

24 killed in Iran road accident

AFP, Tehran

Twenty-four people have been killed and 13 others injured when the driver of a heavy truck dozed off and smashed into a passenger bus on a road in southern Iran, state media said yesterday. The accident occurred shortly before dawn between the towns of Darab and Fasa in Fars province. "The driver had fallen asleep and lost control," a provincial police official was quoted as saying.

Iran's roads are already considered to be among the most dangerous in the world. More than a quarter of all cars are over 20 years old, and drivers in general seem to display suicidal tendencies when they are behind the wheel.

Close to 100,000 people have died in road accidents over the past five years, and during the last Iranian year from March 2003 to March 2004, a total of 25,772 were killed.

On June 24, about 90 people died in southeastern Iran when a fuel truck lost control and crashed into a police post, with the explosion engulfing other trucks, cars and buses.

Lalu orders probe into Godhra carnage

PTI, New Delhi

Indian Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav yesterday ordered a high-powered departmental inquiry into the Godhra carnage in Gujarat.

Winding up a discussion on the Railway Budget in Lok Sabha, Lalu said the probe panel would be given three months' time to submit its report.

Alleging a conspiracy in the February 27, 2002 episode in which 59 people were burnt alive, Lalu said the committee would probe whether the blaze was caused by a short-circuit or some inflammable material.

Reading out a report of the Forensic Science Laboratory of Gujarat of May 17, 2002, the minister said there was "clear evidence that the fire had been caused by inflammable material inside the compartment."

Charging that the findings of the forensic lab were kept under wraps by the previous NDA government and the BJP government in Gujarat, he said there would not cover up and all those found guilty would be punished.

Malaysia's jailed leader rushed to hospital

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Jailed former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim was rushed to hospital and requires surgery after a long-standing back injury put him at risk of being paralysed, his wife said yesterday.

Doctors at the government-run Kuala Lumpur Hospital had advised Anwar to undergo surgery "as soon as possible to decompress pressure on the nerves affected as they are showing warning signs and there is a risk of paralysis," Wan Azizah Wan Ismail told AFP.

"He is experiencing problems with his bladder system. The family believes that his health deteriorated after the government did not allow him to travel overseas for surgery," Wan Azizah said.

His lawyer, Sankara Nair, said "Anwar was rushed to hospital at 11.30pm on Tuesday after developing more pain than usual."

US Aids chief heckled at summit

BBC ONLINE

The US Aids co-ordinator was heckled by about 50 activists as he addressed a global Aids summit in Thailand.

Protesters chanted "Bush lies, millions die" before Randall Tobias launched his defence of US policy on combating Aids.

Critics have attacked US trade deals with poorer nations, and say strings are attached to US anti-Aids funding.

Mr Tobias called for unity in fighting the disease and said the US was spending twice as much as other donor nations combined.

Fewer US government-employed scientists are attending the conference than in previous years. Washington says this is because of financial considerations.

But some scientists have said it was because Tommy Thompson, US Secretary of Health and Human Services, was not well received at the last conference two years ago.



A US soldier walks next to a car bomb wreckage at the main checkpoint for vehicles entering the Iraqi government building complex within the perimeter of the heavily secured Green Zone, housing the new Iraqi government headquarters and the US embassy in Baghdad yesterday. The blast killed at least ten people and wounding 40 others.

Israel demolishes homes of wanted Palestinians

AFP, Jenin

The Israeli army demolished yesterday the family homes of two Palestinians suspected of involvement in deadly attacks, military sources and witnesses said.

One house in the central West Bank city of Ramallah was brought to the ground after being packed with explosives. It had been the home of Jidan Ramadan, a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

The home of Islamic Jihad activist Hussam Abed was also destroyed in a similar fashion in the northern city of Jenin. Abed is suspected of involvement in a suicide attack in Israel last year.

The two buildings had been home to more than 20 people,

according to the witnesses.

The army said that the demolitions served as a "message to terrorists and their accomplices that there is a price to pay for their acts."

The army also announced that four wanted Palestinians had been arrested overnight in the West Bank while two Israelis were lightly injured in a shooting attack on their car near the settlement of Ariel.

The Al-Aqsa Brigades, which is loosely linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the shooting.

