

Aideedmen launch fresh attack on UN peacekeepers

MOGADISHU, July 19: Forces of Somalia warlord Mohamed Farah Aided mounted a fresh attack Sunday night on UN forces at Mogadishu airport, journalists in the capital reported, says AFP.

Several mortar shots were heard followed by automatic gunfire lasting about 10 minutes. Helicopters of the US rapid intervention force took off after the shooting died down.

No information on casualties was available from the UN force an hour and a half after the attack started, US helicopters were still circling over districts near the airport where US forces carried out intensive searches for arms on Saturday and Sunday.

UN troops at the airport came under attack on Wednesday from Aided forces bent on "avenging" comrades killed on Monday when a house belonging to an Aided aide was bombed.

Meanwhile, US troops launched a fresh sweep for weapons near the capital's airport Sunday, conducting house-to-house searches as US helicopters buzzed overhead.

The US troops scalded a neighbourhood where several houses used by the UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia are located.

On Saturday the troops searched another neighbouring area between the airport and a polytechnic.

The searches were prompted by an attack Wednesday on UN troops stationed in the airport area. The gunmen who launched the attack are believed to be supporters of fugitive Somali warlord General Mohamed Farah Aided.

This weekend's operations were the latest in a series of strong-arm measures by US troops who have spearheaded a UN crackdown on Aided's faction, which the world body blames for the deaths of 24 Pakistani peacekeeping soldiers last month.

On Sunday, Aided supporters staged an anti-US and anti-UN demonstration in the capital. Many of the demonstrators were teenagers and children.

Benazir emerges winner in triangular fight

ISLAMABAD, July 19: Pakistan's main opposition leader Benazir Bhutto emerged clear winner in an army-sponsored overnight shake-up that led to the exit of both the president and his prime ministerial rival, diplomats and analysts said today, reports AFP.

Almost all diplomats gave high marks to the role played by Army Chief Abdul Waheed in ending the month's old crisis and averting a collapse of the country's democratic system.

"The solution has also helped in regional stability as there is always a risk of India taking advantage of turmoil in Pakistan," one diplomat observed.

Analysts pointed out that this time the army had come to the rescue of democracy in Pakistan, whose history is replete with repeated military interventions.

Both President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, 78, and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, 45, stepped down "in the larger interest of the nation" and the national assembly was dissolved.

for the second time in three months late Sunday.

Ishaq Khan handed over the all powerful portfolio of president to the senate chairman Wasim Sajjad, 52, who became

taker prime minister. Similar changes were effected in the country's four provinces where former army officers or judges have taken over as governors and chief ministers.



Benazir... winner in overnight shake-up

acting head of state under the country's constitution.

Sharif was replaced by renowned economist and former World Bank Executive Moeen Qureshi, 63, who became care-

The caretake administrations will ensure impartial elections to be supervised by the army. Elections to the National Assembly would be held on October 6 and those to the provincial

assemblies on October 9, an official notification issued after the departure of the mutually hostile leaders said early today.

"I have been maligned too much, but history will vindicate me," said the seasoned bureaucrat Ishaq Khan in his nationwide parting speech before dawn Monday, drawing the curtain on his 52-year long involvement in the country's administration and politics.

Sharif in his own broadcast, full of torrents of rhetoric, said, "the real issue was based on constitutional contradictions and personal ambitions."

His address, seen as the opening shot in his campaign for re-election, repeatedly referred to the "conspiracies and intrigues" hatched by political opportunists and the enemies of the country's economy and the people's prosperity to undermine the democratic system.

"I have accepted their challenge. The war with the opposition has started and it will continue on all fronts," he said, predicting that the masses would return him "this time with even greater majority."

Off the Record

'Charles not fit to be King'

LONDON: More than half the people questioned in a Daily Mirror poll published Monday felt Prince Charles was not fit to be the crowned king, reports AP on Monday.

One in six of those questioned by pollsters ICM also thought the British monarchy would not survive much beyond the end of the century.

Asked whether Charles was "fit" to succeed his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, 37 per cent of respondents said he was, while 53 per cent said he was not and 9 per cent didn't know.

Asked whether the crown should pass directly to Charles or to his eldest son, Prince William, respondents were almost evenly divided. Thirty-six per cent opted for Charles, 33 per cent for William and 20 per cent for neither.

