

JKLF calls strike tomorrow to protest Indo-Pak talks

Kashmiris defy shoot-on-sight orders, celebrate Aug 14

SRINAGAR, Aug 14: Kashmiri Muslims defied shoot-on-sight orders in their Indian-ruled Himalayan state to observe Pakistan's independence day today, reports Reuter.

New Delhi routinely denounces the annual August 14 celebrations by Kashmiri dissidents. But witnesses and police said on Friday that Indian troops were given unusual orders to shoot at any pro-Pakistan demonstration.

Militants declared the day a holiday and all shops were closed to observe their call, witnesses said.

Reporters who toured Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital, said demonstrators defied troops who had fanned out in the narrow lanes of the old city and shouted

"Long live Pakistan" and "Indians go home".

In some lanes young boys climbed on electricity poles to hoist the Pakistan flag.

There were reports of militant-led parades elsewhere in Kashmir, two-thirds of which is ruled by India. Barring one report of shooting by troops, the demonstrations so far had been peaceful, militant sources said.

More than 7,500 people have been killed since a Muslim separatist campaign erupted into a bloody war against Indian rule in Kashmir in January 1990.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the guerrillas, a charge denied by Islamabad.

The two countries have fought two of their three wars

since their independence from Britain in 1947 over Kashmir.

India celebrates its independence day on August 15, one day after Pakistan, Kashmiri separatists observe it as a "black day."

Another report from Islamabad says: A Kashmiri pro-independence group has called for a general strike in Indian-ruled Kashmir Sunday in protest at peace talks between India and Pakistan in New Delhi next week.

Amanullah Khan, Chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), said in a statement in Islamabad on Thursday the strike would show the anguish of Kashmiris. He accused India and Pakistan of ignoring their wishes and aspirations.

In New Delhi, India's largest opposition party demanded the talks be cancelled and accused Pakistan of waging a "proxy war" against India.

The right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party said the government should review its foreign policies because of Islamabad's hostility.

The talks between the foreign secretaries of both countries begin on Monday in an attempt to reduce tension fuelled by a Muslim revolt in the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India.

Pakistan controls the remaining third of the Himalayan region, over which the two countries have fought two of their three wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

500 Pak troops to guard relief convoys in Somalia

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 13: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali intends to send 500 soldiers and officers from Pakistan to guard the humanitarian relief convoys for Somalia, UN officials said Thursday, reports AP.

Nadia Younes, spokeswoman for the Secretary-General, said Boutros-Ghali hopes "to proceed with deployment as soon as possible."

But at a daily news briefing she could not give a date.

The Security Council has authorized the 500-man security force in principle, pending agreement from the parties in Somalia.

However, the force was not authorized under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter which provides for military action, as is the case for protecting food

shipments in Bosnia.

Also, because of their humanitarian mission, the soldiers for Somalia are not technically considered peacekeepers.

On Wednesday Gen Mohamed Farrah Aided, who long had opposed the UN military force as an intrusion, finally gave his assent to deployment.

Ms Younes said she believed a new Security Council resolution would not be required for the deployment and that it could be authorized through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the council president, Ambassador Li Daoyu of China.

The council already has been informed in a letter about Pakistan's willingness to contribute troops.

BRIEFLY

Rains claim 18 more in Sind: At least 18 people died in Wednesday's rains in southern Pakistan, raising the death toll to 112 since the monsoon started in late July, Muzaffar Hussain Shah, Chief Minister of Sind Province, said on Thursday, reports Reuter from Karachi.

The monsoon rains have killed 60 in Hyderabad, 25 in Sukkur, 14 in Larkana and 13 in Karachi, he told a news conference.

Shah said the rains had killed 6,000 cattle, destroyed 100,000 mud houses and damaged 200,000 mud houses.

The government ordered 100 million rupees (3.9 million dollar) compensation for those affected, Shah said.

