

New computer virus

AFP, Washington

A new computer virus that tricks users into thinking they have received a picture of tennis star Anna Kournikova is spreading rapidly by e-mail, security firms warned Monday.

"Early propagation reports indicate that this virus is spreading faster than many of the biggest viruses we saw last year," comments Mikko Hypponen of the Finnish-based software firm F-Secure.

"It seems to be spreading almost as fast as LoveLetter," LoveLetter is regarded as the biggest-ever virus case, with estimated 15 million infected computers.

"This is a destructive Internet worm that has the potential to create e-mail storms leading to network performance slowdowns," said the McAfee Anti-Virus Emergency Response Team, a division of Network Associates.

The virus "arrives pretending to be an image of professional tennis player Anna Kournikova," McAfee said. "The worm, originally discovered in August 2000, has been found in more than 50 enterprise companies, including Fortune 500s."

"When users click on the e-mail attachment, the virus sends itself via e-mail to all addresses found from the Microsoft Outlook address book."

"Because of the big number of e-mails being generated by the virus, it can overload and crash e-mail servers," F-Secure said.

Pakistan asks India to let Hurriyat delegation visit Islamabad

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan on Monday again asked India to let Kashmiri separatist leaders visit Islamabad to pursue a quest for peace amid the festering Kashmir dispute.

Foreign office spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan said India was showing "intransigence" in allowing the All Party Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference (APHC) delegation to travel to Pakistan for consultations.

The meeting would hopefully pave the way for a tri-lateral dialogue involving Pakistan, India and Kashmiri representatives.

"Indian hesitation in enabling the APHC delegation to travel to Pakistan is suggestive of familiar intransigence in engaging in a meaningful dialogue on Kashmir," Khan told reporters.

Earlier, separatist leaders in Indian-held Kashmir said a planned mission to Pakistan was vital for the fledgling peace process.

"It is necessary to create a conducive and peaceful atmosphere for the settlement of the Kashmir issue and that is why we had proposed the Pakistan trip," APHC said in a statement issued after a meeting in Srinagar.

The delegation had planned to visit Islamabad on January 15 but New Delhi has so far not issued travel documents.

Khan said delay in the delegation's visit could "damage the opportunity which is still available to address genuinely the Kashmir dispute."

Khan said the representatives of Kashmir should be involved in the dialogue process because "after all it is a matter of their self-determination."

New Delhi should respond to Islamabad's December 2 promise of a "maximum restraint" along the dividing Line of Control in Kashmir and allow APHC leaders to travel to Pakistan.

India which has observed a unilateral ceasefire since November 27 wants Pakistan to rein in militant groups and stop their "cross-border" attacks on the Indian side in Kashmir.

Pakistan denies Indian charges that the insurgency, in which an estimated 34,000 people have died over the past 12 years, is fueled by Islamabad.

Khan said "the allegations of cross-border terrorism was a pretext used by India to continue its military efforts to suppress Kashmiri freedom struggle."

US rejects Taliban's threat to close UN office

AFP, Washington

Senior US officials on Monday rejected a Taliban threat to close the United Nations office in Kabul if Washington shuts down the ruling militia's office in New York to comply with UN sanctions.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the office of the UN Special Mission in Afghanistan (UNSMIA) was in no way equivalent to the Taliban office in New York and should be allowed to stay open.

"We think, frankly, that the two are just in no way comparable, that that's a mistake," he said.

"The office provides a lot of important humanitarian support and other contacts with the Taliban, and therefore that it should be left open."

The Taliban's New York office was not a diplomatic office, and was not a UN representative office, so the United States had no alternative but to close it, he said.

The Security Council directed all UN member states on December 19 "to close immediately and completely all Taliban offices in their territories."

The order came under sanctions designed to force the Taliban to hand over Saudi billionaire Osama bin Laden, who is alleged to have masterminded the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August, 1998.

Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, a senior US diplomat to the UN, told reporters Monday members of the Security Council were unanimous in demands for the Taliban to comply with its resolutions.

The top UN representative to Afghanistan, Frances Vendrell, said the threatened closure of the Kabul office would handicap the UN's work there, and said he would travel to Washington on Tuesday for talks with US officials.

A senior State Department official did say on condition of anonymity that "it is a little weird for the UN to come down here and ask us to violate a UN Security Council resolution."

Bush urges Saudis to help fight 'threats'

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah received messages Monday from US President George W. Bush calling on them to help counter "threats" against both Washington and Riyadh, the official Saudi Press Agency said.

"Threats target the kingdom and the United States throughout the world, which require common efforts to counter these threats in the spirit of respect, cooperation and dialogue," said Bush, his message carried in Arabic by the agency.

