Lake Ladoga, northeast of St. Petersburg. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Ice-fishing is highly popular in Russia, both for sport and as a food source, and thousands of anglers become stranded on drifting floes every year, many of them carried out to sea before being rescued.

7 die in clashes in Yemen:

A territorial dispute in central Yemen has left seven dead and eight injured in nearly a week of tribal fighting, a security official said Sunday. AP reports from Sana'a.

Clashes between the Al-Ahlin tribe and the Al-Diyan tribe broke out last week, with a dispute over a plot of land bordering their respective territories escalating to machine-gun shootouts, a tribal official said on condition of anonymity. On Saturday, government troops moved into the area in the southern province of Shabwa and put an end to the fighting, the security source said without elaborating.

Pilot killed in Philippines:

A small plane with four people aboard crashed south of Manila after its pilot suffered a heart attack, Philippine aviation officials said, AFP reports from Manila.

Perfecto Maglante lost consciousness and control of the privately owned Cessna 206 as it flew over Batangas province, the Air Transportation Office (ATO) said citing a distress call monitored by another aircraft.

Red alert in Assam

GUWAHATI, India, Feb 28: Security forces in the far-eastern Indian state of Assam were put on maximum alert today, with state ministers and legislators told to restrict their movement after dusk, official sources said, reports AFP.

The government's decision to impose sunset laws, -- limiting the movement of government officials -- followed Saturday's landmine explosion in western Assam's Nalbari district, which killed the state forest and public works minister, Nagen Sharma, and four others.

The attack was blamed on the state's main separatist front, the United Liberation Front of Assam.

"Specific instructions were issued after a high-level meeting asking all ministers and legislators not to travel after dusk and also avoid visiting remote areas at night without full proof security cover," a top Assam police official told AFP.

'Israeli troop withdrawal offer still unsatisfactory'

JERUSALEM, Feb 28: Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak showed signs of flexibility Sunday in part of a dispute that has deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and kept a US mediator shuttling back and forth between the two sides, reports AP.

The Palestinians, however, said that Israel's offers were still unsatisfactory and that US envoy Dennis Ross had so far failed to bridge the gaps.

Barak dropped his insistence that an additional West Bank troop pullback be folded into a final peace treaty rather, than be finalised beforehand, his office said. Barak told his Cabinet Sunday in comments

Indonesian army replace 74 commanders, officers

JAKARTA, Feb 28: Indonesia's once all-powerful military today announced it was replacing 74 commanders and staff officers in a reshuffle aimed at revamping the institution to meet the changing times, reports AFP.

Military spokesman Air Rear Marshal Gratto Usodo said the reshuffle included two posts in the defence ministry, 19 in the military headquarters, 18 in the air force, 14 in the army and 21 in the navy.

Usodo said the documents of transfer were signed at 6:00 a.m. Monday morning (5:00 am BST, Sunday) by armed forces commander Admiral Widodo Adis-

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In the most important change, the key post of commander of the army's strategic reserves command (Kostrad) went to reformist Major General Agus Wirahadikusumah, who replaced Lieutenant General Jaja Suparman.

Superman will take the leadership of the officers' command school, Usodo told a press conference.

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Sharif lashes out at Musharraf

ISLAMABAD, Feb 28: Deposed Premier Nawaz Sharif yesterday lashed out at General Pervez Musharraf and charged that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) ordinance under Pakistan's military regime was meant to victimise politicians, my family and my party-men, reports PTL.

Describing Musharraf as a usurper, Sharif said in a statement from Landi jail where he is incarcerated, that the NAB reflected the era of barbaric society based on vengeance, to victimise politicians, my family and my party-men.

His statement was released by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) media centre here.

Terming the accountability courts as kangaroo courts, Sharif said the present usurper in spite of all malafide, barbaric and brutal acts, inhumanised, illegal exercises has miserably failed to make out any case against my family and myself.

The pending cases were being

transferred to these courts only to defame the judiciary, he said, because these courts have no powers except to abide by the provisions of this very (NAB) ordinance, wherein the burden of proof has been shifted to the victimised persons to prove their innocence, which is contrary to the known principle of justice that a person is innocent till proved otherwise.

Therefore citizens are constrained to rethink as whether to submit to defend themselves in these kangaroo courts, as there is no constitutional or legal society and authority at the back of this ordinance, the deposed premier said.

Sharif hoped that he Pakistan Bar Council, provincial bar councils, bar associations and jurists would take up the matter and get such courts abolished as they were parallel courts to the constitutionally established legal system.

He said NAB has been promulgated with the ulterior motive of lowering the prestige of

politicians. Persons detained under the NAB act are being kept in very inhuman conditions, which is against recognised human rights, the NGO charter and Islamic principles of justice.

Referring to the provisions under the act, he said the NAB act was not only bad in the eyes of law, but was in sheer disregard of the legal rights conferred by Article 10 of the Constitution and also in conflict with the objective resolution, which was the basic ideology behind the creation of Pakistan.

He said it is also negation of the Islamic concept of justice. Due to this law we have become a laughing stock in the international community.