Respondents were also evenly divided on whether Princess Diana should be crowned queen if she remains separated from Charles or if the couple divorce — 43 per cent said yes, and 43 per cent said no.

"These results confirm how Charles' marriage breakup and his relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles have turned public opinion against them," the newspaper said, referring to this longtime married women friend.

The poll said that 42 per cent believe Britain would be better off without a royal family and that 16 per cent don't think the monarch will survive the next decades.

If found that 83 per cent believe the queen has performed her royal duties well since ascending to the throne in 1952, but that 16 per cent think she has not been a good mother to her four children.

Men surveyed listed Queen Mother Elizabeth, widow of King George VI, as their favourite member of the royal family, followed by the Queen and Diana.



BRIEFLY

Shevardnadze puts off Israel trip:

Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze has postponed indefinitely an official visit to Israel due to start Monday because of fighting in the ex-Soviet republic, officials said, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The Georgian head of state began peace talks Sunday to try to resolve the conflict with Abkhaz separatists.

UK bases put on alert:

British military bases were put on alert for a possible terrorist attack after two Defence Ministry fuel tankers disappeared from a defense compound, police said on Sunday, Reuters reports from London.

The two vehicles with military number plates were driven from the compound in west Sussex in southern England on Friday night on Saturday.

The Defence Minister refused to comment on the security alert.

Bus mishap claims 25 in Peru:

At least 25 people died when a bus carrying about 60 passengers to a religious festival in northern Peru tumbled down a 300-metre (yard) Cliff, police sources said, Reuters reports from Lima.

Police rescue teams on Sunday were working to clear debris and bodies from the site about 400 km (250 miles) north of Lima, the sources said.

6 more Palestinians shot in Gaza:

Six Palestinians were wounded by bullets fired by Israeli troops in the occupied Gaz Strip on Sunday, Palestinian sources said, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Two were hit in clashes with soldiers at Jabalia refugee camp in the evening. They were taken to Ahli Hospital in Gaza.

Two others, including a child aged 10, were wounded earlier at the same camp, when soldiers opened fire on youngsters who threw stones at them. The child was said to be seriously hurt.

A woman and a teenage boy suffered minor bullet wounds at Rafah camp during incidents at the funeral of a 39-year-old man who died on Friday from gunshot wounds.

CPC team leaves for N Korea:

A delegation of officials of the Communist Party of China (CPC) left here today for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at the invitation of the central committee of Workers' Party of Korea, reports Xinhua from Beijing.

The CPC officials delegation is headed by Shu Huaide, Secretary-General of the Political Science and Law Committee of the CPC central committee.

ASEAN officials start preparatory talks

SINGAPORE, July 19: Senior officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) began three days of preparatory talks today ahead of an annual meeting of their foreign ministers here Friday, reports AFP.

Among topics the official will discuss are regional security issues, a US proposal for a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum and the situation in Cambodia after the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces August 28.

The officials held a working dinner Sunday at which a proposal to include China and Russia in a dialogue on security issues between senior officials of ASEAN countries and their major trading partners was discussed.

"We discussed how to bring them into the dialogue on security issues. Everybody thinks it is okay. We are discussing how we can include them," an ASEAN source said.

Senior officials of ASEAN, which groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, and their dialogue partners held their first security forum here in May.

Officials said that the 26-year-old grouping was concerned over a possible escalation of tension in the South China Sea because of territorial disputes over the Spratly islands.

The group of islands and atolls, which straddle vital sea lanes, and are believed to harbour oil wealth in its sea bed, are being claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

The two-day ASEAN ministerial meeting will be followed by the so-called post ministerial conferences with dialogue partners Australia, Canada, the European Community, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and the United States from July 26 to 28.

China and Russia have been invited to an informal dinner July 25 with the ASEAN countries, the dialogue partners, and Laos, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam, which have observer status in ASEAN.

Italy threatened to withdraw its troops.

Profiles of new Pak President, PM

ISLAMABAD, July 19: Following are brief profiles of Wasim Sajjad and Moeen Qureshi, sworn in as Pakistan's interim President and Prime Minister Sunday night.