Meanwhile Palestinian sources in Gaza said that troops had withdrawn from an area close to the Kissufim checkpoint where they had been operating since dawn on Tuesday. Five houses had been

made uninhabitable while dozens of dunams of land had been destroyed by army bulldozers, they said.

The Israeli army said that the operation had been launched after a number of attacks against settlers in the region in recent weeks.

More than 70 percent of Israelis favour the main opposition Labour party joining a new coalition government under right-wing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a poll in the Maariv daily showed yesterday.

A total of 71 percent of those questioned said they were in favour of Sharon forming a national unity government with Labour while only 29 percent wanted the premier to form a new alliance with the religious right at the expense of Labour and the secular Shinui party.

Bush takes credit for making world safer!

PTI, Washington

The US confronted the dangers posed by state-sponsored terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction following which the world today is a much safer place, President George W Bush has claimed.

"We confronted the dangers of terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We acted against two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on earth. We liberated over 50 million people," Bush said in a speech at Michigan, on Tuesday evening.

He added that despite these efforts US will stay on course and continue to hunt for terrorists. "The world is changing for the better because of American leadership. America is safer today because we are leading the world."

White House refuses to provide intelligence report on Iraq

PTI, New York

The White House and the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) have refused to give the Senate Intelligence Committee a one-page summary of intelligence report on Iraq prepared for US President George Bush that contains few of the qualifiers and none of the dissents spelled out in longer reviews.

Senate Democrats claim the document could help clear up exactly what intelligence agencies told Bush about Iraq's illicit weapons. The administration and CIA say the White House is protected by

executive privilege and Republicans on the committee dismissed the Democrats' argument that the summary was significant, a media report said yesterday quoting Congressional officials.

The review, prepared for President Bush in October 2002, summarised the findings of a classified, 90-page National Intelligence Estimate about Iraq's illicit weapons.

Congressional officials were quoted by the 'New York Times' as saying that notes taken by Senate staffers who were permitted to review the document show that it

eliminated references to dissent within the Government about the National Intelligence Estimate's (NIE) conclusions.

"In determining what the President was told about the contents of the NIE dealing with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, qualifiers and all, there is nothing clearer than this single page," Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat, said in a 10-page "additional view" that was published as an addendum to the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on Friday (July 9, 2004), the paper said.

Iraq tops agenda in US-India talks

AFP, New Delhi

US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage held talks with India's new leaders yesterday, with the situation in Iraq topping the agenda, Indian and US officials said.

Armitage, who arrived in New Delhi late Tuesday, began his engagements by meeting Indian opposition leader Lal Krishna Advani followed by "substantive" talks with foreign secretary Shashank, who uses only one name, a diplomatic source said.

He was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Foreign Minister Natwar Singh, after a lunch meeting with National Security Advisor J.N. Dixit.

The United States wants India to commit troops to Iraq now that a

new transitional government has taken office in Baghdad.

In the past, New Delhi has been firmly against sending troops to Iraq without a clear UN mandate.

Peace talks between India and Pakistan and the situation in Afghanistan are also on the agenda, Indian officials said.

Armitage, on a 10-day tour of the Middle East, South and Central Asia, is the first senior official to visit New Delhi since a left-leaning government came into power after April-May elections.

Under the now-ousted Hindu nationalists, India, who was close to the erstwhile Soviet Union during the days of the Cold War, had developed warm relations with Washington.

Armitage's next stop is Pakistan where he would again hold talks

with Pakistani leaders on the situation in Iraq, counter terrorism and relations between Pakistan and India, officials said.

Formal talks between Armitage and Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar are scheduled for Thursday, officials said.

He was also due to meet with Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and is expected to call on Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, they said.

Foreign ministry spokesman Masood Khan has said Armitage's agenda here was wide-ranging and included the situation in Iraq after the handover of power to a transitional government in Baghdad.

Pakistan, which opposed the US-led occupation of Iraq, has resisted US pressure to send its troops to Iraq for peacekeeping mission.



US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage (R) talks with Indian Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee during a meeting at the Ministry of Defence in New Delhi yesterday.

US denies strip searching Indian minister

BBC ONLINE

The US embassy in Delhi has denied that former Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes was strip-searched while entering the US last year.