There is no law in the present world the ousted premier said under which a citizen could be arrested without charge or offence. The chairman, NAB, can order any Pakistani citizen without any allegation or any proof.

Kissinger to be Wahid's adviser

JAKARTA, Feb 28: Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger said today he has accepted an offer from Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid to become one of his advisors, reports AFP.

But Kissinger made it clear he was not being paid for acting as "advisor on general affairs," and told journalists after meeting Wahid at the state palace here that he had accepted the offer "as a friend of Indonesia."

There would be "no financial compensation," he said. "I was very happy to be received by the president whose extraordinary achievement to democracy in Indonesia and to stability to his government I greatly admire."

"I want to make clear that I do this as a friend to Indonesia... I do this as a public service to the two countries," Kissinger, who is known here as a lobbyist for key US multinational companies such as the giant mining and gold firm PT Freeport Indonesia.

By taking up the offer, Kissinger said he would "educate myself and contribute whatever I can to democracy progress and unity in Indonesia," adding he planned to return at least once a year.



Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid shakes hands with former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger (R) during their meeting at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta yesterday. Kissinger accepted Wahid's offer to become one of his advisors. — AFP photo

Opposition kills 3 Taliban commanders

KABUL, Feb 28: Afghan opposition forces killed three Taliban commanders as the ruling militia launched an assault on rival forces north of Kabul, the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance said today, reports AFP.

The ruling Taliban militia attacked Pange Garya town in Darra Sauf district on Sunday but were pushed back, the opposition said in a statement.

It said 50 Taliban fighters joined the opposition side while three commanders, identified as Mullah Shahedi, Noor Mohammad and Mullah Qayyum, were killed.

"Their bodies are still lying in the battlefield," the opposition said.

Miracle!

LONDON, Feb 28: An 11-year-old boy was in hospital Sunday after surviving a 250 feet (76 metre) fall over one of the highest cliffs in England, emergency services said, reports AFP.

The boy, who has not been named, suffered serious head and back injuries in the fall at Skinningrove in northeast England.

He was walking with his parents and their dog on Boulby cliff near Skinningrove, on the North Yorkshire-Cleveland border, when he disappeared in a severe storm.

Coastguards found marks at the top of the cliff and a Royal Air Force helicopter crew later found him on the beach.

Winchman Mark Vickery from the RAF Search and Rescue helicopter which found the youngster said he was "incredibly surprised" the boy had survived.

"A fall of just 15ft can be fatal, so he's been amazingly lucky."

Six killed in separatist violence in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Feb 28: Muslim separatist rebels in Indian Kashmir shot dead five Hindus, while a border guard died and seven others were injured in a landmine explosion elsewhere, police said today, reports AFP.

Muslim guerrillas stormed a Hindu home late Sunday in the village of Harni, some 230 km northwest of the state winter capital Jammu, and opened fire on the sleeping residents.

Three women and a child died immediately while a man succumbed to his injuries later in hospital, police said.

Police have tightened security in the area following the attack.

In another incident, a member of the Border Security Force died and seven others were in-

jured when their vehicle hit a landmine late Sunday in the southern village of Lassipora in Pulwama district, police said.

Two of the wounded were in critical condition, Pulwama police chief Raja Aziz told AFP by telephone, adding that the attack came hours after a top separatist rebel was killed in a bloody gunbattle.

The militant leader was the chief suspect in a February 18 blast in southern Kashmir which killed 11 security personnel and a civilian.

A Muslim separatist campaign in the Indian zone of Himalayan Kashmir, which is administered in parts by India and Pakistan, has claimed more than 25,000 lives since 1989.

Anwar's lawyers launch appeal against sentence

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 28: Lawyers for Anwar Ibrahim launched an appeal on Monday against his six-year sentence for corruption, arguing that the charges against Anwar were based on a law annulled by parliament, reports AP.

Anwar, once the country's No 2 leader, was convicted last year on four counts of corruption for abusing his power to force police to obtain retractions from people who had accused him of illicit affairs.

Anwar's attorneys began by arguing three of more than thirty grounds for appeal, saying the sentence should be overturned because the Emergency Ordinance, on which the charges were based, had been

annulled by the lower house of Parliament.

"We must accept what has been stated in parliament," lawyer Raja Aziz Addruse told appeal judges Lamin Yunus, Sheikh Ahmad Fairuz and Mokhtar Sidin.

Raja Aziz told the court that the house had passed a resolution on Oct 22, 1998 to annul the Emergency Ordinance with effect from Jan 8 of that year. The decision made the charges, filed on Sept 29, 1998, invalid, he argued.

Anwar, who was removed from office on Sept 2, 1998, has denied the charges, saying they were concocted to stem his challenge to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.



Mozambican residents of Chokwe province stand on top of their houses waiting to be rescued by a South African National Defence Force helicopter Sunday. The United Nations made an urgent appeal yesterday for more helicopters and aircraft to help flood victims in Mozambique as rescuers scrambled to pluck stranded villagers from trees, rooftops and power pylons. — AFP photo

Bush wins primaries in 4 island territories

WASHINGTON, Feb 28: Texas Governor George W. Bush claimed victory in primaries in four US territories Sunday, representing 26 votes at the Republican convention even though residents in the territories cannot cast ballots in the presidential election, reports AFP.

