

DPRK opposes Japan's bid for SC seat

TOKYO, July 15: North Korea today criticised Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council as impudent and indiscreet, reports Reuter.

The Communist Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said it was a mistake "to think Japan can be a permanent member of the Security Council if it wants or it can obtain that qualification with a little donation to the United Nations."

"Japan is not entitled at all to be permanent member," it said, describing Tokyo's claim as "impudent and indiscreet." The newspaper, quoted by the Korean Central News Agency monitored in Tokyo, denounced Japan's World War Two history as an aggressor and said it had not erased the stain on its name.

Russian rocket engine sale to India US may drop objections

WASHINGTON, July 15: The United States will drop its objections to the sale of Russian rocket engines to India provided Moscow guarantees not to impart the skills to build such devices, a State Department official said, reports AFP.

"We don't want the Russians to be there when the Russians put the engines together and we don't want the Russians to provide the technical manuals," said the official who asked not to be identified.

His comments came as a Russian delegation began negotiations Wednesday at the State Department on the details of the controversial deal that has caused the biggest rift in US-Russian relations since the Cold War. Prime Minister Viktor

Chernomyrdin cancelled a visit to Washington in June, ahead of the Tokyo Summit, because preparatory talks on the proliferation of ballistic missile technology had not concluded.

The United States had originally opposed the entire deal, concerned that it might give India access to technology that would enable it to manufacture its own ballistic engines. Washington had warned Moscow that the sale would violate an international agreement on non-proliferation of ballistic missiles.

State Department spokesman Michael McCurry reiterated such concerns Wednesday, but stressed that the United States was not opposed to the sale of the rocket engines themselves but to the "technical knowhow" that went

with them, apparently confirming the shift in US policy.

The spokesman refused to comment on the negotiations under way between Russian space agency director Yuri Koptev and under secretary of state for international security Lynn Davis.

The administration of President Bill Clinton had threatened two Russian firms involved in the Indian deal with limited economic sanctions, which were to go into effect on Thursday if no agreement was in sight.

The first sign of an imminent solution came during a meeting in Tokyo between Clinton and Russian president Boris Yeltsin, said unnamed US officials quoted in Wednesday's Washington Post.

LONDON, July 15: After 45 years of silence, Britain is facing up to a tragic secret: The forced exile of thousands of children sent to "revitalize" the empire after World War Two, reports AFP.

A television drama made by the Australian Broadcasting Company, The Leaving of Liverpool, will be broadcast Thursday on the BBC.

But it is already causing shockwaves. British newspapers are dedicating full-page spreads to the story and victims — speaking out for the first time — are insisting on justice. Even the British Parliament is now taking an interest in the scandal.

For 20 years, between 1947-1967, orphans and abandoned children were literally exported by authorities in order to repopulate the Commonwealth with good British stock. The main destinations were Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

Helen Lazlitt, aged 50, re-

A tragic secret

members the morning in 1953 when nuns at her catholic orphanage in Aberdeen, Scotland, announced she was being sent to an orphanage in Adelaide, Australia.

All my life, she said, I had a feeling of emptiness. I did not know who I was or where I came from.

Her brother — whom she never knew existed until last year — was sent to New Zealand.

Some of the children were as young as four years old when they were sent abroad.

Most had been sent to live in institutions by single parents impoverished by the war. The children were usually told their parents were dead. When parents later went to reclaim their children, they were told they had been adopted by rich families but could not be contacted.

In reality, the "orphans" had been away on boats thousands of kilometres from home. When they reached the far-flung "charitable institutions" they were sometimes treated like child slaves, according to several witnesses.

No one disputes the tragedy actually took place. But with no official documents in the public domain, there are doubts over the exact number of children involved. Estimates put the figure at 20,000-50,000 of whom at least 10,000 were sent to Australia.

The secret finally came to light thanks to the persistence of Margaret Humphreys, a social worker employed by Nottingham County Council in central Britain.

