

### Kabul demands Russian troops pullout from border

ISLAMABAD, July 16: Afghanistan accused Russian troops of an artillery attack on Thursday on a village across the border from Tajikistan in which eight people were killed and many injured, official Kabul radio reported, says Reuter.

It called for an immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from the border and rejected Russian charges that Afghan fighters were involved in increasingly bloody incursions into Tajikistan.

The foreign ministry protests strongly against this action by the CIS forces and hopes that the republican actions, the radio, monitored in Islamabad, said.

# Most Israeli Jews against direct talks with PLO

JERUSALEM, July 16: Some 57 per cent of Israeli Jews are against "Direct and official" peace negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, according to an opinion poll published today, reports AFP.

The survey for the Yediot Aharounot newspaper found 42 per cent in favour of negotiations with the PLO, which is considered a "terrorist" group under Israeli law, one per cent expressed no view.

The telephone survey of more than 500 people came after press reports that Israeli and the PLO were conducting

secret talks to try to break a deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

Over the last two years, pollsters who asked Israelis if they supported dialogue with the PLO found about 33 per cent in favour.

Meanwhile, Reuter says: Israelis and Arabs have suggested that peace talks should aim for a Jordanian-Palestinian entity in the occupied territories instead of an interim period of Arab self-rule.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was quoted by two Israeli newspapers on Thursday as suggesting the

new approach to the stalled Middle East peace talks.

Palestinian negotiator Sabh Erakat expressed similar ideas in an interview with Israel television.

"The question is, have we in 20 months proved to each other that the concept of an interim period is not workable, is not do-able and can complicate matters more?" Erakat said.

"May be it is time to really see the possibilities of going directly towards the final status. A confederation is one of the serious options for the final status, we're pursuing it as Palestinians with the Jordanians now."

Deputy Foreign Minister Yoosi Beilin told the Jerusalem Post that Peres raised the proposal of a Jordanian-Palestinian entity with US envoy Dennis Ross, who was in the Middle East trying to break an impasse in the talks.

Beilin said Ross appeared intrigued by the idea. It was not clear whether Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin supported the proposal.

His spokesman said on Thursday Israel was negotiating an interim arrangement with the Palestinians and discussion of the permanent status would come at a later stage.



UN disarmament chief Rolf Ekeus speaks to journalists in Baghdad on Thursday. —UNB/AFP photo

## UN sanctions on Iraq create 'grave humanitarian tragedy'

ROME, July 16: The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation(FAO) said on Thursday a "grave humanitarian tragedy" was unfolding in Iraq because of UN food sanctions imposed after the Gulf War and urged the sanctions be lifted or eased, reports Reuter.

In a special report on Iraq in its monthly world food outlook, the FAO warned of pre-famine conditions there and said food supplies were scarce throughout the country.

"A vast majority of the popu-

lation is living under most deplorable conditions and is simply engaged in a struggle for survival," FAO said.

"But with increasing numbers losing out in this struggle every day, a grave humanitarian tragedy is unfolding."

The agency said the food shortages were caused by sanctions imposed by the United Nations after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

It said the sanctions caused "persistent deprivation, severe

hunger and malnutrition for a vast majority of the Iraqi population." Children, the elderly, disabled and sick were the worst hit.

"The mission believes that it would be impossible to continue the sanctions in their present form without further aggravating the already grave food supply situation in Iraq."

The report estimated that Iraq would need to import 5.4 billion tonnes of food by the end of next July at a cost of 2.5 billion dollar.



King Hussein of Jordan accompanied by his wife Queen Noor arrives at the Royal United Services Institute in London on Thursday to deliver a lecture on peace in Middle East. —UNB/AFP photo

### Amnesty for probe into deaths in Nepal

LONDON, July 16: Human rights group Amnesty International called on Thursday for an independent public inquiry into the deaths of at least 16 people when Nepal police fired on opposition demonstrators in June, reports Reuter.

In a statement issued in London, Amnesty urged Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to ensure the inquiry established the full circumstances in which the killings occurred their lawfulness, and whether any of the police officers responsible ... should be held to account.