Rebels kill 13 in Nagaland: Tribal rebels in the northeastern Indian state of Nagaland killed 13 members of a rival group which they suspected of aiding an army crackdown, officials said Friday, Reuter says from Guwahati.

State Chief Secretary TCK Lotha said 15 members of the Nagaland National Council (NNC) were traveling by bus on Wednesday when they were stopped by armed gunmen of the pro-independence National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) rebel group. The NSCN opened fire on the rival group, killing 13 people, Lotha said.

76 Asians arrested in UAE: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) coast guard has arrested 76 Asians who allegedly tried to enter the country illegally in the past three weeks, Al-Khaleej newspaper reported on Thursday, says AFP from Abu Dhabi.

It said they included 33 Iranians, 25 Afghans and the rest were Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Amounts of hashish and opium were also seized with the men as they tried to enter by sea into four Emirates, it said.

According to police records, more than 1,000 people, all Asians, have been arrested in the past year on charges of illegally entering the oil-rich Gulf state to look for jobs or smuggle drugs.

Four killed in French plane crash: A prominent French politician and three other people were killed late on Thursday when a small aircraft crashed into a mountain in northern Corsica, police said, AFP reports from France.

Yvon Briant, President of the National Centre of Independent Politicians (CNI) was on his way to a rally in Ajaccio devoted to the forthcoming referendum on the Maastricht treaty.

There other people including a child and the pilot were also killed. The cause of the accident was not yet known.

Abu Nidal man receives bullet injury: A lone gunman on Thursday ambushed an activist loyal to terrorist mastermind Abu Nidal, shooting him five times as he emerged from his house in a teeming refugee camp, security sources said, reports AP from Lebanon.

The attack on Sheik Mahran, 41, was believed to be part of a bloody feud pitting Abu Nidal's followers against PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah guerrilla group, the sources said.

Pilot blamed for Thai Airbus crash in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Aug 14: A preliminary report Friday blamed the pilot for the Thai Airbus crash in Nepal late last month that claimed the lives of all 113 people on board, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

Analysis of the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder of the ill-fated Thai Airways international Airbus 310-300 said the pilot steered his plane in the wrong direction and was obeying a warning to climb as it ploughed into a mountain 80 kilometres (50 miles) northwest of here on July 31.

The aircraft crashed while trying to ascend after receiving signals from its terrain and ground warning system, the Thai aircraft crash investigation

commission said in a statement announced over state radio.

The report said the pilot aborted his first landing when a fault was encountered and received permission from Kathmandu's air traffic control centre to recommence his landing approach.

"The aircraft was turned to the right but the turn continued past a southerly direction and the aircraft stopped its turn when heading north (towards the Himalayan mountains)."

The aircraft continued in a northerly direction and the crews received a terrain and pull up warning from the ground approximating warning systems.

Libya blasts renewal of UN sanctions

TRIPOLI, Libya, Aug 14: Libya on Thursday denounced the renewal of UN sanctions against it because of its refusal to hand over two suspects in the blowing up of Pan Am Flight 103, and said the penalties were responsible for deaths and deprivation, reports AP.

The UN Security Council decided on Wednesday to maintain air, arms and diplomatic embargoes against Libya because it has not handed over the two men for trial in the bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

The People's Committee for Foreign Liaison, which acts as Libya's foreign ministry, issued a statement saying the "unfair sanctions have caused a lot of tragedies."

"Children, elderly, and women died. The standards of living have deteriorated... and huge damages have been incurred in all economic and human aspects," said the statement carried by the official Libyan news agency JANA.

Egyptian journalists who accompanied President Hosni Mubarak to Tripoli on Tuesday said that Libya has suffered losses amounting to \$1.4 billion as a result of the sanctions, mainly from a drop in the income of Libyan Airlines, the national carrier.

"Libya which is innocent and has nothing whatsoever to do with this incident has paid a hefty price due to the sanctions," said the statement.

