

Weather		world Cities in degree centigrade			
	max	min			
Bangkok	35	28	Hong Kong	29	24
Beijing	20	15	Islamabad	38	23
Colombo	30	29	Karachi	36	28
Chicago	16	4	London	16	5
Dubai	34	24	Los Angeles	24	14
			Moscow	10	0
			New York	14	5
			Paris	15	6
			Singapore	34	26
			Tokyo	20	8



Blair fights to put scandals behind him — p16

Short stories

Iran playing games: Rice



Washington: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Sunday accused Iran of "playing games" in the dispute over its nuclear program and called on Tehran to come clean and halt uranium enrichment. Speaking on ABC television, Rice dismissed Iranian offers to allow spot inspections of its nuclear facilities and to reopen discussions on a Russian proposal to conduct sensitive fuel cycle work for Tehran. —AFP

Pak releases A Q Khan's aide

Islamabad: Pakistan has released an official who had been detained two years ago on charges of helping disgraced former top scientist A Q Khan in transferring nuclear technology to foreign countries. Mohammed Farooq's son Asim confirmed that his father had been released and was in good health, but did not provide details. —PTI

Egypt extends emergency laws

Cairo: Egypt's parliament on Sunday approved a two year extension to emergency laws that have been in place since 1981, despite a growing chorus of criticism from opposition groups. The People's Assembly voted 287 to 91 to extend the laws, which were due to expire at the end of May. The measures, instituted after the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, give security forces broad powers to arrest and detain suspects. —AP

Australia short of medical experts

Sydney: In spite of influx of general practitioners from countries like Britain, India and Pakistan, shortage of medical professionals in Australia is not showing any signs of improving in the near future, sources said. According to a research by Monash University academics five new medical schools since year 2000 have failed to address the crisis which has even resulted in emergency departments of few government hospitals shutting down. —UNI

Paul Spiegel dies aged 68

Berlin: Paul Spiegel, who fled the Nazis as a child during World War II and returned to Germany to eventually become the influential head of its main Jewish organisation, has died. He was 68. Spiegel died overnight of cancer in a hospital in Dueseldorf where he had been seriously ill for weeks, Nathan Kalmanowicz, a senior official in Germany's Central Council of Jews, said Sunday. Spiegel had suffered a heart attack in February. Chancellor Angela Merkel mourned a passionate supporter of Jewish life in Germany, where it was all but wiped out under the Nazis, and an "exemplary democrat." —AP

Pak travel ban on 11 leaders

Islamabad: Pakistan has banned 11 senior nationalist leaders and members of their families from visiting foreign countries, reports said on Sunday. The names of the eleven, including two top Baloch nationalist leaders Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and Sardar Attaullah Mengal, have been put in the Exit Control List. The Ministry of Interior has issued an order to all airports about the ban. Copies of the order have been sent to the Prime Minister Secretariat, Military Intelligence, Federal Investigation Agency, intelligence agencies and National Accountability Bureau, the sources said. Supporters of Bugti and Mengal are blamed for attacks on security forces and government installations in the mineral-rich but the Baluchistan province. —PTI



King Carl Gustaf of Sweden waves to well-wishers from the stairs of the Royal Palace in Stockholm. King Carl Gustaf celebrated his 60th birthday on Sunday —AP

'They are killers'

Who are Taliban?

Afghanistan was invaded by the Russians in 1979. Ten years later Afghan fighters sent them packing with the help of US and the Mujahedeen. But the country soon fell into disarray. It was then the Taliban came to the fore. It emerged as a movement in the seminaries of Pakistan.

What emerged as a student movement in 1994 from the madrassas with active support of Pakistan and ISI, Taliban became a strong force within a few months. Under the leadership of Mullah Omar it overthrew Burhannudin Rabbani's government and captured Kabul. By the end of 1996 Taliban were controlling 27 provinces out of 36 in Afghanistan, 85 per cent of the country.

For the next five years Taliban controlled Afghanistan under strict Islamic laws even demolishing the 1500 years old Bamiyan Buddha statues. But soon after the 9/11 attacks, Taliban who refused to extradite Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, were attacked by the US-led troops and by the end of the year 2001, Taliban rule was over. Even though the Taliban is now limited in numbers, it has returned to the south and east of Afghanistan. It is believed that Taliban are now active in 15 per cent of the country.

They have been waging a guerrilla war, both against Karzai-led Afghan government and US-led forces and other foreigners as well.

Suryanarayana's employers have announced a Rs 20 lakh compensation

KSR Menon, Dubai

The Bahrain-based IT and Telecom provider Al Moayed Group on Sunday said it did not believe the Taliban version that Suryanarayana, their project manager in Afghanistan was killed as he tried to escape captivity.

"They are killers. We do not believe what they say," Wagih Ahmed a spokesman for the company said.

He also announced an immediate compensation of Rs 20 lakh. The company has also promised to take care of the complete education of Suryanarayana's three children.

