

BRIEFLY

SAARC takes important decisions: External Affairs Minister Madhavi Solanki Friday said the just concluded SAARC Foreign Ministers meetings in Maldives had taken several important decisions on Economic Development and on ways to curb terrorism, PTI says from New Delhi.

Expressing satisfaction at the outcome of the meeting Solanki who returned from Male yesterday told reporters that the ministers had agreed on mutual cooperation and help for the development of the economies of the SAARC nations.

Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey said two important decisions taken at the meeting related to the establishment of a technical committee on tourism and agreement to extend SAARC cooperation to hardcore economic areas of trade and manufactures.

6 die, dozens missing in Soviet rain: At least six people died dozens were missing and scores were injured as torrential rains and hailstorms swept over the southern Soviet republic of Moldavia overnight Thursday, Tass news agency reported Friday, AFP from Moscow says.

Water level rose up to 12 metres (40 feet) in northern and central regions affected by floods of the destiny and Prut rivers and their affluents, a crisis committee set up in the Moldavian capital of Kishinev said.

Dozens of villages were flooded, several bridges and thousands of houses damaged or destroyed, roads railway tracks and electrical lines cut, Tass said.

Relief teams arrived in the affected area overnight and first aid was provided during the day.

Quake death toll now 22 in Indonesia: The death toll from Thursday's powerful earthquake on the eastern Indonesian island of Alor has risen to 22 and could grow further, officials said Saturday, reports AFP from Jakarta.

Smaller tremors meanwhile continued to haunt Alor, a chain in the lesser Sunda islands, throughout Friday, the officials said.

The holiday island of Bali, to the west of Alor, was also shaken by a small quake of magnitude 4.6 on the open-ended Richter scale Friday but there were no reported casualties, officials said.

Some 165 people were injured and a total of 708 government buildings, churches and houses were demolished after the first tremor on Thursday night which reached 6.2 on the Richter scale, said Sabinius Kantus, Assistant Governor of Nusa Tenggara Timur province.

Slovenia releases POWs: Hundreds of war prisoners, captured by Slovenia during its clashes with the Yugoslav army, began heading home Friday relieved but fearing for the future, AP reports from Ljubljana.

Serb, Croat, ethnic Albanian and Macedonian soldiers left Ljubljana wondering whether some day they would be fighting each other instead of facing a common foe.

Ethnic rivalries in the nation of 23 million run deep. Many fear the recent violence in Slovenia could seem trifling compared to the bloodshed likely to ensue if major ethnic conflict broke out.

Slovenia on Friday agreed to release 2,316 prisoners it captured during the fighting that followed federal army intervention in the republic. The army mobilized after the republic declared independence June 25.

The Yugoslav armed forces are estimated to number 180,000, of whom 70,000 are professionals. The rest are conscripts of all nationalities doing their obligatory one-year service. The officer corps is dominated by Serbs.

NATO to strengthen ties with Romania: NATO Secretary General Manfred Wornat said in Bucharest Friday that NATO hopes to strengthen its diplomatic ties with Romania and is willing to help the country, says Xinhua from Bucharest.

Wornat, the first NATO Secretary General to visit Romania, said in a press conference that the security of NATO countries is closely connected with that of Romania and other European countries.

He added that officials and experts from NATO and Romania will hold talks on security and other issues of mutual interest.

The two sides will also increase military contacts.

Floods destroy dam in China: A dam was destroyed near Shanghai on Friday to stop flooding which has damaged thousands of homes and claimed 330,000 hectares (815,000 acres) of farmland, China's official Xinhua news agency reported, AFP says from Hong Kong.

The Hongji Dam, built 33 years ago, was blown up to allow water from overflowing lake Taihu to drain into the Huangpu River, Shanghai's principal waterway, Xinhua said, quoting a local government official.

The diversion was expected to inundate an extra 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) of farmland, Xinhua said.

Ukraine presidential polls Dec 1: The Ukraine parliament of Friday set presidential elections for December 1, Tass news agency announced, AFP from Moscow says.

According to provisions adopted by parliament, the President of the southern Soviet Republic will have executive powers, be elected by universal suffrage and permitted to run once only for re-election.

No post of Vice President will be created.

The Interfax news agency said incumbent Leonid Kravchuk would be a likely winner in the presidential race. Kravchuk is a moderate nationalist and ally of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Peace rally in Yslavia: The speaker of the Croatian and Slovene parliaments crossed the Austrian border on Friday to take part in a demonstration for peace in Yugoslavia called by the government in the south-eastern Austrian region of Styria, which borders Slovenia, organisers said, AFP reports from Vienna.

