

N Korea opens tightly sealed border for aid

Eighty South Korean trucks loaded with rice rumbled into North Korea across the world's most heavily fortified frontier yesterday in a symbol of reconciliation between the two.

A convoy of 40 orange-colored 25-tonne trucks pulled across the mine-strewn no-man's-land that has separated the two countries for more than 50 years from this railroad on the southwestern end of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

A separate convoy of 40 trucks crossed into North Korea with another rice shipment at the eastern end of the DMZ, officials said.

"Pass," shouted two South Korean military policemen here as they opened an iron-grid gate in a barbed wire-fence for the convoy to enter the four-kilometer (2.5-mile)-wide buffer zone in place since the 1950-53 Korean War.

The 80 trucks were to return home later Tuesday after unloading their cargo at Kaesong City in the west and at the eastern port of Kosong. Both Kaesong and Kosong are about an hour's ride from the DMZ.

Israel-Labanon border fighting flares up

Two Israeli soldiers, Hezbollah fighter killed

A Hezbollah fighter and two Israeli soldiers were killed yesterday as Israel-Lebanon cross-border violence flared up a day after a military commander of the radical Shi'a Muslim group was blown up in an attack blamed on Israel.

The escalation prompted Lebanon to take action toward lodging a complaint with the United Nations over Israeli attacks on the south of the country including the killing of the Hezbollah fighter.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed during exchanges of fire with the radical Hezbollah Shi'a militia across the border with Lebanon, the army announced.

"There was a deliberate attack by Hezbollah snipers on a Tshahal (army) position in the western area of

the border. Two soldiers have been killed," Captain Jacob Dallal told AFP.

The army has responded to the shooting," he added.

Hezbollah had earlier said one of its fighters was killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon during the violence which erupted the day after a military commander of the radical Shi'a Muslim group was killed in a car bomb blamed on Israel.

Foreign Minister Jean Obeid gave instructions to Lebanon's UN envoy to hold consultations "on the possibility of calling a special Security Council meeting to condemn the Israeli aggressions," his ministry said.

Israeli combat helicopters carried out three raids, firing a total of eight rockets on Hezbollah "monitoring posts" at the outskirts of the border villages of Aita Shaab and

Explosion kills 31 at Ukrainian coal mine

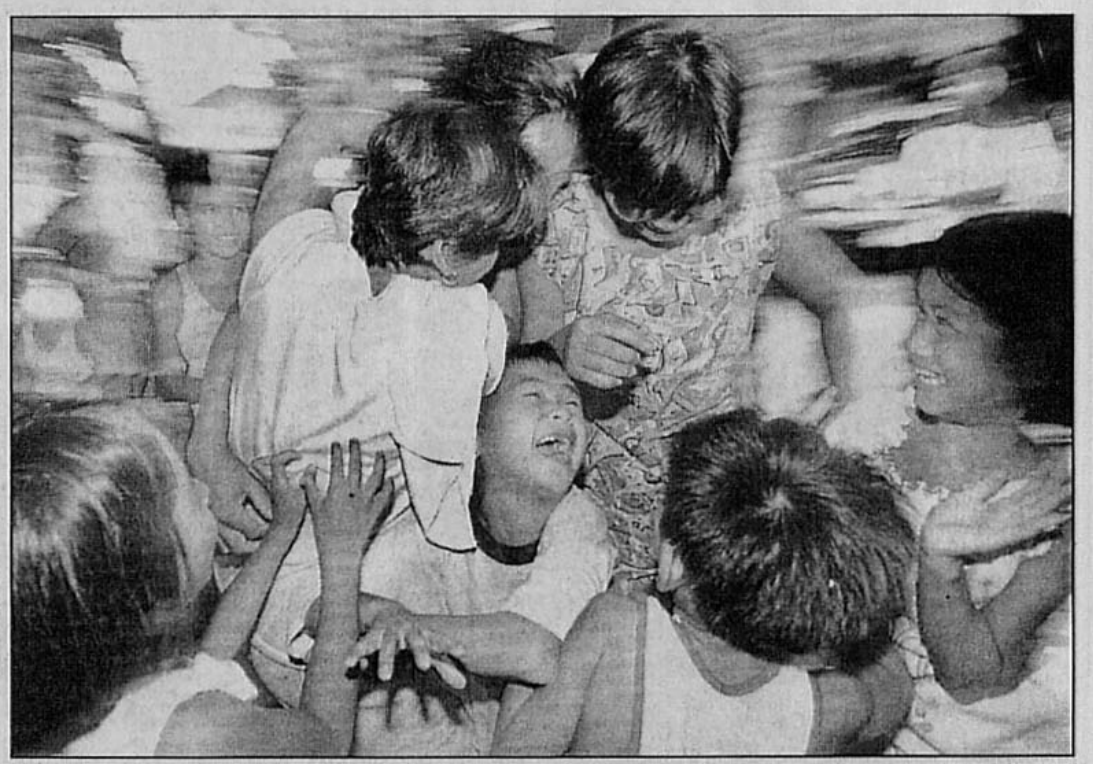
Rescuers battled a raging fire and deadly gases deep in an eastern Ukrainian coal mine yesterday looking for survivors from a methane gas explosion that killed at least 31 miners.

