

BRIEFLY

Egypt opens border with Libya: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Wednesday ordered immediate opening of the country's borders with Libya and the cabinet was busy working on details for carrying out the order, the Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported. Xinhua from Cairo says.

During the one-day visit, Mubarak and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi discussed their countries' bilateral relations in addition to the Middle peace process.

Libyan citizens will be allowed free passage but incoming motor vehicles will have to be registered at the border checkpoints, MENA said, quoting Information Minister Safwat el-Sherif.

Cabinet members were also discussing long-term cooperation with Libya in security, transport, public health and agriculture, the official added.

2 Lakh Burmese evacuated: The country's worst floods in 50 years have inundated more than 44,000 houses in southwestern Burma and forced the evacuation of more than 210,000 people, a state-owned newspaper reported Wednesday, reports AP from Rangoon.

The Working People's Daily said one person was feared drowned in the flooding in the Irrawaddy delta region.

Rivers swollen by heavy July rains burst their banks in the fertile delta and flooded more than 200,000 acres (80,000 hectares) of rice fields, the newspaper said.

The flooding affected 1,386 villages in seven townships, the brief report said, inundating schools, hospitals and rice warehouses.

Rail and road traffic was interrupted and schools and government offices in the region had suspended activities, it said.

US builds wall along Mexico: The US army is building a steel wall along the Mexican border and hopes to complete the work "in no time," according to a defence department letter released on Tuesday, reports Reuter from Washington.

Military engineers are welding steel planking to the border fence to deny access to drug traffickers, who in the past would simply drive their trucks through the wire fencing, according to a congressional spokesman.

Iraq experimented with anthrax: Iraq has admitted it experimented with anthrax — one of the most deadly known diseases — as part of a biological weapons research programme, the UN's chief germ warfare inspector said Tuesday, AP reports from Baghdad.

David Kelly, leader of a 28-member biological warfare inspection team, said there was no evidence that Saddam Hussein's military had produced biological weapons but added that the level of research seen so far was "not inconsistent with that capability."

In a formal declaration to Kelly's group when it arrived in Baghdad Friday, Iraqi authorities acknowledged that research had been conducted on biological weapons. But they declared Iraq did not have such weapons and had not produced any.

Kelly disclosed for the first time Tuesday that Iraq also acknowledged that anthrax and Clostridium botulin, which produces deadly neurotoxins, had been used in the research.

Anthrax spores enter the body through inhalation and multiply, producing poisons that cause the veins in the lungs to hemorrhage. The spores can survive being launched in an artillery shell, rocket or bomb.

Rockefeller won't seek presidency: US Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia has decided not to run for the Democratic Presidential nomination next year, two television networks said on Tuesday, Reuter from Washington reports.

CBS and NBC said they had learned of Rockefeller's decision but gave no other details.

Rockefeller's press aide would not confirm or deny the reports saying Rockefeller would make the announcement on his decision at a press conference in West Virginia at noon on Wednesday.

Menem loosens protectionism: Vice President Dan Quayle signed agreements with Argentina for satellite technology, tourism and mining development that signalled President Carlos Menem's loosening of longstanding protectionist policies, reports AP from Buenos Aires.

Quayle sought to give Menem, whose popularity is sagging in the polls, a political boost by praising his programme of budget austerity, economic openness and labor reform.

"On behalf of President George Bush, let me congratulate you on the progress you have made for the people of Argentina," Quayle said. "We have great confidence in you personally and... for the bright future of the people of Argentina."

In private talks, Menem criticized the United States for selling hundreds of thousands of tons of subsidized wheat to Brazil and other potential customers of Argentine farmers, Quayle said.

Quayle said the subsidy programme was not "aimed at the people of Argentina nor the hard working farmers who produce these commodities," but was intended to pressure the European Community to reduce its farm subsidies.

Ceasefire deadline goes in Croatia: War-torn areas of the Croatian republic were reported quiet early Wednesday as a new, unconditional ceasefire proclaimed by Yugoslavia's federal presidency took effect, reports AP from Zagreb.

Croatian security sources in Osijek, the regional centre of Croatia's Slavonia region, reported overnight gunfire in the towns of Vukovar and Beli Manastir. But they said they had no reports of fighting as the ceasefire deadline passed.

Late Tuesday night, as the ceasefire was being proclaimed, Serb militiamen unleashed a mortar attack that for the first time damaged residential areas of Osijek.

Macedonia calls polls on freedom: Macedonia has become the latest Yugoslav republic to announce a referendum on independence and the poll has been set for September 8, the daily newspaper Borba said Wednesday reports AP from Belgrade.

The paper said the decision to hold the referendum was reached after two days of stormy debate in the southern republic's parliament.

ML provision dropped from Thai draft constitution

BANGKOK, Aug 7: Public opposition has prompted a constitution drafting panel to drop a provision that would let the military keep dictatorial powers until after the next election, reports AP.

