



IN BRIEF

COLOMBIA
Warlords sent to US

CARACAS, Venezuela. The Colombian Government has extradited 13 top paramilitary warlords to the United States, effectively handing over the most brutal commanders of the country's once-fearsome paramilitary movement. Their organisation, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, at one time operated an army of nearly 12,000 heavily armed fighters and was blacklisted as a terrorist group by the US in 2001. President Alvaro Uribe said the commanders had continued to traffic cocaine while in custody and had failed to co-operate with authorities investigating their role in numerous atrocities.

VATICAN
Belief in aliens 'OK'

VATICAN CITY. The Vatican's chief astronomer says there is no conflict between believing in God and in the possibility of intelligent life on other planets. Father Jose Gabriel Funes, a Jesuit priest who is a scientific adviser to the Pope, said in the Vatican newspaper: "How can we exclude that life has developed elsewhere?" Asked if he was referring to beings perhaps even more evolved than humans, he said: "Certainly." He said he saw no conflict between belief in such beings and faith in God. "Just as there is a multiplicity of creatures on Earth, there can be other beings, even intelligent, created by God," he said.

KUWAIT
State funeral for emir

KUWAIT CITY. Thousands of Kuwaitis joined a state funeral yesterday for former ruler Sheikh Saad Abdullah al-Sabah, a long-serving statesman who served as emir for just nine days. The Gulf state began a three-day mourning period and all public offices and schools were closed, while campaigning for Saturday's general election has been suspended following Sheikh Saad's death on Tuesday after a long illness. Sheikh Saad, 78, was laid to rest in a state funeral led by Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah. The Government stressed that the election would not be postponed.

BRITAIN
Off with their wigs

LONDON. British judges have abandoned a 300-year-old tradition of wearing horsehair wigs, to a chorus of mockery from critics who say the new robes have turned them into Star Trek lookalikes. The Lord Chief Justice felt the old-style wig and gown look was out of touch with the 21st century and thought it time to go bare-headed. Despite resistance from some judges and barristers, from October judges hearing civil and family cases will don robes designed by Betty Jackson, a maker of "funky British clothes for aspiring funky British girls". The simple black gowns are decorated with gold, red or lilac bands depending on seniority.

Burma's victims facing new cyclone threat

Suffering grows as aid locked out

By **AUNG HLA TUN**
RANGOON

DESPERATION among Burma's 1.5 million cyclone survivors is mounting as another cyclone threatens the nation. Aid flow remains a trickle and police are barring foreign aid workers from worst-hit areas. As Thailand's Prime Minister left for Rangoon yesterday to press Burma's military junta to admit aid workers who are struggling to get visas after cyclone

Nargis, the United Nations warned that a second cyclone was developing. UN humanitarian relief spokeswoman Amanda Pitt cited information from the Joint Typhoon Warning Centre, which is part of the UN's World Meteorological Centre, that another significant cyclone was likely within 24 hours. Before flying out of Bangkok, Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej said only that he planned to meet Burma's Prime

Minister Thein Sein in Rangoon. Mr Samak has been asked by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, the United States and Britain to act as a go-between with Burma, but an attempt last week to arrange a visit fell through when the junta rebuffed him. The regime has said it will accept foreign aid, but no foreign relief workers. Mr Samak's plane was carrying medical supplies and 50 satellite phones for the relief effort. The emergency response — further complicated by heavy rains — is delivering only a 10th of the supplies needed in the

devastated delta region, where as many as 100,000 people are dead or missing. Lacking food, water and sanitation, survivors face the threat of killer diseases such as cholera as they wait in vain for aid to arrive. "It's just awful. People are in just desperate need, begging as vehicles go past," Gordon Bacon, an emergency co-ordinator for the International Rescue Committee, said from Rangoon. The international community has flown in tonnes of medicine, food and shelter materials, but getting it to low-lying delta area has been complicated by poor equipment, bad weather

KEY POINTS

- Thai PM to deliver a plea for access for aid workers.
- The UN fears another significant cyclone is on the way.
- Junta intransigence branded "a crime against humanity".