Emergency workers had recovered 31 bodies later Tuesday and were seeking five others in the Krasnolimanskaya mine, said Andrey Klyuyev, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister in charge of investigation of the blast.

"We will keep searching," Klyuyev told reporters.

The blast Monday night hit a section of the mine in the Donetsk region, about 3,180 feet below the surface, said Oleh Venzhyk, a spokesman for the Ministry for Emergency Situations.

Dozens of rescue teams searching for dead and injured miners were being hampered by raging fires, high concentrations of poisonous gases, heavy smoke and temperatures of up to 120, a rescuer who gave his name only as Volodymyr said by telephone.



Relatives and young supporters of hostage Angelo de la Cruz celebrate in Buenavista, north of Manila yesterday after seeing Angelo on local television following his release from Iraqi militants. De la Cruz, a Filipino truck driver taken hostage in Iraq and threatened with beheading, was released just a day after his government bowed to the kidnapers' demands and pulled all its troops out of the country.



A young Indian girl and her mother (C) are helped by a crew member as they disembark from an Indian Air Force helicopter to escape floodwaters at Koplil in Nagaon District, some 200kms east of Guwahati yesterday. Indian Air Force helicopters have rescued some 400 women and children from the town as flooding caused by incessant monsoon rains which has left thousands marooned in the north-east of India.

India sets up panel to find lasting solution to annual flood woes

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said yesterday he has set up a panel to find a permanent solution to floods which annually ravage the country's east and northeast, as officials reported another 24 people killed.

"The time has come to take a holistic view to find a permanent, medium and long term solution to the flood problem in India," Singh told reporters in northeastern Assam state's main city of Guwahati after an hour-long aerial survey of floods which have displaced about 11 million Indians.

He said he had set up a "high-power task force" which is to submit a report on "strategies to control floods on a permanent basis" within six months.

Singh's one-day trip came as the death toll due to flooding caused by monsoon rains since mid-June in India touched 217, after another three deaths were reported overnight in Assam and another 21 in neighbouring Bihar state.

"I have realised the gravity of the situation after making an aerial survey and the situation is really devastating," Singh said.

The prime minister said New Delhi would discuss with neighbours China and Bhutan claims that floods in India were aggravated by the two neighbours releasing excess waters from their dams upstream.

Singh was responding to a query on a letter sent to him by Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi stating China and Bhutan had released excess waters from their dams, aggravating the flooding of Assam's main Brahmaputra river.

"Incidents like flooding have always been (inter-country affairs) and if required we will have to discuss the problem with the two countries," Singh told reporters.

According to the Assam chief minister, the melting of snow in the upper reaches of China's Tibet region had also contributed to the already-critical situation in the state.

The Assam government has described the current flooding in the region as "the worst" in 25 years and demanded 21.56 billion rupees (479 million dollars) as immediate financial assistance from New Delhi.

US House freezes aid to Vietnam over HR record

The US House of Representatives late Monday voted to freeze all non-humanitarian assistance to Vietnam and provide aid to its dissidents in response to what it described as "a policy of harassment, discrimination, and intimidation" against those who dare to speak out against the country's government.

By a vote of 323-45, the chamber passed the Viet Nam Human Rights Act that bars the government from increasing non-humanitarian assistance to the south-east Asian nation over this year's level of about 40 million dollars, unless the president certifies that Hanoi is releasing political prisoners and is taking steps to improve its overall human rights record.