Police in the land locked Himalayan country clashed repeatedly with activists of the main opposition United Marxist Leninists (UML) Party over a UML sponsored strike.

### Indian train mishap: 4 more bodies recovered

NEW DELHI, July 16: Rescue workers pulled four more bodies out of a managed express coach today, taking to 22 the death toll in a head-on collision between two trains in eastern India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

The bodies were extricated as rescue operations, hampered by a heavy overnight downpour, resumed at the accident site near Dharbanga town in Bihar state, the news agency said.

More than 50 people were hospitalised following Thursday's collision between the two trains heading towards each other on the same track.

Witnesses alleged that the casualty toll was far higher and that some bodies had been removed without being included in the list of casualties, PTI said.

### Japan's quake death toll rises to 29

TOKYO, July 16: The number of victims killed dead in Monday's devastating earthquake in northern Japan has reached 29 while those missing climbed sharply to 128, police said today, reports AFP.

The number of missing was 85 as of late Thursday. Of the total, 104 were confirmed dead and 120 missing in Okushiri Island, west of Hokkaido and the worst-hit by the quake, a Hokkaido prefectural government official said.

# Off the Record

**He can beat Clinton if he runs as Republican**  
WASHINGTON: Political independent Ross Perot could beat US President Bill Clinton if the election were held now but only if he runs as a Republican, according to a poll, reports Reuter on Friday.



The poll by market strategies said Perot, running with Kansas senator Bob Dole, would get 48 per cent while Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore would get 38 per cent and another 14 per cent were undecided.

In the 1992 election, Texas billionaire Perot received 19 per cent, third behind Clinton with 43 per cent and incumbent President George Bush with over 37 per cent.

The poll made public on Thursday was conducted for USA Weekend, the newspaper supplement coming out this weekend. It was conducted among 1,200 adults and the numerical results had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points either up or down.

### "Kim is crazy"

TOKYO: North Korean President Kim Il-Sung "is crazy," Japanese Foreign Minister Kabun Muto was quoted in the press here on Friday as saying, reports AFP.

Muto, referring to the potential danger of Pyongyang pointing missiles towards Japan, was quoted by the Japan times saying: "Kim Il-sung is Crazy. There will be no comparison with Monday's huge earthquake if North Korea's recently developed missiles hit Japan."

His remarks came as talks between Washington and Pyongyang on international monitoring of suspected nuclear sites in North Korea appeared to be making progress.

Muto's outburst may be seen as an attempt to grab some votes at Sunday's general election in which his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is in danger of losing for the first time since its formation in 1955.

His comments will only bolster the fear of many Japanese concerning their communist neighbour, thereby fostering the wish for political stability in Japan.

### An appeal to thieves

LONDON: An armed gang stole six million pounds (dollar 9 million) of gems from London's "King of Diamonds" on Thursday and he appealed to them to return a unique heart-shaped diamond which they snatched, reports Reuter on Friday.

Police said the robbers brandished handguns at staff and ransacked the safe at Laurence Graff's jewellery manufacturers in Hatton Garden, London's diamond district, in one of Britain's biggest jewellery thefts.

The flawless heart-shaped diamond, of 25.78 carats, was to be the centrepiece of a brooch and experts in the trade described it as a "Very important stone." It was worth about 1.5 million pounds (dollar 2.25 million).

"Mr Graff wants it to be known that the heart-shaped diamond cannot be cut and sold in separate pieces as it is unique," detective constable Barry Hughes said, explaining Graff's appeal to the thieves not to destroy the stone.

The raiders, dressed in dark clothes and wearing stocking masks got through three combination locks before scooping the diamonds into a bag from the safe and the workshops and making off into central London's rush-hour traffic.



ENGLAND: The Prince and the Princess of Wales leave after the funeral on Thursday of Ruth, Lady Fernoy the Princess' grandmother who died last week aged 84. The separated royal couple were united in grief during the funeral at St. Margaret's church in King's Lynn. —UNB/AFP photo

### Funeral unites Royal couple

KING'S LYNN: Prince Charles and his estranged wife Diana put aside their differences on Thursday and were united at the funeral of the aristocrat who is rumoured to have acted as matchmaker in their ill-fated romance, reports Reuter on Friday.