Adul Vichiencharoen, spokesman for the Constitution Drafting Committee, said Tuesday that panel members had decided to drop the provision, Article 27, because of public pressure.

He said the drafters initially felt the provision should be retained to give the military the authority to deal with threats to national security and public order. But he said that after debating the issue Monday, they now feel the military has the power to maintain order without Article 27.

Khien Theeravit, a professor of political science at Chulalongkorn University, said of the committee members "I think this demonstrates that

they are willing to listen to criticism as well as on some other points, too, and willing to accommodate public criticism."

The military seized power Feb. 23 in a bloodless coup that toppled the elected government of Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan. The ruling junta, calling itself the National Peace-Keeping Council, abolished the constitution.

The generals appointed an interim government of mainly civilian technocrats, led by Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, and said it would hold elections by early next year. They also announced an interim constitution that, through Article 27, gave them dictatorial powers, and named a committee to draw up a permanent constitution.

Parliament becoming irrelevant: Benazir

'War between army, govt to continue even after Beg's exit'

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 7: Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto marked the first anniversary of her ousting as Prime Minister on Tuesday saying she now expected to be bundled out of Parliament too, reports Reuter.

"I do not expect to be in Parliament. They know that none of them can speak as well as I can. So they want me out of Parliament. So they want to be embarrassed," she said.

If convicted on any of eight charges of abusing her powers during 20 months as premier, Bhutto could be disqualified from holding any public position for seven years.

But Bhutto said the way Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif rammed a constitutional amendment through the National Assembly last month without debate showed that Parliament was becoming irrelevant.

Speaking in an interview, she said her Pakistan People's

Party (PPP) remained the only Muslim, humane, liberal alternative in Pakistan.

Another report from Karachi adds: The former Prime Minister and the co-chair-person of the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) has expressed the view that the "war" between the Army and the government would continue even after the change of the chief of Army staff, Gen Mirza Aslam Beg, on August 16.

Ms Bhutto's statement was a direct reference to the denial by a foreign office spokesman of the statements by Gen Beg about the appearance of war shadows in the region and the possibility of an attack by India.

A controversy has been generated on the issue, inviting criticism from Ms Bhutto and other leaders like Nawabzada Nasrullah of the Pakistan Democratic Party and Mr Malik Qasim, chief of a Muslim League faction.

Ms Bhutto, who is 40 Islamabad these days, is busy organising a campaign against the government of Mr Nawaz Sharif on more than one count.

She described the contradiction Gen Beg's statement by the foreign office spokesman as a "public slap." Talking to a select group of newsmen, specially invited for an informal talk, Ms Bhutto expressed the opinion that Gen Beg has a right to give statements on national security when Pakistan is facing a threat by India. The government should not have contradicted the statement of the chief of Army staff, she said.

Gen. Beg, in his farewell address to troops in Stalkot and elsewhere last week said that shadows of war had started appearing over the region following the aggravated situation in Kashmir and India might embark on some adventure against Pakistan. The

spokesman of the foreign office, at his briefing, contradicted the statement saying there was no immediate threat of an Indian attack on Pakistan.

Gen Beg, in his later statements, avoided any direct reference to the Indian threat. If he made any such remark it was not included in the press release issued by the inter-services public relations.

The general, however, did say in his addresses at Bahawalpur, Okara and Multan that certain countries who have vested interests in the region consider Pakistan as the main stumbling block in the way of their objectives. "We are alive to the motives of these countries and will frustrate their designs," he said.

His only implied reference to India was in his warning that the Pakistan Army was not the Army of 1965 or 1971, the years when Pakistan and India fought wars.

Sharif to fall in 2 months: Zardari

KARACHI, Aug 7, Asif Ali Zardari, jailed husband of the sacked Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Tuesday predicted the fall of the government Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif within two months in a brief speech before a special anti-terrorist court here, reports AP.

Zardari, 39, jailed since October 10 on alleged charges of extortion and financial scandals during his wife's 20-month rule before she was sacked by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan for alleged massive corruption and incompetence, did not elaborate.

Bhutto has called a public meeting in Lahore on the country's independence day August 14 to demonstrate her opposition alliance's strength.



ISTANBUL, Turkey: Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal (L) smiles to his Turkish counterpart Safa Gharu (R) during talks prior to the 20th ministerial meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Istanbul Aug 6 as Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati (centre right) looks on. —AFP/UNB photo

Sihanouk says he holds limited powers as Cambodia President

BEIJING, Aug 7: Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk said in remarks distributed Wednesday that he would exercise "limited power as chief of state" as president of a council set up to end Cambodia's civil war, reports AP.

Sihanouk also said he plans to run for president and that elections might be held as early as next year, indicating his optimism that the long civil war could end before then.