Speakers Francez Bucar and Zarko Domljan, respectively of the Slovene and Croatian parliaments, joined some 2,000 other people on the March, which was held in the main Styrian town of Graz.

Marchers called for "peace and freedom in Slovenia and Croatia."

One killed in Pak Kashmir, Rathore held in Islamabad

MUZAFFARABAD (Pakistan-controlled Kashmir), July 6: One person was killed and three wounded today in an election-related shooting incident, witnesses said, a day after the arrest of state Prime Minister Mumtaz Rathore, reports AFP.

The violence came during repolling in four districts where voting irregularities in June 29 elections to the 40-seat state legislature were reported.

One person died and three were wounded in the shooting before polling began in Hajira

locality, the witnesses said. Fighting pitted supporters of Sardar Abdul Qayyum, leader of the Islamabad-backed All Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC), against those of Sultan Mahmood Chaudhury, leader of the democratic alliance, the witnesses said.

In another incident, official sources said voting was "briefly" interrupted at a polling centre in Rawalakot after police arrested a man with a gun.

Rathore, local leader of former Prime Minister Benazir

Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), rejected results of the June 29 election, in which the AJKMC won a two-thirds majority and the PPP only two seats.

Army troops Friday seized Rathore, 51, and placed him in detention in Sihal, near Islamabad, official sources here said.

A government spokesman in the federal capital said Rathore's government had been sacked because it threatened the interests of the Pakistani government and may have damaged the Muslim in-

dependence campaign in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Hundreds of Pakistani border guards were patrolling the streets of Muzaffarabad today and security was tightened throughout the territory.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistani Kashmir, Sardar Mohammad Ashraf, was sworn in overnight Friday as interim Prime Minister of the territory.

The oath of office was administered in Islamabad, the official associated press of Pakistan said.

Iranian-Syrian row widens

TEHERAN, July 6: Iran and Syria, strategic allies since the Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979, are increasingly opposing each other on regional questions, reports AFP.

Disagreements centring on the Lebanese and Palestinian situations as well as regional security issues threaten the close ties that were forged during the Iran-Iraq war when Syria was the only Arab state to support Iran.

Teheran, which opposed the involvement of Syria and Egypt in a US led anti-Iraqi coalition, refuses to accept the post-war Damascus declaration, which includes the two countries in a planned regional security force.

The declaration called for a "six-plus-two" regional security contingent comprising the six Gulf Cooperation Council States — Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates plus Syria and Egypt.

Thai junta leader won't quit armed forces

BANGKOK, July 6: Thailand's junta leader has said he has no intention of quitting the Armed Forces over a public feud between his wife and his mistress, reports Reuter.

"This is a personal affair," General Sunthorn Kongsompong told Thai Television on Friday while in Malaysia.

It was his first public comment on the lawsuit his wife has filed against his 39-year-old lover, Ampapan, charging she was using the Kongsompong name without his permission.

Sunthorn, who seized power in a coup on February 23, has been out of Thailand much of the time since the scandal surfaced last month.

He said he had no intention of resigning as Armed Forces' Supreme Commander, saying he still had important work to



do. He reaches military retirement age of 60 at the end of September.

A civil court rejected the lawsuit brought by Sunthorn's wife of 32 years, Khunying Orachorn, saying she was one of several people who used the Kongsompong name and was therefore 'not directly damaged.

Kidnapped Swedes freed in Srinagar

NEW DELHI, July 6: Two Swedish engineers who were kidnapped three months ago by Kashmiri militants were released Saturday, news reports said, reports AP.

Press Trust of India news agency said Johan Jansson and Jan-Ole Loman were set free at Bijbehara, 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir.

Jansson and Loman were kidnapped March 31 by the Muslim Martyrs Force, one of the several guerrilla groups fighting for secession of the Muslim-dominated Kashmir region from the predominantly Hindu India.

The two engineers were working on a hydroelectric project near Srinagar, 650 kilometres (400 miles) north of New Delhi.

Press Trust said details of their release were not immediately available.

10,000 Slovenian troops demobilised

Yugoslavian army under political control: Mesic

BONN, July 6: Yugoslavia's army "is under political control" and will remain in barracks even if Slovenia fails to meet a Sunday deadline to cede control of border posts, Federal President Stipe Mesic said in an interview published here Friday, reports AFP.

"We will solve our conflicts by political means, there will be no more blood-letting," he told the Bild Zeitung newspaper.

The Belgrade government has set a Sunday deadline for Slovenia's forces to relinquish the border posts.