and government intransigence. Foreign experts in sanitation, nutrition and medicine have either been prevented from entering the country or turned back by armed police when they try to move out of Rangoon. One veteran of 10 humanitarian disasters accused the

junta of crimes against humanity for hindering relief efforts. Pierre Foulant, from a French disaster rescue agency, said: "I've never seen delays like this, never. It's a crime against humanity . . . It's like they are taking a gun and shooting their own people." After emergency talks in Brussels on Tuesday, European Union development ministers called on Rangoon to offer unfettered access to international humanitarian experts. The ministers stopped short of endorsing a French call to deliver supplies without the junta's permission if necessary. France's junior minister for

human rights said it had the backing of Britain and Germany to call on the UN Security Council for aid to be taken into Burma without the Government's approval. "We have called for the 'responsibility to protect' to be applied in the case of Burma," Rama Yade said, referring to a 2005 UN resolution conceived to assist victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, but not natural disasters. A British official said London did not consider the proposal realistic given Russian and Chinese objections. REUTERS, AP, AFP

Arab envoys offer hope for end to crisis in Lebanon



JASON KOUTSOUKIS
BEIRUT

THE arrival of an Arab League delegation in Lebanon yesterday has provided fresh hopes of a negotiated solution to the latest Lebanese political crisis, which has provoked deadly fighting between the Hezbollah-led opposition and pro-Government forces since last week.

In a sign that a peace deal could be in the works, Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora scheduled a cabinet meeting last night.

As Lebanese soldiers were deployed at hundreds of checkpoints in Beirut and the northern city of Tripoli, with orders to treat any overt armed presence as hostile, tensions eased enough to allow some government offices, shops and commercial centres to reopen. Gunmen loyal to the Iranian-backed Shiite Islamic movement Hezbollah, which took control of large parts of Beirut last week, have largely melted away from the capital. But the situation remains volatile.

Lebanese army tanks could be seen on most main intersections in Beirut, and at regular intervals along the main highway linking Beirut to the north of the country.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah has continued to block almost all traffic in and out of Beirut International Airport, and there were more reports yesterday of sporadic clashes in the outlying areas surrounding Beirut and Tripoli.

The Arab League delegation, led by Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, and Arab League chief Amr Moussa, was scheduled to meet senior Lebanese political leaders including Prime Minister Siniora, parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri and Christian Opposition leader Michel Aoun. During a news conference on Tuesday, Mr Hariri, the son of assassinated former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, vowed that the US-backed Government would "not surrender to Hezbollah's allies, Syria and Iran". He said Lebanon's anti-Syrian majority would refuse to negotiate with Hezbollah "with a pistol pointed at our heads". The recent clashes in Lebanon have resulted in the deaths of at least 81 people, including Melbourne-man Fadi Sheikh, who was visiting his parents in the town of Halba, about 20 kilometres north of Tripoli in the north of the country.

The violence erupted after the Government closed down a telecommunications network controlled by Hezbollah and sacked the head of security at Beirut International Airport over his suspected links to the Shiite movement.

It follows 18 months of stalemate over who should become the country's next president.

The violence in Lebanon has also overshadowed a visit to the Middle East by US President George Bush, who arrived in Jerusalem yesterday as part of celebrations to mark Israel's 60th anniversary.

Before arriving in Jerusalem, Mr Bush signalled his strong support for Mr Siniora, describing him as "tough" and a "good guy".



Hotel director Marianne Dorfer outside Villa Trapp, the original Salzburg home of the von Trapp family.

PICTURE: REUTERS

The hills are alive with sounds of dough-re-mi

By **KARIN STROHECKER**
SALZBURG

THE *Sound of Music*, one of Hollywood's greatest money-spinners, will scale new heights when the original von Trapp family villa near Salzburg opens as a hotel in two months. The 1965 film based on the true story of how aspiring nun Maria sang her way into the hearts of Baron von Trapp and his seven children has provided fans with many must-have items. The Villa Trapp hotel will give visitors a chance to sleep in the family's former bedrooms or get married in their chapel.

The gazebo where Liesl, eldest of the von Trapp daughters in the film, and her boyfriend Rolf meet secretly and perform *Sixteen Going on 17* will also be available as a self-assembly construction set. "The hotel really is a milestone for the commercialisation of *The Sound of Music* for Salzburg," said Leo Bauernberger, of the Salzburg provincial tourism board. "*The Sound of Music* is well and truly a stroke of luck for this city." The film, which starred Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer and was based on a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, has

inspired sing-along shows worldwide, a drinking game and a Maria Barbie doll. The von Trapp family lived in the villa outside Salzburg from 1923 to 1938 before fleeing the Nazi takeover of Austria. Nazi security chief Heinrich Himmler used the villa as a home close to the Austrian Alps until 1945. A missionary order bought it after World War II and has agreed to relinquish it for use as a hotel. Entrepreneurs plan to make no alterations to the building other than essentials such as painting and rewiring.