It also authorizes the White House to spend four million dollars in fiscal 2004 and 2005 to provide support for Vietnamese dissidents and groups that "promote internationally recognized human rights."

More than 10 million dollars are being offered over the same period of time to overcome Vietnamese jamming of Radio Free Asia, a surrogate US Congress-financed radio station that beams US programming to the region.

Iraq vows to hit states backing insurgents

Iraq is ready to retaliate against countries it accuses of supporting terrorism wracking the country, the country's defence minister warned yesterday.

Hazim al-Shaalani mentioned no countries by name but accused old foe Iran of "blatant interference." Iraq has also complained in the past about guerrilla fighters entering the country from Syria.

"We are prepared to move the arena of the attacks on Iraq's honor and its rights to those countries," he was quoted as saying by the London-based Ashraq al-Awsat newspaper.

"We've spoken to them and confronted them with facts and evidence, but none of them have taken any action to stop supporting terrorism in Iraq," he said.

Iraq blames a wave of bombings and assassinations, which has claimed hundreds of lives including senior Iraqi politicians, on remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime as well as foreign Islamic militants who have entered from neighboring countries.

"They (Iranians) confess to the presence of their spies in Iraq who have a mission to shake up the social and political situation," the defence minister said.

"Iranian intrusion has been vast and unprecedented since the establishment of the Iraqi state. Washington, too, has accused Tehran of seeking to destabilize and gain influence in Iraq, which like Iran, is predominantly Shia Muslim. Tehran denies interfering in Iraqi affairs.

Ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein waged a protracted war against Iran between 1980 and 1988 in which hundreds of thousands died on both sides.

Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi -- on a tour of Arab states bordering Iraq -- won Jordanian support for his drive to crush insurgents.

Syria agreed earlier this month to help seal its long desert border with Iraq and stop foreign insurgents infiltrating into Iraq to fight US forces and the US-backed authorities.

Khartoum 'backs Darfur militias'

A human rights group says it has proof that Sudan's government has been supporting Arab militias accused of killing thousands in Darfur.

New York-based Human Rights Watch says it has government documents showing that officials directed recruitment, arming and support of the Janjaweed.

The government in Khartoum has denied any involvement with the militia.

In Darfur itself, the government has been deploying armed police in camps set up for those displaced by the conflict.

Sudan says about 6,000 police are being sent to protect the refugees, following reports of widespread rape of women in the camps by the militias.

Aid agencies warn that thousands more of the one million displaced people could die from hunger and disease.

A group of British charities - known as the Disasters Emergency Committee - is launching an urgent aid appeal for the people of Sudan on Tuesday.

US probes involvement of Iran in 9/11 attack

President Bush said on Monday the United States was trying to determine whether Iran was involved in the Sept. 11 plot and accused the government of harboring al-Qaeda leaders.

"We want to know all of the facts," Bush said when asked about reports that at least eight of the 19 hijackers passed through Iran before attacking the United States.

The commission investigating the attacks will detail links between al-Qaeda and Iran in its final report this week, raising new questions about why Bush turned his focus to Iraq after Sept. 11, 2001. The commission has found more al-Qaeda contacts with Iran than with Iraq, officials said.

Bush, at a meeting with Chilean President Ricardo Lagos, quoted acting CIA director John McLaughlin as saying "there was no direct connect between Iran and the attacks of Sept. 11."

The US intelligence community has been harshly criticized for overstating the Iraqi threat before the war, leading to calls for its overhaul and for the creation of an intelligence czar. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Bush was willing to consider this step, although McLaughlin Sunday questioned whether it was necessary.

Bush said the United States will continue to look into whether Iran was involved. "As to direct connections with Sept. 11, we're digging into the facts to determine if there was one."

Iran, branded like Iraq by Bush as part of an "axis of evil" that threatens to fuel global terrorism, was "harboring al-Qaeda leadership there," the president said. He urged Tehran to have them "turned over to their respective countries" or "if the Iranians would like to have better relations with the United States there are some things they must do," including halting the country's alleged nuclear weapons program and support for terrorism, Bush said.

The New York Times reported on Sunday that the Iranian government had ordered its border guards not to stamp the passports of Saudi al-Qaeda members moving through Iran after training in Afghanistan.

An Iranian stamp could have made the al-Qaeda members subject to additional scrutiny upon entering the United States, US officials said.