He made the remarks in a message from the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, where he has been living since late last month. It was distributed by the Cambodian Embassy in Beijing.

The embassy represents the Cambodian resistance government in exile, not the govern-

ment installed in Cambodia's capital of Phnom Penh by Vietnam in 1978. Three resistance factions are fighting the Phnom Penh government, led by Hun Sen.

It was not clear if Hun Sen would accept giving Sihanouk even a ceremonial role as chief of state at this early stage in the peace process.

Sihanouk, 68, headed the resistance until July, when he gave up his factional posts to become president of the Supreme National Council. The council is a reconciliation body that includes delegates from the resistance groups and the Hun Sen government.

In his message, Sihanouk said being council president meant "I have and will have to exercise very limited power as chief of state."

He compared his power to

that of French presidents during the Third and Fourth French Republics, from 1870 to 1958, when prime ministers held most authority.



Hun Sen has balked at a UN peace plan that would dismantle his government and army

and install UN administrators while free elections are held. During this transition period, the UN plan would lodge Cambodian sovereignty with the Supreme National Council.

The council became operational last month when Hun Sen agreed to Sihanouk's leadership, but its authority remains unclear.

The various factions have yet to agree on how and when to disarm their armies, how to draw up a new constitution and how to make the transition to an elected government. They are to meet Aug. 26 in Bangkok to resume negotiations.

Sihanouk said he would be a candidate in presidential elections, which he said might be held next year or in 1993.

UN team to monitor truce in Cambodia

BANGKOK, Aug 7: The United Nations will send a team to Cambodia to determine how to monitor agreements for a truce and a halt to receiving foreign arms supplies, the Khmer Rouge guerrilla radio said Tuesday, reports AP.

The team sent by UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar will visit Cambodia Aug 17 to Sept 3, said the broadcast, monitored in Bangkok.

Khmer Rouge leader Kieu Samphan was informed of the decision in a telegram received Sunday from Rafeeuddin Ahmed, the UN chief's special envoy on the Cambodian issue, it said.

The broadcast said the Khmer Rouge hoped the first UN monitoring team would be sent to Cambodia when the survey mission finished its work, and would be the start of a UN transitional authority in Cambodia.

UN monitoring would help end the fighting and speed up efforts for a political settlement of the war, it said.

"Without UN supervision, the war in Cambodia will never end," because Vietnamese troops are still fighting there despite Hanoi's claim to have withdrawn, the broadcast said. Hanoi has denied this.

The Khmer Rouge dominates a guerrilla coalition that also includes the forces of Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front. They oppose the gov-

ernment Vietnam installed in Phnom Penh after invading in late 1978.

The four factions signed an agreement on June 24 for a truce and a halt to receiving arms supplies from foreign countries. Phnom Penh receives arms from the Soviet Union and the guerrillas from China, Singapore and other sources.

But the Cambodians have differed on the size of a UN monitoring force and the scope of its mandate.

7 killed as security forces sweep thru a lawless tribal area in Peshawar

PESHAWAR, Aug 7: Three soldiers and at least four bandits were killed as security forces swept through a lawless tribal area on Pakistan's northwest frontier flushing out criminals and bulldozing their homes, officials said today, reports Reuter.

The deaths occurred on Tuesday and today as heavily-armed bandits battled with the government forces in the hills of Mohmand agency, they said.

Mujahideen enter Kashmir, take part in action: Delhi

SRINAGAR, Aug 7: Indian security force are searching for Afghan Mujahideen they believe have entered Indian-ruled Kashmir to help Muslim militants there, senior officials said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The officials, who asked not to be identified, said they had reliable reports that Afghan Mujahideen, veterans of the decade-old war against the Moscow-backed government in Kabul, had taken part in recent militant operations.

Spokesmen for leading Kashmiri militant groups denied Afghan involvement in the insurgency which police say has resulted in some 3,600 deaths since it erupted in January, 1990.

But witnesses in Srinagar, summer capital of Indian-ruled Kashmir, and other major towns of the Kashmir valley said security forces were stopping and questioning anyone resembling an Afghan.

Life in Kashmir valley towns came to a virtual standstill today in response to a general strike called by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) to mark the first anniversary of the arrest of its military commander, Yaseen Malik, 26, was caught along with other senior JKLF men in a raid on a house on the outskirts of Srinagar. He has been detained without trial under anti-terrorist laws ever since.

All shops were closed and only security force vehicles were seen on the roads of Srinagar.

The JKLF is the leading militant group fighting for a re-united, independent and secular Kashmir. Other fundamentalist groups are fighting for a merger with Pakistan, which rules one-third of the region.

India accuses Islamabad of arming, training and guiding the Kashmiri rebels. Pakistan denies the charge, saying it gives only moral and diplomatic support.

The JKLF has been complaining for months that Pakistan is helping only the fundamentalists, especially the Hezb-Ul-Mujahideen, the leading fundamentalist group.