"We hope that the government of Afghanistan will also compensate his family and of course as the company which employed we will also give all support," Ahmed told DNA from

Manama, Bahrain. "Suryanarayana was in Bahrain for training and then he also worked in Maldives for us. He was a simple and kindhearted person. He was part of our family. It is a freak tragedy that he was taken by the Taliban as he was very familiar with the local situation and security hazards," Ahmed said.

As a mark of respect, the Head Office in Bahrain and all international offices will remain closed on Tuesday. The Indian office will be closed for 3 days, and all offices will observe a mourning period of one week.

"In fact he was not supposed to have moved about without proper security. I think he was so confident as he knew every nook and corner that he let his guard down and ignored the security drill. Or perhaps it was just bad time." "We hired him from Afghanistan where he has been working for the last three years with a local company. There are hundreds of Indians working there and generally they do not move around without tight security," he said.



DNA Graphic: Nitin Tuse

"Negotiations were going on between Indian diplomats and the Taliban representatives. In fact it was for the Indian government to work this out, but we were caught up in the whole thing." The Almoayed group had also sent out an appeal denying

he was a US spy and pleading for his release saying neither the company nor Suryanarayana had any political affiliation. But that was of no avail. "Our company is a politically neutral technology company and we do not have any affiliation with any other agency... We can also vouch for the politically neutral stand of our employee, Suryanarayana Kasula, who far from being a US spy, has no affiliation to any political party, or leanings towards any other government or political party."

Suryanarayana an engineer from Hyderabad and father of three, was abducted on Friday evening when he was travelling from Kalat, the capital of southern Zabul province, to Ghazni.

Gloom descends over Kabul

Offices have boosted security, barred employees from going out unescorted

Taran Khan, Kabul

Indians in Afghanistan spent a sleepless night on Saturday. Most of them were on the phone throughout the evening reassuring family and friends back home, after the Tal-

iban announced the deadline for Suryanarayana's killing.

"I tried to convince my family that Kabul is safe, and that the abduction took place in the provinces," said Kulkarni, a hotel worker in Kabul.

"None of us slept properly. Our thoughts were with the abducted man and his family," said Umesh, his colleague.

But Sunday morning brought news of Suryanarayana's death. For most, it meant reliving last November's killing of MR Kutty, a driver

with the Border Roads Organisation. "We were trying to get over Kutty's death, and now we have to deal with this," said Umesh.

Meanwhile, security has been intensified across offices in Kabul. Most organisations have asked employees to remain in their guesthouses.

"We are not being allowed to go out of the compound except in official transport," says Shahnawaz, a travel agent.

His friends say it is the end of leisurely walks to work.

Koirala calls Maoists for talks

Girija Prasad Koirala was sworn in as Nepal's new Prime Minister on Sunday

Lalita Panicker, Kathmandu

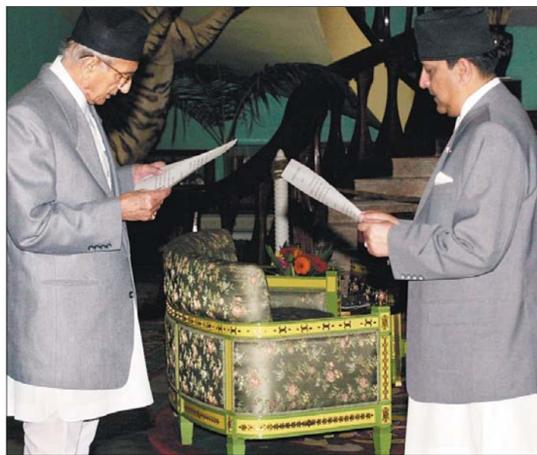
Girija Prasad Koirala, who was sworn in as Nepal's prime minister Sunday, renewed his call to the Maoists to begin peace talks but did not make a concrete offer to the Maoists.

He was sworn in by King Gyanendra at the Narayanhiti royal palace at 10.15 in the morning. This is the fifth time he has become prime minister of the Himalayan kingdom. The swearing in was due to take place on Saturday but had to be put off owing to the octogenarian Koirala's ill-health.

Koirala will swear in his cabinet ministers at the seat of government, Singha Durbar, as and when he and other alliance leaders decide on the names. In a departure from tradition, Koirala did not take oath of Raj Parishad Standing Committee (RPSC) from its chairman Parasu Narayan Chaudhari.

If he swears in his ministers at his office in Singha Durbar in a day or two, the act will put an end to a system whereby the King is present when the prime minister administers the oath office to his ministers.

Sources said Koirala had already told palace functionaries



King Gyanendra of Nepal administers an oath of office to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at a ceremony in Naryanhiti Royal Palace in Kathmandu.—AFP

about the change he was effecting in this regard as per the decision of the seven party alliance.

Crown Prince Paras and the chief justice were present on the occasion when Koirala took office. Koirala and the monarch sat together and talked for a while before the swearing in ceremony.

The King was uncharacteristically solicitous towards the new prime minister before the ceremony. He walked up to Koirala, took him by the hand, and ushered him to a divan. The two chatted for a while and the King en-

quired after Koirala's health. He told Koirala, "Prime minister, one must give up smoking."

King Gyanendra is also said to have sought information from Dr Madhu Ghimire who had accompanied Koirala to the palace.