Iran acknowledged some of the Sept. 11 attackers may have passed through illegally, but said it had since tightened border controls. It said any attempts to tie the country to al-Qaeda, the militant network which carried out the attacks, were part of US election-year "news propaganda."

3 foreigners held for hacking in Philippines

Eight people including two Indians and a Bangladeshi were arrested for allegedly hacking into Philippines telecommunications systems to make unauthorized long-distance calls, officials said yesterday.

The suspects, who include five Filipinos, were arrested in a series of raids in and around Manila over the weekend, immigration, police and military spokesmen said.

They named the foreign suspects as Gulshan Kumar and Avtar Singh from India and Sirajul Islam Raju of Bangladesh. No further details on the suspects were released.

Immigration and police said that the eight would be charged with using computer equipment to break into the systems of corporate subscribers of dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT).

Blair defends Iraq war decision in debate

Blair is likely to be questioned on Downing Street's assertion that he only discovered the intelligence had been withdrawn as a result of the Butler inquiry.

The inquiry said there was no evidence of "deliberate distortion or culpable negligence" in the treatment of pre-war intelligence.

But it did raise concerns about Blair's style of government and his emphasis on un-minuted and informal meetings.

Despite the criticisms of the intelligence, the prime minister told the Commons there was "no doubt" from the intelligence assessments that Saddam had the intent, programmes and weapons of mass destruction themselves.

The international community had backed that view in United Nations resolution 1441.

Blair said: "Whatever the situation with actual readily deployable weapons, part of the problem with this is that people have now gone to the other extreme and said there was no threat. That was not the case."

In what is already emerging as a testy debate, Blair was challenged by Howard that the intelligence was branded "sporadic and patchy" by the IJC.

The prime minister countered that the "sporadic" judgement had come in an earlier assessment.

Blair said he fully accepted there had been errors but the decision to go to war had not been a mistake.

Jt patrols launched to protect Malacca Strait

Military chiefs from three Southeast Asian countries launched coordinated patrols yesterday to protect one of the world's busiest shipping lanes from piracy and possible terror attacks.

The Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean chiefs signed an "immediate execution order" for the patrols in the piracy-plagued Malacca Strait, which carries half the world's oil shipments.

Some 15-20 ships from the three countries bordering the strait will guard the 800-kilometre (500-mile) waterway year-round.

The agreement to work together follows US suggestions earlier this year that American forces could help patrol the strait -- an idea that raised hackles in Indonesia and Malaysia.

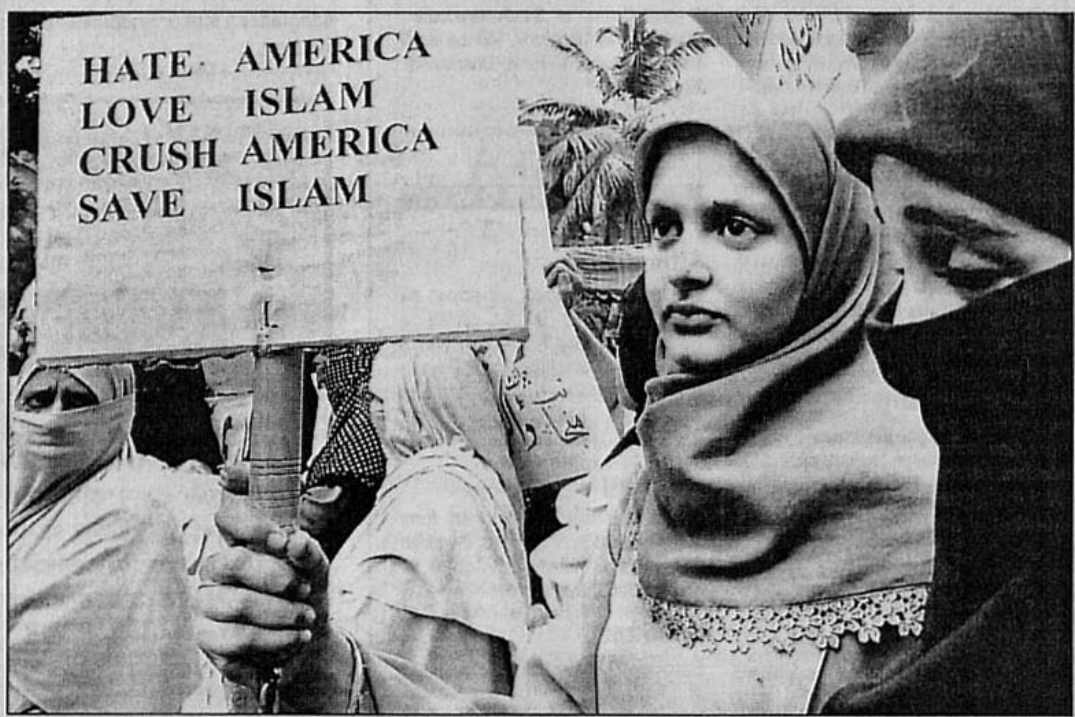
Indonesian military chief Endriartono Sutarto said other countries were welcome to supply equipment and skills, but any proposal that foreign forces join the patrols would need approval from all three countries.