Bitterness between the two groups erupted into gunfights on the streets of Srinagar in April and spokesmen said there were more clashes and some kidnappings last week.

Malik's successor as JKLF Commander, Javed Ahmed Mir, made a rare public appearance at Friday prayers in Srinagar's main mosque to denounce the Hezb-Ul-Mujahideen, which in turn issued statements blaming the JKLF for the friction.

However the two groups issued a joint statement on Monday night promising to resolve differences through a special committee, whose members were not identified.

The statement said the committee was authorised to investigate complaints and suggest punishments for those it deemed in the wrong.

Floods render 2 lakh homeless in Burma

MAE SOT (Thailand), Aug 7: Burma's biggest floods for 50 years have submerged seven towns and left more than 200,000 people homeless in the southwestern Irrawaddy Division, Burmese State Television said today, reports Reuter.

Turkey to occupy 5 km deep 'buffer zone' in Iraq

ANKARA (Turkey), Aug 7: Turkey will occupy a 5-kilometer (3-mile) deep "buffer zone" in northern Iraq to prevent Turkish Kurdish guerrillas from infiltrating into Turkey, a government official said Wednesday, reports AP.

The move marks the most dramatic step Turkey has taken in seven years of fighting its Kurdish separatists.

It could put Turkey into conflict with Iraq and raise tensions with the US-led allied force poised on Turkey's border with Iraq to defend Iraq's Kurds.

"We are declaring a 5-kilometer region along the border a buffer zone," Foreign Minister Mesut Yilmaz said in an interview with the Turkish daily Hurriyet.

"Everyone who steps into that area (without permission) will be fired upon."

A feminist's demand

WATERLOO (Canada), Aug 7: Women should be able to take off their shirts in public just as men do in the summer heat, without having to face indecent exposure charges or harassment, Canadian feminist Barbara Saunders said Tuesday, reports AP.

A member of the Canada's Women's Legal Committee, Saunders has thrown her support behind 19-year-old student Gwen Jacob, now embroiled in a legal battle with Canadian justice officials for having walked bare-chested down a street in Guelph.

The student, who appeared in court last week, said she wanted to protest a Canadian law which says that women who bare their chests publicly commit an illegal, indecent act, while men have the legal right to take off their tops outdoors.

Indonesian convicts get conjugal rights

JAKARTA: Indonesia plans to allow prisoners to have sexual intercourse with their spouses on regular basis in the hope of cutting the number of escape attempts, the official Antara news agency said Tuesday, reports AP.

The Minister of Justice issued a directive to launch a pilot project called the "family visit programme" in which convicts would be allowed conjugal rights, Antara said quoting ministry officials.

The programme would try to discourage convicts from escaping, since many who tried in the past were prompted in part because they missed their families, Correctional Institute Director General Baharuddin Lopa said.

Under the programme, a convict who had served a specified term would be allowed to visit his family, accompanied by prison guards, for up to two days, he said.

The projects would be tried first at prisons in the Central Java town of Semarang and Ujungpandang in South Sulawesi, according to Antara.

A miracle indeed

BEIJING: A newborn baby survived after her father left her to die under a pile of rocks for over 30 hours, an official newspaper reported from western China, reports AP.

Xia Mingliang, a 37-year-old peasant in Neijiang, Sichuan province, buried his nine-day-old daughter under a rock pile because he wanted a son, according to the Liaoning Legal Daily received there today.

Xia, whose wife had already given birth to three daughters, told his neighbours the baby had died from disease.

"The cadres and masses of the village had serious doubts and Xia was forced under pressure to exhume the girl, who had already been buried for over 30 hours," the newspaper said.

The father was arrested, it said, without indicating if he had been punished.

They like to experiment on live animals

MONTREAL: Brain researchers on Tuesday strongly defended their need to experiment on live animals in order to discover cures for Alzheimer's epilepsy and other brain diseases, reports Reuter.

Fearful that the animal rights movement could stall progress in their field, leading neurologists argued at the International Brain Research Organisation convention in this Canadian city that scientists must work to recapture public support.

"The public is seriously misinformed about this issue," said Colin Blakemore, a neurologist at Oxford University who said he stopped hoping the animal rights outcry would just fade away when his family received threats from extremists.

He said a recent poll taken in Britain showed 56 per cent favoured a total ban on tests on animals. The figure rose to 72 per cent among people 24 years and younger.

Animal rights proponents have won many supporters by arguing that scientists can obtain the same results using computer models or by experimenting on issues and cells.



THE HAGUE, The Netherlands: A young Croat joins demonstration Aug 6 at the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry to protest Serbian aggression in Croatia. Simultaneously, EC foreign ministers were discussing the Yugoslav crisis in which Serbia refused to join EC ceasefire accord. —AFP/UNB photo