In Puerto Rico, the largest of the territories, Bush won the primary Sunday with about 93 percent of the vote, his campaign said in a statement.

On Saturday, he won contests in the Pacific island territories of Guam and American Samoa, as well as in the Caribbean territory of the Virgin Islands.

The four territories will send a total of 26 delegates to the Republican convention later this year, where delegates from all the states and territories will choose the party's candidate for president.

Bush now has 93 delegates compared to 96 for his rival, Arizona Senator John McCain. A total of 1,034 nominating delegates are necessary to win the Republican nomination.

Bush personally endorsed the target chosen by his predecessor, Labour's Paul Keating, to coincide with the centenary of federation — which joined Australia's states into a single nation in 1901.

The government and Aboriginal leaders had been working together to draft and sign a document of reconciliation by the end of this year.

After his re-election in October 1998, Howard declared that he would make reconciliation with Aboriginals a priority for his second term of government.

But in an interview for Monday's edition of national newspaper The Australian, Howard said the target had been too optimistic.

"We won't resolve it by May or December," Howard said. "The reconciliation process will take a long time and it will unfold over a period of years."

Aboriginals, who have lived in Australia for at least 40,000 years, are now a tiny minority of about 386,000 in the country's mostly white population of almost 19 million. They are the poorest, sickest and most frequently jailed members of Australian society.

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation member Marjorie Thorpe said she was concerned by the prime minister's comments.

Howard insists he will not apologise, saying he is not personally responsible for the policy.

Critics also say Howard's restrictions on Aboriginal land rights, which have been condemned by the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, have also been a major stumbling block.

AFP adds: Prime Minister John Howard was bitterly attacked by Aboriginal leaders and political opponents Monday after he declared Australia had failed in its bid to achieve racial reconciliation by the year's end.

PLA on alert ahead of polls in Taiwan

HONG KONG, Feb 28: Chinese President Jiang Zemin has issued an alert for People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces including on the coast along the Taiwan Strait, a newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Jiang, also head of the Central Military Commission, signed decrees ordering the military regions of Nanjing, Jinan, Beijing and other units including the East China Fleet to go on alert from February 23, Chinese-language daily The Sun, said citing unnamed "insiders" in Beijing.

The orders follow Jiang's visit to various military sites in Anhui, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Guangdong provinces from February 17, the daily said.

"We want peace, and not war, but we're not afraid of war," Jiang was quoted as saying by the newspaper, calling on the forces to be prepared mentally, economically and militarily in

the war against Taiwan's independence moves.

The military alert order comes as Taiwan, which Beijing deems a renegade province, is to hold its presidential elections on March 18.

The Communist leadership in Beijing recently hardened its position on Taiwan, warning in a White Paper that the nationalist island could face war if it continued to reject calls for reunification.

The warning sparked strong concerns in Washington.

In similar elections in 1996, China carried out large-scale war games and fired missiles into the Taiwan Strait and Washington sent two battle ships to the area.

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Invitation for Prequalification

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dhaka City Corporation

Project Implementation Unit

Dhaka Urban Transport Project

Improvement of 3 Inter-District Bus Terminals

IDA Credit No 3163 BD

This invitation for prequalification follows the general procurement notice for this project that appeared in Development Business No 477 of Dated 31.12.97.

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit from the International Development Association toward cost of the Dhaka Urban Transport Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this credit to payments under the contract for Improvement of 3 Inter-District Bus Terminals. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, hereinafter referred to "the Employer" intends to prequalify contractors and/or firms for the Improvement of 3 Inter-District Bus Terminal Contract Package No (W)CS. It is expected that invitations to bid will be made in July 2000.

Prequalification will be conducted through prequalification procedures specified in the World Bank's Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits, January 1995 (revised January and August 1996, September 1997 and January 1999), and is open to all bidders from eligible source countries, as defined in the guidelines. In addition the following countries are not eligible for Procurement under the Credit: the Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from and inspect the prequalification documents at the office of the Project Director, PIU, DCC. In the address below from 09 to 17 hours during office hours. A complete set of prequalification documents in English may be purchased by interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Taka 5000.00 (Five thousand) or US\$ 100.00 or equivalent. The method of payment will be in cash or in the form of Pay Order or Demand Draft from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favour of Project Director, PIU, DCC, Dhaka Urban Transport Project. The documents may also be sent by Courier Service. But under no circumstances will be Employer be held responsible for late delivery or loss of the document so dispatched.

Applications for prequalification should be submitted in sealed envelopes, delivered to the address below at 12 hours on or before April 17, 2000 and be clearly marked Application to Prequalify for Dhaka Urban Transport Project, Improvement of 3 Inter-District Bus Terminals Contract Package No (W)CS.

Shafiqul Islam
Project Director
Project Implementation Unit
Dhaka City Corporation
Nagar Bhaban, 14th Level
Fulbaria, Dhaka
Bangladesh
DCC/PRD/325/1999-2000