In 1986, Humphreys received an inquiry from an Australian woman pleading for help in tracing her British family. She said she had been sent to Australia as a young child.

ROK prosecutors to question 2 ex-army officers

SEOUL, July 15: South Korean prosecutors will summon two former top army intelligence officers for questioning over their alleged harassment of President Kim Young-Sam while he was an opposition leader, official, said today, reports AFP.

The civilian prosecutors probe began Wednesday following an announcement by military prosecutors that they had arrested Lieutenant Colonel Lee Sang-Bum, an official at the Army Intelligence Command (AIC), last week.

Seoul prosecutors said they would summon former AIC chief Lee Jin Sam and former AIC section chief Han Jin-Koo, now in hiding, for questioning over allegations that they set up a secret terror squad coordinated by the AIC and the Army Security Command (ASC). Lee and Han were barred Saturday from leaving the country.

BRRIEFLY

Sihanouk in Beijing: Cambodian head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk arrived in the Chinese capital Beijing yesterday (Thursday) after cancelling a scheduled trip to North Korea because of his health, the official Xinhua news agency said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

Sihanouk has residence in both Beijing and Pyongyang. "Sihanouk, together with his wife Monique, was originally scheduled to visit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea before going to China," Xinhua said. "The trip was re-scheduled for health reasons."

It gave no further details and there was no one available for comment at Sihanouk's elegant residence in Beijing.

Highest Saudi award for Powell: Saudi Arabia has awarded General Colin Powell, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, the King Abdul Aziz Medal for his role in the Gulf War against Iraq, AFP reports from Jeddah.

It said Powell received the medal, one of the Kingdom's highest awards and named after its founder, from King Fahd on his arrival in the western coastal city of Jeddah late Tuesday for the third leg of a Gulf tour. The Saudi news agency reported Wednesday.

The general also met the Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, to discuss the Gulf situation and plans to boost cooperation.

Lanka frees 41 Tamils: Sri Lankan authorities freed 41 young Tamil men arrested for their suspected links with separatist Tiger guerrillas as the rebels accused security forces of abducting 200 Tamil civilians, AFP reports from Colombo.

The 41 detainees were handed over to their parents Wednesday by the Commissioner-General for Rehabilitation Ananda Weerasekara at the end of a four-month vocational training course in Colombo, officials said.

It was not immediately clear when and where the 41 had been arrested but rehabilitation officials said they came from the islands northern and eastern regions where Tamil guerrillas are active.

French fire claims 4: Four people were killed and 14 injured when a fire swept through the psychiatric ward of a military hospital early Thursday in Lorient, northwest France, authorities said.

Two of the injured were said to be in critical condition and had been transferred to the intensive care unit of a hospital in Brest.

Three of the dead were civilians and one military. Most of the victims were in a closed psychiatric ward in the Albert Calmette Hospital, where 17 patients were being treated who needed special surveillance.

ROK denies DPRK's allegation: Defence Ministry officials in Seoul denied yesterday an allegation by North Korea that South Korea's soldiers had fired a barrage of artillery and small arms fire Tuesday across the demilitarized zone, AFP reports from Seoul.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said a report by Pyongyang's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) claiming South Korea had fired more than 100 shells and more than 1,200 rounds of machine gun and rifle fire towards the north was "absolutely groundless."

Kim also denied KCNA allegations that South Korean warships had tried to seize a North Korean cargo vessel after entering the North Korean waters in the Yellow Sea on Monday.

Quake takes one in Athens: A 67-year-old man died of a heart attack and at least 20 people were injured Tuesday seriously, by falling debris when a strong earthquake Wednesday struck the Gulf of Patras, in southern Greece, police said, AFP reports from Athens.

The initial quake, a measuring 5.4 on the open-ended Richter scale, was followed by nearly 30 smaller tremors which registered over 3 on the Richter scale, the Athens observatory said.