In Salzburg, visitors from North America, Asia and Britain generate some 700,000 overnight stays every year, according to tourism officials. For 40% of them, the film is the sole reason for their visit. Seeing the film's original locations is for many, like Lana Wright, of New Zealand, a dream come true. "It was almost a feeling like you've come home," said Ms Wright, 53, with watery eyes, stepping off a tour bus. "Finally I have arrived, arrived somewhere where I was supposed to be, somewhere that I was supposed to see."



Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer in the famous gazebo.

REUTERS

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- For 60 years, the Palestinians have had to struggle for their right to exist in their own land.
- For 60 years, the Palestinians have suffered the violent uprooting of their society, dispossession, displacement, exile, occupation, discrimination, degradation and deprivation.
- For 60 years, Palestinian pleas to return home, and for justice and compassion have been ignored.
- For 60 years, international law, human rights conventions and United Nations resolutions have been transgressed to deny the Palestinians their rights.
- For 60 years, Palestinian refugees have yearned to return home.
- For 60 years, Palestinian refugees have waited to hear the word 'SORRY'.
- For 60 years the world has been silent.

PALESTINE
60 YEARS OF DISPOSSESSION

AUSTRALIA HAS YET TO SHOW IT CARES.

- Our Government apologised for the suffering caused to indigenous people of our land.
- Our Government acknowledged the suffering caused by others to the Jewish people in the Holocaust.
- Our Government has yet to acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinians. Their suffering is no less tragic, no less worthy of being championed, and what is more, their suffering is increasing daily.
- Our Government and the Opposition have yet to respond to our request for a bipartisan motion acknowledging that suffering, thus balancing the motion they moved celebrating Israel's independence - the cause of 60 years of Palestinian suffering.

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New South Wales

NORTH WEST METRO – SHADOW OPERATOR

The NSW Government will fund and construct the \$12 billion North West Metro Project in Sydney. There will be 17 stations along the 38 kilometre route between Rouse Hill and the Sydney CBD.

The North West Metro is the largest single transport infrastructure project ever undertaken in Australia. Construction will start in 2010 and the first trains will operate along part of the route between Epping and The Hills Centre by 2015. The full route will be open by 2017.

Recruitment of operational capability for the North West Metro Project is essential now, in the planning and procurement phases, to maintain a central focus on delivering a safe, attractive and efficient end-product for passengers. The primary purpose of the Shadow Operator is to ensure this central focus is maintained, particularly prior to the appointment of the actual operator.

The Shadow Operator will be engaged as a group of individuals (i.e. under separate contracts to Government); an organisation; and/or a consortium with the capability and expertise to assist throughout the Project in these two key roles:

A. Management: Provide executive advice up to the commencement of construction in 2010.

B. Technical: Provide technical support required by management and other working groups.

Full detail of the Call for Expressions of Interest can be downloaded from <http://www.sydlink.com.au>

Expressions of Interest must be lodged by Monday 9 June 2008, 5pm.

NorthWestMetro



Victoria

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Police Integrity Bill 2008

Submissions invited

The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee of the Victorian Parliament reviews legislation introduced in the Parliament and reports on specified terms of reference which are set out in section 17 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*. Under these terms of reference, the Committee invites submissions from individuals and organisations concerning this Bill.

This inquiry concerns whether the provisions in the Bill - unduly trespass on rights or freedom; or are incompatible with the human rights set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

The Committee's recent report on the Bill published in Alert Digest No. 4 of 2008 may be of assistance in formulating submissions to the Committee. This can be found at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/sarc (see 'Alert Digests Reports on Bills'). The Bill, Charter Statement of Compatibility, explanatory memorandum and second reading speech can be found at www.parliament.vic.gov.au (see 'Legislation & Bills').

Further information may be obtained from the Senior Legal Adviser, Mr Andrew Homer on (03) 8682 2891 or andrew.homer@parliament.vic.gov.au

Submissions must be received by **Wednesday 28 May 2008** and may be forwarded by email to the Senior Legal Adviser as above or delivered to -

Mr Carlo Carli MP
Chairperson,
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Parliament House
Melbourne Vic 3000

mitch 20075

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