Wasim Sajjad, 52, is an Oxford educated parliamentarian known for his cool temperament and amicable conduct.

Born at Jalandhar in India before the birth of Pakistan in the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, Sajjad has been chairman of the 86-member Senate, the upper house of parliament, since December 1988.

Sajjad had earlier replaced Ghulam Ishaq Khan as Senate

chairman when the outgoing President relinquished the office following the sudden death in an aircraft crash of former military ruler General Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq on August 17, 1988.

Sajjad earned a degree in jurisprudence from Oxford University in 1966 and later a bachelor of civil laws and an MA degree from the same institution. He trained as a Barrister at the Inner Temple in London.

As a practising lawyer, he appeared in several important constitutional and civil cases and later, as a parliamentarian held the posts of Justice and

Parliamentary Affairs Minister from 1986 to 1988.

Moeen Qureshi

ISLAMABAD, July 19: Moeen Qureshi, 63, is an economist with an impressive record of service in senior positions at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Holder of a Doctorate in Economics from Indiana University in the United States, Qureshi began his career in the government of Pakistan in 1953 and held various responsible positions in Finance and Planning.

Qureshi served in various

capacities with the IMF from 1958 to 1970, including service in West Africa as the IMF's resident representative in Ghana.

He held the rank of senior advisor at the time of joining the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 1970. He served in the IFC as economic adviser and vice president before being appointed executive vice president in February 1977.

In July 1979, he was currently appointed vice president (finance) of the World Bank. In August 1980 he was appointed a senior vice president of the World Bank.



AMBALA (India): Rocks are strewn across railway tracks Saturday in northern Haryana state in the wake of monsoon flooding which has submerged nine states in the country taking the death toll to 446. The floods, which are an annual feature, have damaged communication networks, railway lines and highways. — UNB/AFP photo

Floods death toll rises to 446 in India

NEW DELHI, July 19: Unprecedented floods in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal states of India have claimed 30 more lives, taking the death toll to 446 with the situation in the region continuing to be grim, the Press Trust of India reported Monday, Xinhua says.

It said Punjab reported the maximum number of deaths followed by Himachal and Haryana states.

The flood situation in Haryana further worsened on Sunday and over 25 villages had been ravaged and about 80,000 people badly affected by the fury of floods.

In Punjab state, there still many places were submerged and tens of thousands of people marooned although the flood is beginning to recede as the rainfall lessened on Sunday.

Kabul seeks aid for victims of Russian artillery attack

KABUL, July 19: Afghanistan on Sunday appealed for emergency aid for the victims of what it called cruel artillery attacks by Russian forces from across the border in the former Soviet Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan, reports Reuters.

Presidential spokesman Abdul Aziz Morad told reporters that about 360 people had been killed or wounded in attacks last week in Takhar province and food and medical aid was needed.

A government spokesman said on Saturday an emergency meeting of the Afghan cabinet had decided to ask the United

Nations to halt deployment of Russian forces along the border and suggested talks to solve the problem.

Russia flew extra troops to Tajikistan on Saturday to protect the border against Tajik rebels, who last Tuesday launched an attack in which 25 Russians and 100 Tajiks died.

Tajik fighters fled to Afghanistan after defeat in a civil conflict last year. They had mostly backed at Islamic government in Tajikistan that collapsed.

Morad said about 6,000 people had been displaced in Takhar province by Russian ar-

tillery attacks.

"This cruel bombardment means the Russian government is repeating its old mistake, Morad said, referring to 10 years of military intervention in Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union.

An Afghan army General said Kabul was not sending additional forces to Takhar to face Russian attacks.

Another report says: About 40 rebels and five government soldiers have been killed in a clash in the former Soviet Republic of Tajikistan, the Russian news agency Itar-Tass said on Sunday.

20 feared dead in Madhya Pradesh stampede

NEW DELHI, July 19: At least 20 people were feared dead and more than 100 injured today in a massive stampede at Hindu festival in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

More than 100,000 pilgrims were in the temple town of Omkareswar, 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the city of Indore, when the stampede occurred following an electric short circuit in some floodlights, the news agency reported.

Six bodies were brought to a hospital but details of the other deaths were not available.