The Patras observatory said over 100 aftershocks had been felt in the city throughout the afternoon, following the initial quake at 1232 GMT (3.32 pm).

The earthquake caused panic in Patras, a port some 180 kilometres (about 110 miles) west of Athens, and people left the city for the less dangerous open countryside.

Mudslide hits Nambija village: A mudslide hit the remote mining village of Nambija for the second time in two months, burying at least six houses on Wednesday night, authorities said, Reuter reports from Quito.

It was not known if there were any casualties, the Civil Defence said in a brief statement. More than 200 people were killed, 100 of whom were never found, when a mudslide in May covered the gold-mining village as residents were celebrating Mother's Day.



Demand for prestigious Rolls Royce cars has increased in east European countries. The manufacturers house decided to open a show room in Moscow and have increased production of the automobile by a quarter.

Mexico to allow Chinese immigrants

MEXICO CITY, July 15: The Mexico government said on Wednesday it would allow three ships carrying illegal Chinese immigrants to enter country, reports Reuter.

"The government of Mexico has decided to allow the three ships to enter Mexico territory," Deputy Foreign Minister Andres Rozental said in a news conference here, adding that the more than 600 Chinese would be repatriated to their homeland.

Rozental told reporters that Mexico was making a humanitarian gesture and was into accepting an earlier US offer to pay for the costs of repatriation.

"The costs will be assumed by the Mexican government," he said.

"None of the illegal immigrants will remain in Mexico... repatriation proceed immediately," he said.

China to crack down on corruption

BEIJING, July 15: The Chinese Communist Party will kick out any leading members who fail to crackdown on corruption, a powerful member of the Politburo was quoted today as saying, reports AFP.

Qiao Shi, one of seven Politburo standing committee members, delivered the warning Wednesday at the graduation ceremony of the central party school, of which he is president, the People's Daily reported.

"Socialist market economy does not mean you can do anything you want, rush headlong into mass action, go your own way or defy laws human and divine," Qiao said.

"Doing this would not only result in harm to the state, but enterprises would collapse and individuals would have difficulty avoiding making mistakes of even committing crimes," he said.

Qiao called on all party members to staunchly fight against negative and corrupt phenomena that have mushroomed since China began a shift to a market economy last year, and told them to act with urgency.

Party leaders found to be lax in the fight against corruption were not qualified to stay in power, he said.

"Party members, especially leading cadres, must never shout about resisting and preventing corruption, clean government and hard work for the people, while acting in the complete opposite way," Qiao said.

Corruption is endemic in China, countless crackdowns since market-style reforms were launched in 1978 have all failed and critics predict the problem opposition and allows independent supervision of officials and businesses.

Japanese want an end to LDP rule

TOKYO, July 15: Japanese voters intending to end the 38-year rule of the corruption-ridden Liberal Democrat Party (LDP) next Sunday may find their new leader has an equally chequered past, reports AFP.

For Ichiro Ozawa, the brains behind the new Shinseitō (renewal party), the greatest threat to the LDP in the polls, is a former Secretary-General of the ruling party and closely tied to recent scandals.

Ozawa is also a protégé of the influential former LDP Vice-President Shin Kanemaru, who goes on trial July 22 in Tokyo on charges of corruption and tax fraud.

Today, Ozawa is the power behind Shinseitō, founded last month by former Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata, which is expected to prevent the LDP from obtaining an absolute majority in the lower house of the Japanese Diet for the first time since 1955.

Hata and Ozawa helped provoke the current political crisis when along with 37 other dissident LDP deputies, they voted in a motion of no-confidence against the government of Prime Minister Kichii Miyazawa, forcing the Premier to dissolve Parliament and organize new elections.

"Ozawa is a scoundrel," said a Social Democratic Party deputy.

Shinseitō hopes to include the socialists and other opposition parties in a coalition government that would exclude the LDP.

