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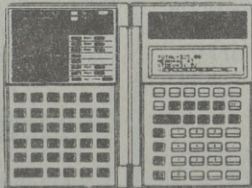
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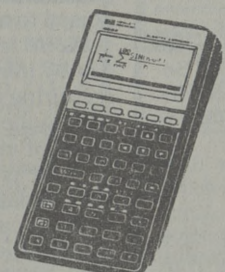
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WORLD & NATION

8

Tuesday, July 3, 1990

Thousands of pilgrims die in tunnel

Event mars observance of annual Moslem ritual

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — About 1,400 Moslem pilgrims suffocated or were trampled to death Monday in a stampede in a pedestrian tunnel leading to the holy city of Mecca, witnesses and diplomats said.

They said the stampede began when some pilgrims stopped in the middle of the air-conditioned tunnel with people outside pushing each other through the entrance to escape the 112-degree heat. They also said the ventilation appeared to have stopped.

One diplomat who refused to be identified put the total death toll at 1,400 and said most of the victims were Malaysian and Indonesian pilgrims.

Other Middle Eastern and Asian diplomats and witnesses gave the same death toll. The Saudi Interior Ministry said only that a number of people died or fainted.

The stampede shattered what had been a peaceful observance of the annual Hajj, or pilgrimage, and was

the worst pilgrimage tragedy in recent years. In previous years, terrorist attacks and riots marred the celebration.

Ambulances and security forces rushed to the exits of the 500-yard-long tunnel that joins Mecca and the tent city of Mina, according to state-run Riyadh radio, which quoted an Interior Ministry spokesman in Mina.

Witnesses said people stampeded, crushing hundreds of people and suffocating hundreds others.

People were smothered "as thousands of the pilgrims thronged through the tunnel of Me'esseh, causing severe congestion within the tunnel as the pressure was beyond its capacity," the radio said. "This led to some deaths and some cases of fainting."

A witness, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the flow of people through the tunnel suddenly stopped. The air-conditioned tunnel can hold up to 1,000 pedestrians, but the crowd inside quickly swelled to 5,000, he said.

"With the lack of oxygen, a good number collapsed unconscious, and some died," the witness said. "There was also a stampede."

"There always should be movement within the tunnel, but the entire crowd suddenly stopped, and no one yet knows why," he said.

The witness said he helped carry victims to the ambulances waiting by the tunnel's exits, but it was impossible to determine how many people were dead or simply unconscious.

The tunnel is part of a massive

\$15 billion development plan for the holy sites to move pilgrims in a more orderly fashion for the Hajj, the world's largest religious gathering. The plan includes other tunnels and overhead bridges.

The tent city was set up in Mina house visiting pilgrims.

There are an estimated 2 million Moslems, including 800,000 visitors from around the world, at Islamic holy sites in the Mecca area for the Hajj. The celebration climaxed Sunday with prayers on Mount Arafat about eight miles from Mecca.

At the time of the tunnel accident the pilgrims were taking part in post-Hajj rituals or preparing to leave.

These rituals of Eid Al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, commemorate the Prophet Abraham's offering of his son in sacrifice to God.

Moslems celebrate the feast by slaughtering sheep to emulate the sacrifice of Abraham.

Strikes, happy shoppers signal merger of German economies

EAST BERLIN (AP) — East Germans entered a new economic world Monday with West German money in their pockets, strikes by thousands of worried workers, and happy shoppers buying bananas, chocolate and fresh meat.

It was the first day of business after the two Germanies plunged into an economic union following the Cold War division and a 40-year experiment by East Germany with a Communist system.

Gerhard Pannier, a worried coal dealer, said, "We're rolling into a dark tunnel without even knowing there'll be an engine to pull us out."

With widespread layoffs expected in East Germany, there was immediate labor unrest.

A spokesman for the powerful IG Metall union claimed during a rally that up to 15,000 workers had briefly put down their tools in warning strikes around East Berlin.

Karl-Heinz Graffenberger, a union leader, said the strikers included 3,000 people at a locomotive factory in the town of Hennigsdorf, where the rally was held. He

said they wanted pay increases, better working conditions and guaranteed jobs.

Kerstin Arendt, 21, who works in a locomotive factory, said she makes 640 marks (about \$390) a month after deductions. "With 600 marks, you don't get very far," she said.

East Berlin coal dealers used their trucks to blockade loading points at four locations to protest the end of state subsidies on brown coal, the nation's most important source of energy.

Economists have predicted up to one third of East Germany's 8,000 businesses may fail when the full force of West German competition depends on their inefficient production methods.

Experts have predicted up to 4 million people in this nation of 16.6 million could end up out of work.

East Germans were able to change some of their worthless East German marks for West German marks at a 1-1 rate as the country swung over to a capitalist system Sunday.

Gorbachev confronts factions

Troubled Soviet leader faces call for resignation

MOSCOW (AP) — Mikhail S. Gorbachev parried a demand Monday that he resign and urged unity among bickering factions of the Communist Party in what he said was a race to keep the country from becoming a second-rate power.

Despite a lack of enthusiasm for his 2-hour, 20-minute speech opening the Communist Party's crucial 28th Congress, the Soviet leader appeared to have papered over differences between reformers and traditionalists with equal doses of confrontation, conciliation and confession.

There was little strong emotion displayed by delegates, despite declarations by the party leader that the congress would decide the Communist Party's fate.

It was unclear whether Gorbachev could continue to hold back the explosive disputes among the 4,657 delegates threatening his leadership

and the unity the party has maintained since the 1920s.

Gorbachev defended his reforms and insisted radical reform is vital because the Soviet Union "is rapidly becoming a second-rate power."