The British royal couple, separated for the last seven months of their 12-year marriage, stood side by side and shared an umbrella when they attended the funeral of Diana's maternal grandmother Lady Fernoy in the eastern town of King's Lynn.

Ruth, Lady Fernoy, who died last week aged 84, was a close friend and lady-in-waiting to the Prince's grandmother the Queen Mother and helped bring the young Lady Diana Spencer into the Royal Court where she met the heir to the British Throne.

The Queen Mother, 92, also attended the funeral. With thoughts inevitably going back to the early days of their romance, it was a poignant joint appearance for the couple whose union was hailed as a perfect blend of good breeding and High-society glamour but failed to supply personal happiness.

When Charles and Diana married in July 1981 many commentators thought the respective grandmothers Lady Fernoy and the Queen Mother had brought the couple together in an informal equivalent of arranged marriage.

## UNSC threatens Unita with arms embargo

UNITED NATIONS, July 16: The Security Council on Thursday threatened the Angola rebel movement Unita with a worldwide arms embargo unless it honours peace accords by September 15, reports Reuter.

A resolution, adopted by a unanimous 15-0 vote, renewed the mandate for the UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) for two months until September 15. UNAVEM now has less than 100 civilian and military staff.

The resolution calls on Unita, which stands for the national union for the total independence of Angola, and the Angolan government to restart as soon as possible talks on establishing ceasefire and implementing peace pacts.

Units took arms after it lost elections last October, contending they were fraudulent and

now controls most of the countryside. War deaths have mounted and at least two million civilians need food and other aid to survive. Angola says about 1,000 people are dying daily.

The resolution says the Security Council would ready to impose sanctions "on the sale or supply to Unita of arms and related material and other military assistance to prevent Unita from pursuing its military actions."

The move towards sanctions would be dropped if Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reported by September 15 that an effective cease-fire was in force and that agreement had been reached on "full implementation" peace accords signed in Lisbon in May 1991.

### BRIEFLY

**Sihanouk hospitalised:** Cambodian head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk was taken to Chinese hospital for a medical check-up immediately after arriving in Beijing on Thursday, a spokesman at his Beijing residence said, Reuter reports from Beijing.  
"He is in the hospital now, but it is not serious," the spokesman said by telephone. "It is for a medical check-up." The official could give no details as to what type of treatment Sihanouk might be receiving.  
He said staff at the prince's luxurious Beijing residence had been told last week to expect Sihanouk, but had not been told how long his hospital stay might last.

**Lanka bans carrying of firearms:** The Sri Lankan government has banned carrying of firearms by any person other than security forces and police personnel, Xinhua reports from Colombo.  
Any person defying the banning order will be prosecuted under the firearms ordinance, Defense Ministry said in Colombo Thursday.  
This follows a directive issued by President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga to police recently, the sources said.

**11 die in Jakarta bus plunge:** Eleven people were killed and 15 seriously injured when a bus plunged into a ravine in Batang, Central Java, press reports said in Jakarta yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.  
The Kompas Daily quoted a police spokesman in Batang as saying the accident happened Wednesday when the driver tried to avoid a truck which appeared from the opposite side and plunged into the ravine.  
The police said the bus, carrying 52 people, was on the way to the nearby town of Patit from Jakarta.

**12 more executed in China:** Twelve members of gangs which kidnapped women and forced them into prostitution were executed in south China's Guangdong province this week, the legal daily reported Thursday, Reuter says from Beijing.  
It said 18 other gang members were sentenced to prison terms of between five years and life or were condemned to death with the executions suspended.  
The kidnapers, who made more than one million yuan (dollar 175,000), were executed on Tuesday as authorities in the wealthy province declared war on organised crime.