Fifth year of detention begins Suu Kyi still unbowed, steadfast

BANGKOK, July 19: Aung San Suu Kyi, the diminutive Myanmar's dissident whose thunderous silence continues to enrage the ruling junta and rally freedom fighters worldwide, begins her fifth year of house arrest Tuesday, still unbowed and steadfast, reports AFP.

Little has changed for the 48-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate over the past year of incarceration in her family home on Rangoon's University Avenue, where armed guards and barbed wire ensure her isolation.

Her one request — a set of encyclopedias — was approved by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the junta's formal name, ad provided by an American company.

Throughout the year, foreign governments, human rights or-

ganizations and prominent individuals continued to demand her release.



Aung San Suu Kyi

The biggest noise came in February when eight fellow Peace Prize winners gathered in neighbouring Thailand after Myanmar denied them entry

visa.

They brought an open letter signed by 13 Nobel laureates, including former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, which called for the "immediate and unconditional release" of "our sister."

The laureates also publicly chided Myanmar's ruling generals.

"I hope the military government there — which is scared of a little woman — is made to quake in their boots because of our mission," said Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

"I say, the world is watching you — watch out," said Ross Daniels, the representative of human rights group Amnesty International, the 1977 prize winner: "I have a message for the SLORC — this is just the beginning."

The high-profile visit brought a cry of outrage from the SLORC.

Khin Nyunt, widely considered Myanmar's most powerful general, accused the laureates of blatantly interfering in Myanmar's domestic affairs, of being pawns of unspecified secret organization and — after they visited a Myanmar refugee camp in Thailand — of meeting with terrorist groups.

"We have no plan to change our internal political and human rights policies because of their actions," Khin Nyunt said. Later adding: "There is no human rights abuse in Myanmar."

Last April, after things quietened down, Aung San Suu Kyi's family was permitted to visit her again.

"Her spirits and her conviction remain as steadfast as ever," her husband, Michel Aris, said later in a statement.

S African conservatives boycott democracy talks

JOHANNESBURG, July 19: Black and white conservatives boycotted the resumption of South African democracy negotiations today but other negotiators agreed the talks must go on, reports Reuters.

The Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the headline white Conservative Party stayed away in protest at rejection by the multi-racial 26-party conference of their demands for virtually autonomous homelands.

Inkatha also seeks a virtual veto on decisions by the conference, saying it wants agreement that "sufficient consensus" cannot be reached without it.

The talks two weeks ago agreed by consensus to set April 27 as the date for South Africa's first election in which blacks will vote. Inkatha says a vote cannot be held under current levels of violence and without agreement on the form of the new South African state.

Four groups — the IFP, Kwazulu, the Conservative Party and the Afrikaner Volksunie (Afrikaner People's Union) — were missing when talks resumed at the World Trade Centre outside Johannesburg.

Representatives of the Concerned South Africans Group (COSAG), comprising the four plus black homelands Bophuthatswana and Ciskei, gathered at a nearby hotel to discuss strategy.

Ruling National Party negotiator Leon Wessels told reporters the talks must proceed.

"There must be an agreed negotiated settlement," he said. Communist Party Chairman Joe Slovo told the conference that the absence of some participants without official explanation displayed "gross disrespect to the whole process."

Those missing would be welcomed to return but could not then complain about decisions taken in their absence, he added.

"We are not going to allow this process to be held to ransom," he declared.

The talks then went into discussion on a technical committee report on an independent media commission to ensure equitable treatment of political parties by broadcasting and government information services.

Chief government negotiator Roelf Meyer said he was confident Inkatha would attend negotiations again.

7 blacks shot dead in Johannesburg

JOHANNESBURG, July 19: Gunmen flagged down a taxi and ordered the passengers out of vehicle, then shot seven blacks with pistols and AK-47 rifles, police said Monday, reports AP.

The pre-dawn shooting Monday in Germiston, just outside Johannesburg, appeared linked to the vicious feud between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party, the country's two largest black groups.

One of the attackers stood in the middle of the road with a flashlight and waved down the taxi van, which pulled over to the side, police said.

When the van stopped, about 10 gunmen surrounded the vehicle and demanded all the Zulus get out and stand to one side. The Zulus were told to lie face down and were executed, according to police.

The attackers seemed to be targeting Inkatha members, most of whom are Zulus, police said.