"Enormous possibilities exist to achieve progress in the areas of peace, freedom and prosperity for our peoples," Bush was quoted as saying.



An Israeli human rights supporter holds signs against the light sentence handed to Israeli Nahum Korman during a protest in front of the Jerusalem district court yesterday. Korman, who killed 12-year-old Palestinian boy Hilmi Shusha by kicking him in the head, was sentenced to six months community service and 15 months probation and to 15,000 US dollars to the family.

Palestinian security officer killed in Gaza

AFP, Gaza City

An officer in Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's private security force was killed Tuesday when his car was rocketed by an Israeli helicopter in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian security officials said, describing it as an "assassination."

Gassud Ayyad, 50, a major in Arafat's Force-17 bodyguard, died instantly when a helicopter fired four rockets on his car as he drove in the Jabalyia area of the northern Gaza Strip, the officials said.

The Israeli army confirmed the killing, describing Ayyad as a member of the Lebanese Shiite fundamentalist group Hezbollah and head of a "dangerous Palestinian organisation."

The Palestinian security official said the helicopter came from Israeli-controlled areas near the Erez crossing point into Israel and

the Nisanit Jewish settlement and shot Ayyad's car while he was waiting at a traffic light.

Palestinian security officials said Ayyad tried to escape, and managed to dodge the first three rockets -- one of which failed to explode -- but was killed by the fourth.

Seven other parked cars were damaged by the volley of missiles, but there were no immediate reports of other injuries.

Pakistan offers Lanka \$20m to buy arms

REUTERS, Colombo

Pakistan has offered to lend Sri Lanka \$20 million to buy arms to battle a minority Tamil separatist rebellion, military officials said yesterday.

"We have been offered a \$20 million line of credit for military requirements," military spokesman Brigadier Sanath Karunaratne said.

He said the offer was made during a visit to Sri Lanka last month by Pakistan's army chief of staff, General Yousuf Khan.

Karunaratne said no decision had been made on how the money would be spent.

126 nominated for Nobel Peace Prize 2001

REUTERS, Oslo

The Red Cross, which won the first Nobel Peace Prize in 1901, and China's banned Falun Gong spiritual group are among 126 nominees for the prestigious award on its 100th anniversary.

Other nominees include a convicted US killer, soccer's governing body FIFA, the European Court of Human Rights and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

"We have a preliminary count of 126 candidates, of which 28 are organisations," Geir Lundestad, director of the Nobel Institute, told Reuters yesterday. He declined to give names but people making nominations often publicise their choices.

"The number is likely to increase because nominations are still coming in," he said.



Indian college student Vijaya Laxmi waits for her valentine message to be written on a grain of rice at a shopping mall ahead of Valentines Day in Bangalore yesterday. Hindu fundamentalist party Shiv Sena have threatened to disrupt valentine day celebrations following a call by their chief Bal Thackeray to ban festivities influenced by the West.

Thai-Myanmar border key checkpoint closed

AP, Mae Sai

Thailand closed a key border checkpoint Tuesday and sent troop reinforcements following heavy fighting with Myanmar when this border town came under mortar attack.

Col. Wanthip Wongwai of Thailand's Pha Muang border task force told The Associated Press that Myanmar sent "heavy reinforcements into the area" "we are also doing that to ensure the security and sovereignty of the nation."

"The situation has become more tense," he said.

The fighting, the worst between the two countries in several years, presents the first diplomatic crisis to new Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who said Monday he would visit Myanmar as soon as possible in a bid to improve relations.

The Thai army said hundreds of troops were deployed along a mountainous stretch of the frontier. Two armored personnel carriers and dozens of armed troops were posted at the checkpoint between Mae Sai and the Myanmar town of Tachilek.

The checkpoint, one of three principal crossing points along the more than 2,000 kilometer (1,250 mile) long Thai-Myanmar frontier, was closed Sunday when the fighting started. It reopened Monday when Thai and Myanmar forces agreed on a cease-fire, but was closed again early Tuesday.

Two women were killed and seven other civilians injured by Myanmar mortar shells that landed Sunday at Mae Sai, at the northernmost tip of Thailand, about 720 kilometers (440 miles) from Bangkok. There were no military casualties.

The fighting started near Tachilek between Myanmar government forces and anti-government Shan rebels and spilled into Thailand as Myanmar forces tried to take over vantage points in Thai soil to target the rebels.

Myanmar accuses Thailand of helping the Shan rebels, who have been fighting for four decades for independence from Myanmar. Thailand denies helping the rebels.