**Tamil rebels kill 3:** Tamil rebels killed three people, including a policeman and soldier guarding farmers working in Richfield, in a rare attack in Sri Lanka's northwest Puttalam district, a military spokesman said yesterday Reuter reports from Colombo.  
A farmer was the third victim, killed in the crossfire during Thursday's attack on a group of 20 policemen and soldiers protecting Sinhalese farmers at Illavankulam village, which lies next to a huge wildlife and nature park.

**Crowe may replace Seitz:** US President Bill Clinton plans to name retired Admiral William Crowe as ambassador to Britain, the Washington Post reported yesterday, Reuter says from Washington.  
Clinton recently named Crowe to head the Foreign Intelligence Review Board, an advisory panel on intelligence matters. Crowe would replace Raymond Seitz, a career foreign service officer, some time early next year, the post said.

## US hands over documents of Vietnam war to Hanoi

HANOI, July 16: The United States today handed over the first of three million pages of Vietnamese documents captured during the Vietnam War to help Hanoi trace its own 300,000 missing soldiers, reports Reuter.

The documents were handed over during talks at a centre where experts from the two sides examine Vietnamese war-time films and archives for clues about the fate of the 2,253 US servicemen still listed as Missing-in-Action (MIA).  
"It's to help them find out about the fate of their missing people," Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord, head of a US presidential delegation, said afterwards. "I'm sure they'll appreciate it."

The documents — capture diaries, policy documents, battle plans and soldiers letters — were stored on microfiche, a form of miniaturised record-keeping used in the 1960s and 1970s.  
They were handed over in two small boxes by Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs Hershel Gober, another leader of the US delegation, who said President Bill Clinton had authorised their release.  
Clinton sent the delegation to press Vietnam for more help in tracing US MIAs.  
"We have asked for a lot of things and the Vietnamese have been responsive," a senior delegation member told reporters.  
"The Vietnamese have asked us for things — we've attempted to be responsive."

A senior Vietnamese official said after the talks, "We have got a better mood for understanding."  
Lord declined to speculate on the impact the US action would have on the MIA issue.

US President Bill Clinton announced the delegation on July 2 when he lifted US restrictions of fresh international Monetary Fund (IMF) loans to Vietnam.

He told the team to push for help in recovering US remains, getting more documents, resolving 92 "discrepancy cases" where servicemen were last seen alive and presumed captured, and checking out "live sighting" reports of US prisoners after the war.  
The United States has set the fullest possible accounting for the fate of US MIAs as a condition for further action to normalise relations 20 years after the war ended.  
Vietnam wants the United States to lift its economic embargo completely and to establish diplomatic relations. It says it is doing all it can to cooperate on the MIA issue and denies that it has held any US prisoners of war since 1973.  
Vietnamese officials have pointed to an imbalance between US insistence on resolving the fate of US MIAs and Hanoi's inability to account for its own 300,000 though it won the war.  
Vietnam asked for US help on the issue earlier this year.  
US researchers said the microfiche documents — to be

followed by more batches and equipment to help the Vietnamese read them — covered 1965 to 1973, when US troops withdrew from Vietnam.  
They would contain information that would at least confirm the fate of Vietnamese soldiers.  
During the war, captured communist documents were housed in a special centre in Saigon, then the capital of US-backed south Vietnam, and filmed. Copies of these films sent back to the United States were microfiched.

The researchers said major US veteran's groups were also canvassing their members for any help they could give the Vietnamese in tracing their MIAs.

### LDP's popularity falls

TOKYO, July 16: Popular support for Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party fell to 25.6 per cent in July down 6.3 points from a month earlier, a Jiji press opinion poll showed today, reports Reuter.  
The nationwide survey covering some 1,400 eligible voters was conducted July 9-12 ahead of Japan's general elections on Sunday for the 511-member lower house of Parliament.

Support for the main opposition Social Democratic Party remained unchanged at 7.4 per cent, while the approval rating of the second largest opposition party Komoto, or clean government party, rose 1.7 points to 4.7 per cent.  
Support for the Japan Communist Party rose from 1.5 per cent in June to 2.1 per cent.