Meanwhile, Nepal's parliament on Sunday unanimously approved a proposal by the new Prime Minister to hold elections for a special assembly to draw up a new constitution that will decide the future of the monarchy. The 205-member chamber took the decision at the end of a four-

Paras mars wedding party

Dozens of guests headed for a wedding bash here Saturday landed up at a police station instead after a brush with Nepal's controversial Crown Prince Paras. About 60 people, including relatives of the groom, had a fright Saturday evening when the bus they were travelling in was reportedly hit by the crown prince's car but the victims were detained at the police station for questioning while the offending vehicle sped away without stopping to see the damage done. The guests told the Kathmandu Post that the car was driven by Paras himself.

Bhutto wanted F16s ready to attack India

Agencies, Islamabad

Former Pakistan Premier Benazir Bhutto had ordered in 1990 that F-16 fighter jets be kept ready to launch attacks on Indian nuclear facilities amid reports of a similar strike being planned by US, India and Israel on it, a former Army Chief has claimed.

She had also dispatched her Foreign Minister Yaqoob Khan to New Delhi with a message that Islamabad would launch a counter-attack on Indian nuclear facilities if New Delhi targeted Pakistani nuclear establishments, Former Pakistan Army Chief retired Gen. Mirza Aslam Baig, was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

Pakistan government received intelligence reports that the three countries had hatched a conspiracy to attack Pakistan nuclear facilities in 1990, the paper quoted him as saying at a meeting in Hyderabad city on Saturday.

Baig, who recently floated a new political party Awami Qayadat Party said when intelligence reports were passed on to the government, Bhutto, convened an emergency meeting which was attended by the then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Yaqoob, himself besides the now disgraced nuclear scientist A Q Khan.

He claimed Bhutto took a "very bold step" of sending Yaqoob to India with a message that if India launched strikes on Pakistan's nuclear facilities, its own nuclear facilities would be attacked.

US court frustrates Hindutva efforts to gloss over Indian history

Indian advocacy groups battle each other to determine how Hinduism is presented in California's textbooks

Uttara Choudhury, New York

California reviews its textbooks every six years and public opinion is invited for the purpose. But the Golden State got more than it bargained for in the latest edition of this exercise after Indian Americans demanded controversial changes to the history and social studies textbooks used in the sixth grade. In the latest twist to the year-long saga, the Superior Court of California rejected demands by a right-wing organisation called the Hindu American Foundation

(HAF) for a preliminary injunction against the publication of the new books.

The textbooks, which are still a work in progress but are expected to be on student desks by autumn, have devoted 60 pages to ancient Indian history, the same as to ancient China and Egypt. The bone of contention is the rendition in the books of issues such as the caste system, the plight of the Dalits and discrimination against women. HAF and other right-wing Hindu groups maintain that these topics do not belong in a sixth-grade introduction to world civilisations.

The court's decision, delivered in Sacramento on April 21, has been hailed by several South Asian-American groups, as well as professors from Stanford, the University of California and other college campuses, who have challenged efforts by HAF to influence textbooks in the state.

"This means that the Califor-

Indian Science



Medicine
In this modern painting, the Indian surgeon Susruta performs surgery on a patient. The ancient Indians had an advanced knowledge of medicine.

Metalworking
The Indians were expert metalworkers. This gold coin shows the emperor Candra Gupta II.



nia State Board of Education can proceed with the approval process for publication of the new history textbooks, whether or not HAF withdraws its lawsuit," said Anu Mandavilli of Friends of South Asia, which is spearheading the secular California textbook campaign with

six other Indian groups. "The Hindu Education Foundation and the Vedic Foundation, with the support of HAF, had submitted a series of egregious edits [to the textbooks]," Mandavilli added. "They claimed to speak for the Hindu community, but they do not

represent everyone. People are tired of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its hateful agenda."

HAF has argued before the education board that Indian-American children are embarrassed by a warts-and-all depiction of Hinduism in ancient India. This

Hindu groups want to deny the reality of caste discrimination by deleting the very word Dalit from history books. You can't distort facts and whitewash history."

—Anu Mandavilli

week, it reaffirmed its commitment to continue legal action to overturn the decision.

"Hindus are merely seeking parity with other religions in sixth-grade textbooks, where social problems of other religions are not given the same prominence, even as the redeeming features of Hinduism are ignored," Ishani Chowdhury, executive director of HAF, said in a statement.

But that argument does not wash with many academicians. "We have been greatly con-

cerned over claims that an equitable portrayals should prevail over historical accuracy," Lawrence Cohen of the University of California-Berkeley was quoted as saying. "That is a slippery slope."

"History is not meant to make you feel better," said Mandavilli, adding that the inferior status of women and Dalits should not be glossed over because it is uncomfortable. "Hindu groups want to deny the reality of caste discrimination by deleting the very word Dalit from history books. You can't distort facts and whitewash history."

The textbook furore is far from, what with HAF and its allies still on the warpath. But for now at least the state education board has retained descriptions of, among other touchy subjects, India's caste system, the role of women in the country's society, the Aryan migration history and polytheism in ancient Hinduism.

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