Only nine minutes into the congress, the Soviet party chief and president faced a demand for his resignation. Coal miner Vladimir Bludov from the Far East said the leadership had bungled a program to improve food supplies and implement other reforms.

Another reformer, Yuri Boldyrev of Leningrad, called for the nationalization of the party's property.

Attacks on Gorbachev's leadership are increasingly frequent as reformers and traditionalists find fault with a failing economy, republics bent on secession and rampant crime.

"I think we can return to this proposal," the Soviet leader said evenly

in response to Bludov, and the congress overwhelmingly supported him.

At the end of the day, Politburo member Alexander N. Yakovlev, considered by many to be the brains behind Gorbachev's reforms, won an ovation for a fiery speech calling for delegates to rally around Gorbachev.

"Tomorrow the party will not be alone in this violent political sea," he said, referring to new parties the Communists have permitted. "Criticism will be mounting. This is when both unity and confidence will be especially necessary, and we should learn it today."

When the 10-day congress is over, it will have elected a party leader and Central Committee, and will have approved new party rules and platform.

Goldminer says abductors needed money for war

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — A U.S. goldminer freed by Colombian rebels after 61 days in captivity left for home Monday but vowed to return some day to this country. He said his kidnappers had treated him "like a king."

Scott Heimdal, 27, told reporters at Quito airport that he was kidnapped and held in the Amazon jungle purely for ransom.

"It was simply money — money to finance the war effort against the Colombian government," he said.

Heimdal was kidnapped by the guerrillas April 28 in northeastern Ecuador. He was released Friday after his family in Peoria, Ill., paid \$60,000 they had collected in a community fund-raising drive.

Heimdal said his captors "treated me like a king. They never bothered me."

Smiling at reporters as he arrived at the airport with his parents, Heimdal said the first thing he planned to do in Peoria was to get a haircut.

"I'm looking forward to getting back," he said. "I'm looking forward to seeing everybody."

However, answering questions from reporters, he said, "I'll be back; I'll be back."

United States keeps title of world's largest debtor

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States tightened its grip on the title of world's largest debtor nation in 1989 by ending the year with a net debt of \$663.7 billion, up a sharp 25 percent from the previous year.

The latest figures, based on data collected by the Commerce Department, are certain to heighten the emotional debate over whether the United States is losing control of its financial destiny to foreigners.

The Commerce Department report showed that U.S. holdings of overseas assets rose by \$146.9 billion last year to \$1.412 trillion, a gain of 11.6 percent.

But foreign holdings in the United States climbed at an even faster pace of 15.6 percent, rising by \$279.6 billion to \$2,076 trillion.

The \$663.7 billion imbalance between what Americans own overseas and what foreigners own in the United States is the country's net debtor position. Many private economists believe it will top \$1 trillion within a few years.

As recently as 1983, the United States was still the world's largest creditor nation, a position now held by Japan. The 1983 surplus of \$89 billion fell to \$3.3 billion in 1984 and disappeared in 1985, when the country became a net debtor for the first time in 71 years.

The surplus was eroded by America's huge merchandise trade deficits as Americans transferred billions of dollars into foreign hands to pay for imported cars and television sets.

Those dollars have been reinvested in everything from U.S. Treasury bills to prime real estate in many American cities, raising cries that foreigners are buy-

ing America.

The Commerce Department reported that 54 percent of the increase in foreign holdings in 1989 came from direct investment, defined as at least 10 percent ownership of a company.

Britain retained its position as the country with the largest amount of direct investment in the United States at \$119.14 billion, a 17 percent increase over the 1988 level. Japan was second with \$69.70 billion in direct investment, up 31 percent from 1988. The largest Japanese transaction last year was Sony Corp.'s \$3.4 billion purchase of Columbia Pictures.

While supporters defend the foreign buying surge as proof of America's attractive investment opportunities, critics contend that the development shows that the United States has become overly dependent on foreign capital to finance its huge budget and trade deficits.

"The United States is going ever more in debt," Allen Sinai, chief economist of the Boston Co., said. "That keeps interest rates higher in this country because of the need to attract foreign capital, and it hurts our ability to compete internationally in a number of ways."

The Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis took the unusual position of deleting the debtor position from Monday's report, although it supplied enough detail that it was a simple matter to arrive at the bottom-line figure.

BEA Director Allan Young denied that there had been any pressure from the Bush administration to obscure a politically embarrassing figure.

Bush tries to overhaul NATO policy

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush will urge the NATO allies this week to overhaul their strategy for repelling a Soviet invasion by making the use of nuclear weapons a highly unlikely last resort, U.S. officials said Monday.

Bush also is ready to consider scrapping the 1,470 U.S. nuclear-tipped artillery shells now based mostly in West Germany and reducing or eliminating an arsenal of 1,560 U.S. nuclear bombs deployed in seven NATO countries, the officials told the Associated Press.

The shift in nuclear policy is prompted by a vastly reduced Soviet threat and the crumbling of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. One official said Hungary, once a sturdy Soviet ally, is seeking an affiliation with NATO and said the Bush administration welcomes the move.

The proposed changes in NATO doctrine would not strip the Western alliance of all nuclear weapons. In fact, the Bush administration has made a point in its arms control talks with the Soviets to clear the way for production of a new short-range nuclear weapon, the air-to-surface TASM.

But the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity in a series of interviews, stressed that the likelihood of an attack by the Red Army and other Warsaw Pact forces, or one that NATO could only push back with nuclear weapons, was becoming very remote.

As a result, NATO is reviewing its strategy. Some of the results are likely to appear in the communique that will be issued at the end of the summit on Friday.

Others, officials said, will be implemented in the field with the pace partly determined by what the East does about its forces.