However, the embassy admitted yesterday that some "diplomatic procedures" were not followed and it apologised to Mr Fernandes.

The reports emerged in a book by the former US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott.

His successor, Richard Armitage, says he is "horrified" by the incident. Mr Armitage was speaking in Delhi where he is meeting government and opposition members.

In his book Mr Talbott says that Mr Fernandes told him he had been strip-searched on two occasions while entering and leaving the US.

But the US embassy denied that had happened.

"The minister was not strip-

searched but did have a security wand placed over him when a key in his pocket set off the metal detector," a US embassy spokeswoman said.

She added that the US had established procedures for such security procedures to be waived for heads of states, government ministers and diplomats if the authorities are notified in advance.

It is not clear why these were not followed in Mr Fernandes' case.

The Indian ambassador in Washington at the time, Lalit Mansingh, says that an exception should have been made.

"I protested to the security detail that the defence minister should not be searched, that he was a guest of the US government, but the security personnel accompanying Mr Fernandes stood aside and said that they had no jurisdiction to intervene," he told The Hindu newspaper.

FREED SWEDE SAYS I was tortured at Guantanamo

REUTERS, Stockholm

A Swede released from Guantanamo Bay last week said he had been tortured by exposure to freezing cold, noise and bright lights and chained during his 2-1/2-year imprisonment.

Mehdi Ghezali, the son of an Algerian-born immigrant, told Swedish media in interviews published or aired Wednesday that he was interrogated almost every day at the US naval base on Cuban soil.

The 25-year-old man, who was arrested in Pakistan where he says he was studying Islam, was released on July 8 after pressure from Sweden.

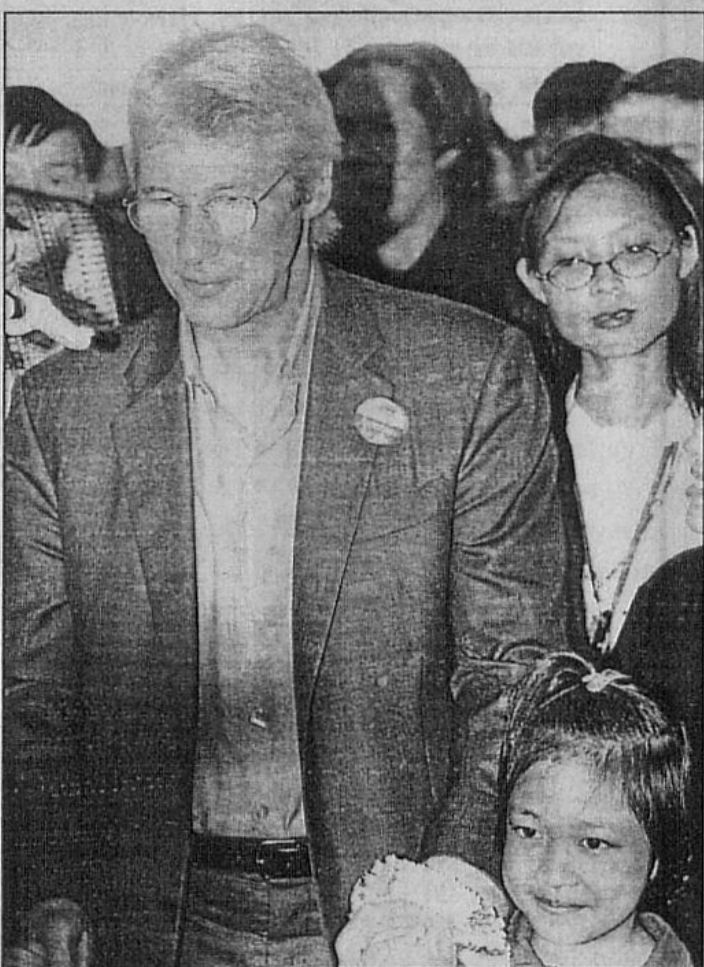
Ghezali told Dagens Nyheter daily and Swedish public radio he

had cooperated for the first six months but stopped talking when his interrogators kept asking the same questions.

In April the military changed their tactics, he said.

"They put me in the interrogation room and used it as a refrigerator. They set the temperature to minus degrees so it was terribly cold and one had to freeze there for many hours - 12 to 14 hours one had to sit there, chained," he said, adding that he had partially lost the feeling in one foot since then.