Clinton still takes lead over Bush

WASHINGTON, Aug 14: Democratic Presidential nominee Bill Clinton continues to hold a big lead over President George Bush in opinion polls released this week, but the data offered a hint of a Bush comeback, reports AFP.

A Gallup poll taken for Cable News Network and USA today on Monday through Wednesday showed 56 per cent of the respondents would vote for Clinton with 37 per cent for Bush and seven percent undecided.

The poll showed Clinton retaining much of the lead he acquired after his nomination at the democratic national convention and the withdrawal of independent Ross Perot.

Serbs use Bosnian women, children as 'human shields'

BERLIN, Aug 14: At least 100,000 people are being held in Serb camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Western Serbia, and torture, rape and other abuse are rife, the President of the Bosnian Red Cross, Muhidin Alcehajic, said here Thursday, reports AFP.

Speaking to a meeting of Yugoslav expatriates, Alcehajic also said there was evidence that Serb fighters had been using Bosnian women and children as "human shields" to discourage attack.

"Between 100,000 and 110,000" people are being held in 38 camps, comprising about 96,000 persons in Bosnia and between 11,000 and 12,000 in Serbia, he said.

Referring to what he called numerous eyewitness ac-

Pentagon plans to scale down 70 overseas bases

WASHINGTON, Aug 14: The Defence Department plans to end or reduce operations at an additional 69 sites in Europe and one in South Korea as part of its programme to scale down US presence overseas, the Pentagon announced Thursday, reports AP.

It was the eighth round of reductions in Europe and brings to 628 the number of overseas installations at which operations will be ended, reduced or placed on standby. Of these, 592 are in Europe.

This makes a 38 percent reduction of US overseas installations since January 1990.

Pentagon spokesman Bob Hall said more overseas reductions would be announced later.

The European installations include one each in Belgium and the Netherlands, three in Turkey, six in Italy, nine in the United Kingdom, and 28 in Germany.

The Pentagon said 21 petroleum tank farms and fuel pumping stations in France would also be returned.

Altogether, the realignment will affect more than 5,000 military personnel, 450 US civilian employees, and 2,300 local nationals. Since the drawdown began, more than 90,000 personnel authorisations have been eliminated.

Hall said military personnel affected, as well as some of the US civilians, would be reassigned elsewhere abroad or in the United States. He said most of the local nationals would be discharged. Large sites in Europe affected by the announcement include Dolan Barracks, Camp Pieri and Dragoner Kaserne in Germany, which are being returned to those countries.

Other significant sites being partially returned include facilities in the Ankara, Turkey, area, leased facilities in the Izmir area of Turkey and Finthen Airfield in Germany.

US forces in South Korea will end operations at Camp Isbell, a small installation in Seoul. The announcements bring to 21 the number of US facilities in Korea that have ended or reduced operations

or are scheduled for return.

In London, the Ministry of defense said US military forces would leave five bases in Britain in September 1993, affecting nearly 200 British jobs. The most significant of the closures is the High Wycombe Air Station in Buckinghamshire, west of London, a US military administrative center which includes a high school and bank for military personnel and their families.



SARAJEVO: The Prime Minister of Serbia and Montenegro Milan Panic (c) arrives at Sarajevo airport Thursday. Panic returned to Belgrade after visiting UN headquarters in Sarajevo. — AFP/UNB photo

Pak newsmen seeks asylum in US

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug 14: A Pakistani journalist who says he will be killed if he returns to Pakistan requested political asylum in the United States on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Ishaq Tunio, who testified before the US Congress earlier this year that he was tortured by government police, said an aunt and uncle were killed four days after his testimony and that friends in Pakistan had warned him not to return.

Tunio said in an interview on Thursday he was beaten by police last April he took photographs of alleged irregularities at a polling place during elections in Sindh province.

"They tortured me for about half an hour," Tunio, Political Correspondent for the English-language newspaper The Nation told Reuter. "There are about 50 torture signs on my body."