Asked if the army would be used if the breakaway republic failed to meet the deadline, Mesic — who is also commander in chief of the armed

forces — said: "No, the army is remaining in barracks, it is under the political control of the presidency."

Asked what solution he saw to the conflict, Mesic said that the Slovenians could retain control of their frontiers, but that customs duties should be paid to the federation.

"That way Slovenia could keep its sovereignty," he added.

Another report from Ljubljana (Yugoslavia): Nearly 10,000 members of the Slovenian territorial defence forces have been demobilised, Slovenian Information Minister Jelko Kacin said here Friday. Kacin told a press confer-

ence that nearly 10,000 members of the 38,000-strong force had been sent home during the past 48 hours.

The Yugoslav Federal Presidency had demanded Thursday that the entire Slovenian force return to barracks by midnight (2200 GMT Thursday).

The Slovenian authorities rejected the ultimatum outright.

Kacin said that "there are fewer roadblocks (in Slovenia), traffic is getting back to normal and vehicles placed across the roads have been replaced at strategic points with anti-tank barriers."

SAARC summit in November

MALE, July 5: The seven-nation south Asian grouping Thursday announced in this Indian Ocean atoll nation that their next heads of state summit will be held in November in the Sri Lankan Capital Colombo, reports AFP.

Maldives Foreign Minister Fathullah Jameel told reporters here at the end of a ministerial meeting that the sixth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be from November 7 to 9 in Sri Lanka.

Jameel said the two-day ministerial meeting which closed Wednesday decided to set up two high powered technical committees to promote tourism and economic cooperation in the region, home to a fifth of the world's population.

Highest national honour conferred on Rajiv

NEW DELHI, July 6: Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who assassinated seven weeks ago was bestowed the nation's highest civilian honour's on Saturday, reports AP.

Gandhi's Italian-born widow Sonia received the Bharat Ratna award from President Ramaswamy Venkataraman at a sombre ceremony in the presidential palace.

The Bharat Ratna, or Jewel of India, is given for public service of the highest order and for the advancement of art, literature and science.

Gandhi was killed May 21 at an election rally in south India by a suicide bomber who detonated explosives strapped to her waist. Gandhi, the bomber and 16 more people were killed in the blast.

Investigations have centered on a powerful Sri Lankan Tamil guerrilla group. A special investigating team has arrested 10 people in connec-

tion with the murder, including five Indian Tamils and five Lankan Tamils.

Three of the Sri Lankans are known to be members of the rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which is fighting to set up a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka's north and the east.

A possible motive for Gandhi's assassination is his role in mediating peace in the Sri Lankan civil war in 1987 when he was prime minister.

Gandhi ordered Indian troops to enforce a ceasefire between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan troops under an India-brokered peace accord. But the Tigers reneged on the peace plan and began fighting Indian soldiers.

After a 2 1/2 year messy involvement, the troops were recalled in March 1990 by the government of VP Singh, who replaced Gandhi as Prime Minister.

Off the Record

How Bush is protected

BEL TSVILLE: President Bush, the nation's most protected citizen, on Friday learned how Secret Service agents make sure he stays safe, reports AP.

During Bush's visit to the Secret Service training center in rural Maryland, agents demonstrated how they would save the president in the water, speed him away from a motorcade explosion, and intercept weapons from entering a hotel where he was speaking.

Bush also rode in a souped-up sedan with an agent demonstrating speed driving and 180-degree spins. And the president fired a Secret Service rifle, aides said.

"He seemed like he was having a pretty good time and he was interested in everything," spokesman John Herrick told reporters.

Reporters and photographers watched Bush's helicopter land at the James J Rowley Training Centre, but were not allowed to accompany the president on his tour of the training facility.

Secret Service spokesman Robert Snow, citing security reasons, instead escorted reporters to the firing range where they were briefed on the Secret Service weapons and were taught to shoot one of them, an Israeli-made Uzi submachine gun.

The Secret Service prefers the Uzi because of its triple safety system and because it is simple and accurate, reports were told.

Although the president was surrounded by officers of the federal agency on the training centre's grounds of several hundred acres (hectares), his own White House security detail remained with him.

The Secret Service was created in 1865 as a division of the Treasury Department, assigned to combat counterfeiting of money.

The presidential protective mission was added to the Secret Service mandate following the assassination of President William McKinley in Buffalo, NY, in 1901.

In addition to protecting the president, vice president and their immediate families, the Secret Service guards former presidents and their wives, visiting foreign dignitaries, and major presidential and vice presidential candidates and their spouses.