On Monday, Thailand said it launched a heavy artillery assault on Myanmar troops which had taken over Pang Noon hilltop base on Thai soil about 40 kilometers (25 miles) west to Mae Sai. Myanmar contests that Pang Noon is located in Thailand.

Wanthip, the border force official, estimated about 20 Myanmar forces were killed and 100 were injured.

In Yangon, Col. Kyaw Thein, a senior Myanmar intelligence officer, said 14 Myanmar soldiers and three civilians were killed while 51 soldiers and 15 civilians were wounded during skirmishes at the border over the past week. Two other soldiers were missing. Four rebels had been killed, he said.

Thailand formally protested to Myanmar Monday for intruding on its territory and demanded compensation for casualties and damage.

Nepal begins search for new living virgin goddess

AFP, Kathmandu

They are not allowed to laugh or smile, are barely allowed out and almost never marry. Nonetheless there will be no shortage of families hoping their daughter is chosen to become Nepal's new Hindu living virgin goddess.

A new Kumari of Kathmandu, the young girl regarded as the patron deity of the ancient Himalayan kingdom, is due to be appointed soon according to a complicated and esoteric process.

The current goddess is now 12 years old, and with puberty marking the end of a Kumari's reign, a successor is being sought now.

The new goddess will be installed at an "auspicious hour" during April, Tej Ranta Tamrakar, head of the department which looks after the Kumari said.

"In accordance with the long-held practice, the incumbent Kumari of Kathmandu is going to be replaced by a new one as the holy order of the priests appointed to perform all ritual worship of the goddess have perceived certain symptoms appearing in her making her unfit to continue in the holy position," he said.

However not any girl can become the Kumari. Prospective candidates have to come from among the Sakya clan, regarded as high priests of the kingdom's Buddhist order, in particular from one of the Sakya families living in Kathmandu's 18 Buddhist monasteries.

The fact that a Hindu goddess is chosen from among senior Buddhist families shows how closely entwined the two cultures are in Nepal.

The processes involved in choosing a new Kumari can sound bizarre to those unfamiliar with the rituals.

The candidate should be a toddler who is pure in all respects, with not even a minor scratch to her body or a missing tooth.

Before her selection she must spend a night alone in a pitch-dark room to prove her courage, as befits the divine person of a Kaili, the Hindu goddess of war.

And whoever is eventually chosen faces a serious-minded life for a young girl.

The Nepalese believe the Kumari should never smile nor laugh during her reign, as if she did it would mean great misfortune for the country.

Once installed the Kumari also has to live a life of seclusion, remaining within the walls of the official temple-residence, the Kumari Ghar.

The Kumari only goes out 13 times in a year to attend certain public and religious functions, to which she is carried in a special chariot, preceded by two deities in human forms: Ganesh, the god of success, and Bhairava, god of war.

The current goddess, born in 1989 and installed on the "holy throne" in 1995, will soon be joining eight other "retired" Kumaris in ordinary life.

And although her duties of office will be at an end, it is highly unlikely she will marry as most Nepalese believe such former goddesses remain sacred.

However the state provides for the retired Kumaris in the form of a generous pension.

Despite the fact that accession to the role means their daughter will almost certainly never wed, most parents consider it a great honour for them to become the Kumari.

The worship of the Kumari began about 300 years ago, according to legend when the last Malla King was playing dice with the Hindu Tulaja Bhawani deity at her shrine inside the royal palace in Kathmandu.

During the game, the king had "unholy thoughts" about the goddess, who saw what he was thinking and disappeared.

The remorseful king begged forgiveness and the deity agreed to return, but only in the form of a little girl living next to the royal palace.

Russian Deputy PM to visit India for \$700m tank deal

AFP, New Delhi

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov is due in India Wednesday to finalise the sale of battle tanks in a deal worth up to 700 million dollars, a Russian diplomat told AFP Tuesday.

Asked whether an agreement for the purchase of 310 T-90 main battle tanks would be signed during Klebanov's visit, the diplomat said "it is likely".

But he added that the two sides still had to work through some obstacles over the price of the deal, put at between 600 and 700 million dollars.

A report in The Hindu daily Tuesday said if the agreement is signed Russia will deliver 124 tanks in a fully-assembled state and the remaining 186 in various stages of assembly.

The contract will also include a licence for the production of more T-90s at an ordinance factory in the southern state of Tamil Nadu which has been manufacturing T-72 tanks of Russian origin for which Moscow supplies the engines, fire control systems and some other equipment.

If the two sides reach an agreement, the first batch of T-90 tanks will be inducted into the Indian army this year. The Hindu daily said the two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, which has recently bought Ukrainian T-80 U tanks.