Li Peng to visit Hanoi

HANOI, Aug 14: Chinese Premier Li Peng has sent a letter to his Vietnamese counterpart Vo Van Kiet confirming he will visit Hanoi later this year, despite tensions over the potentially oil-rich Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, diplomats said, reports Reuter.

The diplomats, asking not to be identified, said late on Thursday that the letter received in Hanoi last week had used conciliatory terms. Vietnam's Foreign Ministry had no comment.

One Hanoi official said China made some recent friendly gestures towards Vietnam after occupying an island in the archipelago and signing an agreement in May with a US company to explore for oil in the Spratlys.

Off the Record

A cruel joke with zoo animals

NSELE (Zaire): At the zoo in President Mobutu Park, the signs still say "Don't Feed The Animals," a cruel joke in a place where the animals are starving and soldiers patrol with automatic weapons, reports AP.

Crocodiles lie motionless, jaws partly open, watching the soldiers.

Two wart hogs raise their bony frames from the ground when a visitor approaches, and butt the fence with their tusks.

Chimpanzees scream and hoot when someone gives another a banana. One hangs a deformed hand through the bars of his cage like a street beggar.

"It's a type of sadism. The ones that are left have got to get out," said Graziella Cotman, who was a volunteer at the Nsele Zoo for 12 years. She now cares for chimpanzees at the zoo in Brazzaville, across the Congo River, and was interviewed there.

Cotman has not seen the Nsele Zoo since November, when she and about 15,000 other foreigners were evacuated from the Central African country after unpaid soldiers went on a looting spree.

Economic chaos prevails in Zaire. About three-fourths of the workers are unemployed, hospitals lack basic medicines and food prices have soared far beyond what most people can afford.

Elvis in Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: A tiny Caribbean nation known for calypso is making a small fortune off the King of Rock 'n' Roll, issuing nine Elvis Presley stamps to cash in on the 15th anniversary of his death, reports AP.

Thousands of Americans have spent 12 dollar including postage and handling — for the set from St Vincent and the Grenadines, which beat the US Postal Service's commemorative Elvis stamp, due out in January.

The printing is already one of the most popular by Caribbean countries, which have used specialty stamps to bolster their economies in recent years.

"Our telephones haven't stopped ringing" since the issue four weeks ago, said Scott Tilson, owner of the company distributing the stamps in the United States, the International Collectors Society in Baltimore. "People just love Elvis."

Tilson said Thursday he had sold 8,000 of the 20,000 sets since their printing — his company's quickest-ever specialty stamp sale. Tilson, who has yet to advertise, said he has another 2,000 sets and is negotiating with St Vincent to buy another 5,000.

The set of nine drawings include the youthful rock 'n' roller, Elvis in uniform, his movie-star "Viva Las Vegas" era and his later, heftier casino-act incarnation.



Expulsion for smoking injurious to teachers' health

TOKYO: Three high school children and their fathers beat up four teachers and burned them with cigarettes after the children had been expelled for smoking, police said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The three boys and their fathers were arrested on Thursday on charges of causing injury.

The teachers were on their way to the children's homes in the southwest rural town of Ehime to explain the expulsions when they were attacked in the street and beaten, kicked and burned, police said.

The school had decided to expel the three boys, aged 16 and 17, because they smoked inside the school, bullied other children and habitually broke other school rules, police said.

One of the teachers had a cheekbone broken in the August 6 attack, and the others suffered minor injuries.

Student violence against teachers has recently increased in Japan, where teachers have traditionally enjoyed high social prestige.

Stalin okayed killing of a US citizen without charges

MOSCOW, Aug 14: Dictator Josef Stalin approved the killing of a US citizen held in a Soviet prison without charges after World War Two, according to documents from the archives of the security police, reports Reuter.

General Dmitry Volkogonov, Co-Chairman of a joint US-Russian Committee investigating the fate of missing Americans, told the Daily Ivestia on Thursday that the man was executed and his family later told he died of an illness.

The published report did not name the victim, adding only that execution was proposed by Viktor Abakumov.