Bras, shoes beckon Imelda Marcos

MANILA, July 6: Five years ago Imelda Marcos bade farewell to her 300 brassieres and 1,000 pairs of shoes and fled with her husband in the face of a popular revolt to a life in American exile, reports AFP.

Now she is preparing to return to the Philippines, an act of revenge against destiny and the country's other celebrated widow, President Corazon Aquino.

From New York this past week, the wife of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos said that she was prepared to go back to Manila in October with the remains of her spouse, who ruled the Philippines for 20 years.

To be buried in his native land was Marcos's last wish before his death two years ago in Hawaii.

Aquino, the leading lady of the "people power" revolution of February 1986, has long opposed the return of Marcos, either dead or alive, and the former first lady, saying it would threaten national security in a country dogged by chronic instability.

'Remember me with smiles'

LOS ANGELES: Michael Landon was remembered for his integrity and humor Friday as family, celebrity friends and co-stars from "Little House on the Prairie" attended a private funeral service, reports AP.

Former President Reagan and his wife Nancy were among about 500 mourners at a noon ceremony at Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary.

"I know that dad wants us to think of him and be filled with love and happiness and laughter," said Landon's daughter, Leslie Landon Matthews.

She read a poem her father wrote for an episode of "Little House."

"Remember me with smiles and laughter, for that is how I will remember you all," she read. "If you can only remember me with tears, then don't remember me at all."

The 54-year-old actor, familiar to a generation of television viewers as Little Joe on the long-running "Bonanza", died Monday of liver and pancreatic cancer at his Malibu ranch. His body was cremated a day later.

His ashes will be interred at the cemetery, which also houses the remains of Lorne Greene, who played Ben Cartwright on "Bonanza".

Thief looks like Major

LONDON: A handbag thief being sought by police in Malvern, central England, bears an uncanny resemblance to Prime Minister John Major, police admitted Friday, reports AFP.

"I think it's all to do with the glasses and the hairstyle that it ended up looking like Mr Major," police artist John Hutchins, who drew the picture for a "wanted" poster, said.

The police notice calls on the public to "tell us if you spot the man we've drawn".

But taking note of Mr Major's excellent alibi — he was speaking in the House of Commons at the time of the robbery — it adds: "We are not looking for the Prime Minister."



DURBAN (South Africa): Nelson Mandela (C), who was a sole nominee for the post ANC President, is congratulated by his wife Winnie (L) and outgoing ANC President Oliver Tambo (R) after being elected to succeed Tambo at the ANC conference July 5. Tambo was elected Chairman.

Once sex-symbols now find peace in Quran

CAIRO, July 6: One day she was a well-known actress, living in the fast lane. The next she was a pious Muslim, shunning fame and fortune, reports Reuter.

Nessrine, in her late 30s, is among millions of Egyptians who are rediscovering Islam and adhering more strictly to its teachings.

They include a string of actresses, singers and belly dancers who over the past six years have suddenly donned Islamic dress to spend their time praying and reading the Quran.

"God be praised, my day used to go by without happiness, without feeling peaceful," said Nessrine, wearing a white nun-like cowl flowing down to her waist. "Now I

have not got enough time because there are so many spiritual things to catch up with... I have found my peace," she told Reuter.

Nessrine says her decision a few months ago to wear the Islamic dress was not a whim. Sociologists agreed. "The wearing of the hajib (Islamic dress) is part of a wide and general movement which is the return to religion, to Islam," said Dr Ezzat Hegazi from Cairo's National Centre for Sociological and Criminological Research.

"This movement is not confined to Egypt. There are similar phenomena in different parts of the Islamic world," he said.

Islamic custom stipulates that a woman cover her body in public, although hands, face and feet can be exposed. Some former actresses have gone beyond that, shrouding themselves from head to toe.

downtown Cairo and serves customers personally. "Actresses, though public figures, are no different from ordinary people who decide to wear the hajib," said Hegazi. "At first it seems strange... an actress ends her career, but ordinary people carry on with their regular work."

She said her husband Mohsen Mohieddin, 31, who played a prominent role in the 1970s, put on Islamic dress almost six years ago, she has abandoned society and now covers her face with a veil when she leaves her home.

Former actor Mohammed Al-Arabi and his actress wife Hanna Tharwat — who also wears face veil — left the film industry at the peak of their careers about five years ago. Arabi now owns an oriental sweets shop in

Nessrine said she decided to stop acting when her mother saw her father in a dream. He was angry with his daughter. Her mother concluded it must be because Nessrine did not pray regularly — Islam stipulates that a Muslim must pray five times a day at specific times. Nessrine tried to pray, and