"The need to purchase the T-90s has arisen because India's ambitious indigenous main battle tank programme has fallen way behind schedule," said Rahul Bedi, of Jane's Defence Weekly.

More than 70 per cent of India's defence hardware is of Soviet or Russian origin.

Russian equipment is attractive to India because "it can operate in climatic extremes, the Indian troops are used to it and it is available at competitive prices," said Bedi.

Two US army choppers crash in Hawaii

Reuters, Honolulu

Two US Army Black Hawk helicopters crashed on the north shore of Hawaii's Oahu island last night, an army spokeswoman said, with media reports saying at least seven people were killed and four others injured.

Army Maj. Cynthia Teramae could not confirm if there were fatalities in the accident involving the two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. Media reports said there were 17 people aboard the helicopters.

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Ferry Division, Barisal

(RHD), Tender Notice

1. Tender Notice No : 57 of RHD, Ferry Division, Barisal/2000-2001.
2. Name of work : As described below.
3. Eligibility of contractor : "A to E" general category contractor of RHD as per financial capacity & territorial jurisdiction.
4. Availability of tender schedule : 1. Executive Engineer, RHD Mechl. Ferry Division, Barisal/Khulna. Sub-Divisional Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Sub-Division, Barisal (only office hours. No tender will be sold on the date of receiving tender schedule).
5. Tender receiving officer : 1. Superintendent Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Circle, Khulna. 2. Executive Engineer, RHD, Mechl. Ferry Division, Barisal/Khulna.
6. Last date of selling tender documents : 19.02.2001/07.11.1407 (only office hours).
7. Last date of receiving tender in sealed cover : 20.02.2001/08.11.1407 at 12 Noon.
8. Date and time of opening tender : 25.02.2001/13.11.1407 at 12 Noon.
9. Date and time of lottery (if applicable) : 26.02.2001/14.11.1407 at 12 Noon.

Group No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money
1	Supplying of spare parts for 120 HP Hydromaster (Newford) Engine under Ferry Sub-Division, Barisal during the year 2000-2001.	Tk 3,02,500/-	6,050/-
2	Supplying of spare parts for 190 Killowatt Man Engine (Model D-2866TE) under Ferry Sub-Division, Barisal during the year 2000-2001.	Tk. 4,84,000/-	9,680/-
3	Supplying of spare parts for 150 HP Cummin's Engine (Model-6 B.T. 5.9M) under Ferry Sub-Division, Barisal during the year 2000-2001.	Tk. 4,99,000/-	9,980/-

Executive Engineer (RHD)
(Mechl.) Ferry Division
Barisal.

DFP-3416-7/2
G-328

Directorate General Defence Purchase
Ministry of Defence
New Airport Road, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215

Tender/Re-Tender Notice

1. Sealed tender in foreign currency is invited from bonafide manufacturer/dealers/suppliers (enlisted firms in DGDP) for supply of the following items for Bangladesh Navy:

S No	Name of item & qty	From	Date of selling	To	Date of opening	Tender No
1.	Spares for Air Blower Compressor (Model: LH48-1) (Qty: 10 L/I)	20-02-2001	29-3-2001	01-4-2001	6744/NP-2	
2.	Spares for Chernikeef Log (Qty: 04 L/I)	20-02-2001	29-3-2001	01-4-2001	6745/NP-2	
3.	Various Size Hot Plate (Qty: 11 L/I)	20-02-2001	29-3-2001	01-4-2001	6746/NP-2	
4.	Insulating Material (Rock Wool) (Qty: 3100 Sh)	20-02-2001	08-3-2001	11-3-2001	6602/NP-2 Re-Tender	
5.	Spares for Overhead Crane (Model: DH-500) (Qty: 22 L/I)	20-02-2001	08-3-2001	11-3-2001	6604/NP-2 Re-Tender	
6.	Spares for Main Broadcast/SRE Conning & Mine Sweeping (Qty: 37 L/I)	20-02-2001	08-3-2001	11-3-2001	6605/NP-2 Re-Tender	
7.	Spares for Echo Sounder (Model: 780) (Qty: 33 L/I)	20-02-2001	08-3-2001	11-3-2001	6606/NP-2 Re-Tender	
8.	Spares for HF TX/RX RT-700 (Qty: 08 L/I)	20-02-2001	08-3-2001	11-3-2001	6607/NP-2 Re-Tender	

2. Tender schedule with detailed specification/condition will be available on payment as per international tender selling rate (non-refundable) during office hours between 0800 hours to 1300 hours. The tender can be dropped latest by 1000 hours and opened at 1005 hours on the specified date of opening in the presence of the tenderers (if present).

ISPR/Misc/2001/144
DFP-3652-8/2
G-329

Lt Commander BN
for Director General