Singapore military chief Ng Yat Chung said the pact shows the littoral states are serious in ensuring safety in the waterway. More than 50,000 ships carrying a quarter of the world's trade use the strait every year.

"We recognise that the security of the Malacca Strait goes beyond the interest of the three countries. There are many other stakeholders in the security of the strait," Ng told reporters aboard this Indonesian navy ship where the order was signed.

Japan receives almost all its oil imports through the strait and China 80 percent of its oil imports. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded 28 pirate attacks in the waterway last year, almost all of them in Indonesian waters.

The US and Singapore also fear that terrorists could hijack an oil or gas tanker in the Malacca Strait or the adjacent Singapore Strait, and turn it into a floating bomb with devastating consequences for world trade.



Veiled Pakistani female doctors hold placards and shout slogans as they take part in a demonstration demanding the release of two male colleagues from police custody in Karachi yesterday. Doctor Akmal Waheed, a renowned heart specialist, and his brother Doctor Arshad Waheed, an orthopaedic surgeon, were arrested early July on suspicion of having links with al-Qaeda terrorist network.

Riot breaks out at UK asylum centre after detainee death

A serious riot broke out at a British detention centre for asylum seekers after the body of a detainee was found hanged, officials said yesterday.

The trouble on Monday night at the Harmondsworth centre, near Heathrow airport to the west of London, which was criticised by inspectors only a year ago as overcrowded and unsafe for both staff and detainees.

Staff were forced to pull out of the centre for their own safety at one point during the "serious disturbance" on Monday night, a Home Office spokeswoman said.

However the trouble later largely died down and staff were gradually bringing the centre under control, she added. The death of the detainee was being investigated by police, who said it was not thought to be suspicious.

সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জনসাধারণের নিকট হইতে বেআইনিভাবে আমানত গ্রহণ

১. ব্যাংক কোম্পানী আইন ১৯৯১, আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠান আইন ১৯৯৪ ও গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক অধ্যাদেশ ১৯৮৩ এর অধীনে স্থাপিত প্রতিষ্ঠান ব্যতীত কোন ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান সাধারণ জনগণের নিকট হইতে আমানত গ্রহণ করিতে পারিবে না। সমবায় সমিতি আইন ২০০১ এর অধীনে স্থাপিত কোন সমিতি উহার সদস্য ব্যতীত আর কাহারও নিকট হইতে কেবলমাত্র ঐ আইনে অনুমোদিত পন্থায় আমানত গ্রহণ বা ঋণ দান করিতে পারিবে। ইহা ছাড়া অন্য কোন প্রতিষ্ঠান উহার সদস্য ব্যতীত আর কাহারও নিকট হইতে আমানত গ্রহণ বা কাহাকেও ঋণ প্রদান করিতে পারিবে না।
২. জনগণের নিকট হইতে আমানত গ্রহণের জন্য প্রাধিকারপ্রাপ্ত নহে এমন কোন ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান কর্তৃক অনুরূপ কার্যে নিয়োজিত হওয়া অর্থাৎ জনসাধারণের নিকট হইতে আমানত গ্রহণ করা বেআইনি বা তাহা শাস্তি যোগ্য অপরাধ। এমতাবস্থায়, এ ধরনের বেআইনি কার্যে লিপ্ত না হওয়ার জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে সতর্ক করা যাইতেছে। অনুরূপ কার্যে কোন ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান নিয়োজিত হইলে তাহাদের বিরুদ্ধে যথাযথ আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হইবে।

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষ

জসওপ্রবিঃ ৪৮/২০০৪-১৬৩৩

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