However, social Democratic Party officials are equally reticent about forming an alliance with Shinseitō while Ozawa occupies the number two position in the party.

"The problem of Ichiro Ozawa has not been solved. If we just ignore the matter people will never trust us, no matter how much we talk about political reform," said Takako Doi,

former President of the Socialists.

Even an Ozawa election campaigner said: "The suspicion that Ozawa was involved in the Sagawa Kyubin mob-and-money scandal has not been cleared by his testimony at the Diet last February" (when Ozawa denied knowledge of any link with the underworld).

Kanemaru allegedly asked for and received a handout of 4.2 million dollars from the Sagawa Kyubin Transport Company to pay underworld figures to black an extreme-right campaign in 1987 against future Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita.

Ozawa is suspected of having had a hand in the affair along with Kanemaru, but would now like to be the champion of political reform, especially as regards party financing and ending the corruption evident in LDP ranks. He is aware of the political

burden he is carrying, and has adopted a low profile during the latest election campaign, leaving the popular Hata to occupy centre stage.

Still, Ozawa can probably count on election thanks to strong support within his district on Iwate prefecture.

According to the daily newspaper Ashai, Ozawa maintains close ties with the construction industry and is almost certain to be re-elected Sunday because of past services to Iwate companies.

A local public works company for which Ozawa helped obtain a major dam construction contract, has been actively campaigning from him, while Ozawa has so far not bothered to canvass personally for votes in the constituency.

"Ironically, these practices are part of the very political system Ozawa and Shinseitō members have pledged to eradicate," Ashai noted.

Debate on Maastricht Treaty Thatcher to vote against her party

LONDON, July 15: Former British premier Baroness Thatcher launched a savage attack on the Maastricht Treaty on closer European union Wednesday in a parliamentary debate on a referendum on the treaty, reports AFP.

Thatcher, who is expected to vote against her own party for the first time in a 35-year political career over the referendum issue, said the treaty created all the structures of a European state.

Her speech in the House of Lords, the upper house, on an amendment calling for the treaty to be put to a referendum, saw Thatcher clash head on with her successor as Prime Minister John Major.

The current premier, who negotiated the treaty for Britain, opposes a public consultation



on Maastricht, which opinion polls show would be massively rejected by British voters.

In her speech Thatcher warned that under Maastricht parliamentary sovereignty is diminished and the powers of the people are eroded.

"We have surrendered too many powers already. We should surrender no more unless the people wish it. It is their powers, she said.

In a veiled attack on Major she accused those who thought the British People were incapable of making a decision on Maastricht of arrogance.

The treaty suffered from a democratic deficit and diminished democracy and substituted curiocracy, she said.

More and more legislation is not going to be made in parliament in open and free debate in

the two houses, but behind closed doors without any (public) debate and without people knowing precisely what is being discussed, Thatcher said.

"More and more decisions are going to be made which are contrary to the will of our representatives of the people and of this chamber too."

Although an unwanted embarrassment for Major, the government is unlikely to be defeated on the referendum amendment, which will be voted on late Wednesday.

Barring the unexpected the treaty, nearing the end of its second reading, will undergo a third reading before passing into law some time later this year.

8 killed, 15 hurt in Nicaraguan fighting

MANAGUA, July 15: Fighting in northern Nicaragua between government troops and rearmend rebels left eight dead and 15 injured, the military said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The fighting broke out a day after President Violeta Chamorro offered amnesty to all the rearmend Contra rebels — except to those who committed war crimes or crimes against humanity — if they disbanded by August 31.

The Nicaraguan army reported the victims included the so-called "Recontra," government troops and civilians.

Three militiamen were killed when the vehicle in which they were riding as bodyguards for the National Development Bank was ambushed near the border of Honduras.

Partition severs family ties but fails to stop inter-border weddings

BEEJGAR, India, July 15: It is nearly midnight when Gulia, a Pakistani bridegroom, and three relatives mount their camels to furtively negotiate high sand dunes and cross over into India's Rajasthan state, reports IPS.