Ghezali said he was also deprived of sleep, chained for long periods in painful positions, and exposed to bright flashes of light in a darkened room and loud music and noise.



Hollywood star Richard Gere walks with children while visiting the Mercy center during the 15th International AIDS Conference in Bangkok yesterday. The actor is one of a handful of celebrities including US soul singer Dionne Warwick, British actor Rupert Everett, Australian Miss Universe Jennifer Hawkins and Hong Kong singer Coco Lee who have joined about 17,000 delegates at the AIDS summit, which is entitled "Access for All".

Six nations sign pact for cheap AIDS drugs

AFP, Bangkok

Six nations facing serious HIV/AIDS epidemics have forged a pact promoting low-cost drugs, officials at the world AIDS forum said yesterday.

Three of the six, China, Thailand and Brazil, are among the world's biggest copycat drug makers and their pact aims to treat up to 10 million new patients.

The list is completed by Russia, Nigeria and Ukraine, and they could endorse a pact agreed through the World Trade Organization in 2001 that allows countries with a health crisis to break patents.

Agreement has been reached but the deal is yet to be signed, said officials.

"This is a cooperation among developing countries. This is not an anti-US network," said Pakdee Pothisiri, deputy permanent secretary of Thailand's health ministry.

"This cooperation will increase the potential in developing and producing the generic drugs," Pakdee said.

The United States has pursued a policy of protecting patents held by drug makers, many of which are US pharmaceutical companies, and having drug companies work out bilateral agreements to

sell drugs cheaply to poor countries.

But some of the countries in the pact, such as Brazil, which proposed the pact, appears to favour breaking patent agreements.

"Public health must come before commercial (interests)," Alexandre Domingues Grangeiro, director of the Brazil Health Ministry's National AIDS Programme, was quoted as saying by The Nation paper in Bangkok.

However, some countries in the pact were reluctant to break patents even though they supported the idea of cheaper drugs.


China, which is a top exporter of raw materials for AIDS drugs, could lose its right to export the materials if it promotes the invokes the compulsory licence.

"It would be a big loss for us if we cannot export," said Ren Minghui, of the Chinese health ministry.

Some countries in the pact are already producing generic versions of patented drugs but an agreement is expected to lead to increased production.

Prices of the anti-AIDS drugs in those countries have dropped by as much as 80 percent.

India and South Africa were making final decisions on joining the pact, The Nation said.



SADHARAN BIMA CORPORATION(SBC)

সাধারণ বীমা কর্পোরেশন

Real Estate Department, 33, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.

AMENDMENT RE-INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION

It is notified for all concerned that following amendment has been made in the minimum qualification criteria for pre-qualification for "Construction of 20-Storeyed Commercial Building with 5-floor Car park of Sadharan Bima Corporation at 37/A, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka" [SH: Construction upto 6th floor with three Basement floors (Civil, Internal Electrification and Sanitary & Plumbing works)] under Real State Department of Sadharan Bima Corporation.

Item/clause	Scheduled	Amended
d) Minimum Qualification Criteria.	The applicant must have experience during last 10 (Ten) years in completion of (i) Minimum 2 Nos. Multi Storied building of minimum 10-Storeyed high each casting minimum Tk. 12 (Twelve) Crore.	The applicant must have experience during last 10 (Ten) years in completion of i.a) Minimum 1 No. Multistoried Building of Minimum 8-Storeyed high in a Single contract under Government/Semi-Govt./ Autonomous Organization. i.b) Successful completion of at least 1(one) number building construction of minimum value of Tk. 20 (Twenty) Crore in a single contract under Government/Semi-Govt./ Autonomous Organization. ii) Minimum 1 No. Basement floor Construction of an area not less than 20,000 sqft.
	ii) Minimum 2 Nos. Basement floor construction.	

Applicants who have submitted pre-qualification applications earlier for the work may resubmit their applications if they desire. However their submitted applications shall be evaluated according to the amended criteria. All other terms & conditions will remain unchanged. This amendment notice will be the part & parcel of the tender documents.

General Manager
Real Estate Department
Sadharan Bima Corporation
33, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.

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