Even by moonlight, they know their way across the shifting dunes. It is not the first time they are traversing this remote desert frontier between the two countries.

A few hours later, amidst a handful of discreet guests, the marriage ceremony unites a farmer from Pakistan with his young Indian wife. There is a wedding feast, but before dawn the bride has to begin the journey to her new home in Pakistan.

India and Pakistan were partitioned along religious lines by Britain before independence in 1947. Many villages like Beejgar in India's desert state of Rajasthan found themselves cut in half.

Clans were separated, and family ties severed. Many Muslims found themselves in India, and many Hindus in Pakistan.

The two countries have since fought three wars, including fierce tank battles amidst the desolate dunes of the Thar desert. And both have large troop concentrations along the border.

But this has not stopped cross-border weddings like Gulia's. Similar nuptials in both Muslim and Hindu communities in the desert districts of Barmer and Jaisalmer in India have been common ever since partition.

In the wedding season, bridal parties are surreptitiously criss-crossing the border all the time, according to local residents.

Traversing the border is illegal on both sides. The bride, groom and wedding parties face stiff sentences if caught. But it is difficult to guard the 1,200 km of desert frontier where temperature at this time of year can soar up to 50 degrees.

The marriage parties run the gauntlet of harsh terrain regularly, slipping in and out between the guard posts at night.

A few days after Gulia and Rewati got married, an Indian groom and his bride party is getting ready to secretly cross over in the other direction. He is a Muslim from the Indian town of Bhu and is going into the Pakistani province of Sindh to marry — girl and bring her back.

Life in this harsh desert region of Sindh and Rajasthan is tough. There is chronic drought, shortage of water, blinding sand storms and unbearably high temperatures.

Jobs are scarce in both countries, and there is little help from the governments. Despite these travails, the hardly locals cling tenaciously to tradition, especially when it comes to weddings.

Hindu Rajputs find a wide range of eligible young men and women in Sindh province, which has the largest concentration of Hindus in Pakistan. And Pakistanis find a good choice of brides and grooms among the numerous Muslim clans in India. In Barmer district these unions occur mainly in

the densely-packed hamlets that were divided by the border. In adjoining Jaisalmer, which is India's most sparsely populated district, even Indian border guards sometimes attend wedding parties.

The marriage feasts are sumptuous, but lack the traditional loud music and wild dancing common elsewhere. Invitations are sent out quietly, and only relatives and trusted friends attend.

The party over, it is time for the residents of Bhu to hop on the camel caravan again and smuggle home a bride.

The wedding season is now winding down, and the scorching summer heat makes the Rajasthan horizon shimmer with mirages. But parents are already match-making for marriages scheduled for winter.

"It may be in Pakistan, but I can only find a suitable match for my daughter in Pakistan. If I apply for a visa for her, it may take years," says a Hindu resident of Chaotan, near here.

And this winter, he will go on camel-back to Sindh carrying an auspicious offering for his future son-in-law, like his ancestors did before a border came in between.

9 more killed in Algerian violence

LAGIERS, July 15: Nine more — six Islamic militants, two public official and an elderly civilian — have been killed in Algeria since Tuesday, official sources reported, says AFP.

They said security forces on Tuesday and Wednesday killed six fundamentalists in confrontations in the capital Algiers, chief of the southwest, Fipaza in the west and Tizi Ouzou in the east.

By unofficial count, 42 Islamic militants have been killed by security forces in Algeria since July 1.

The mayor of El-Afroun, 70 kilometres (45 miles) south of Algiers, was meanwhile assassinated on Wednesday, police said.

Djillali Bourkizia was killed at home in front of his wife and children by two men armed with a hunting rifle.



A model displays a hat designed by famous French designer Yves Saint Laurent in Paris recently on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the House of YSL. — Star TV photo