

UN men install cameras in two Iraqi N-sites

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 4: UN experts finished installing surveillance cameras Tuesday at two missile sites near Baghdad, the spokesman for the Special Commission responsible for monitoring Iraq's disarmament said, reports AP.

Tim Trevan said the officials installed cameras at the Yawm Al-Azim site a day after monitoring equipment was tested at the Rafah test site by the team of experts led by Bill Eckert of the United States.

The commission also has established radio-telephone links between the Rafah and Yawm Al-Azim sites and the commission's control centre in Baghdad. Both were operational as of Tuesday, Trevan said.

Iraq plans to test a missile at Yawm Al-Azim today. Members of the Special Commission are to observe the test, the spokesman added.

Trevan noted that under the July 19 agreement between the United Nations and Iraq, the surveillance cameras will not be activated until high-level technical talks between the United Nations and Iraq are held in late August or early September in New York.

The discussions were to focus on long-term control of Iraq disarmament and Iraq's compliance with relevant UN resolutions outstanding issues include when the monitoring cameras at the two sites would be activated.

In the meantime, Baghdad has agreed to allow UN inspectors to visit the two sites at their discretion between tests.

Monday, inspectors with the UN commission photographed the test stand set-up at the Rafah test site prior to the firing of a rocket, according to a statement released at UN headquarters in New York.

They also received answers to their technical questions about the purpose of the test and reviewed the test data afterwards, it said.

The commission has said it plans to increase the number of experts based in Baghdad, who will inspect the sites at least once a week between tests.

NATO air strike won't end civil war in Bosnia: Owen

GENEVA, Aug 4: Lord Owen on Wednesday dismissed threatened NATO air strikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina as having little effect in bringing the civil war to an end or prodding leaders to make peace, reports AP.

"What would an air strike do apart from satisfy most of you (reporters) who seem to think that's the way to solve this problem?" Owen said as he arrived for the scheduled ninth day of the current round of Bosnian peace talks.

Owen, who has previously endorsed air strikes as a way of protecting UN personnel on the ground, in Bosnia, said they would have at best a "marginal" effect on the war, and that he saw no military leverage the world is likely to apply that would be effective.

"The only military solution is if you're prepared to put ground troops in and take it seriously," said OWEN, who has been co-

chairman of the peace conference on former Yugoslavia since it began in London last August.

"People keep evading this central question," he said. "Since nobody is prepared to put ground troops in and everybody knows they're not prepared to put ground troops in, you have lost your central leverage."

Western leaders shouldn't delude themselves that they can end the war from the air, he said.

"And, second, one has to look at the downsides and the consequences of aerial intervention, but that's a matter which NATO will be discussing again next week and no doubt for some weeks after that. There's nothing new. We've been discussing it for what's the best part of two and a half years."

Owen said the international community in the end is limited in what it can do and that it is up to the warring leaders to end the fighting.

"This is their country," Owen said. "Sometimes we have to say to them: Look, we don't mind what you do. If you can agree amongst the three of you, delighted. This is their country, it's their battle, it's their people who are being killed."

He said the international community could do more or less, "but the fundamental question is: What are these people who actually live in the country going to do?"

Owen, who is trying to restart the current round of talks after two days of boycott by Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, said he was "not at all confident" that the peace talks would succeed.

"If you can't get people to talk there will be war," he said. "That is what it's heading for. War. War in the winter. And if that is the solution, I can assure you you'll have a lot to report, but it will be a humanitarian disaster that you'll be reporting."

He said the biggest problems facing the negotiators was that the three sides keep fighting. "It's the old story," Owen said. "There's nothing new here. They all sign agreements to cease fire and take absolutely not a blamed bit of notice of it."

But he criticized Izetbegovic for holding out for an end to Serb fighting around Sarajevo before coming back to the talks because he said any of the leaders could use the same pretext.

"This is not one side doing these things," Owen said. "All three sides are committing aggression."

He said the Serb offensive near Sarajevo "has been provocative and unhelpful," but that fighting elsewhere was heavier, including that in the offensive of the Muslim-led Bosnian army against Bosnian Croats in central Bosnia.

Off the Record

They look down upon me as woman

LONDON: With accusations snobbery and sexism, Margaret Thatcher is taking revenge on some of the fellow ex-Cabinet ministers who plotted — or enjoyed — her ouster as prime minister in November 1990, reports AP.



In a four-part television series to be screened in October, the Iron Lady — now Lady Thatcher and a member of Britain's unelected House of Lords — has some unflattering recollections of ministers she hired and fired.

"Yes, I know some of them described me as 'that woman' ... to me they were those grandees," she says.

"I think not only did they look down upon me as a woman, but really thought the grocer's daughter didn't know how things were done," Lady Thatcher, 67, adds at another point.

The British Broadcasting Corp will run the series, 'Thatcher: The Downing Street Years,' in October, timed to coincide with her memoirs.

On Tuesday, the BBC released clips to promote the series. In the sections released she did not identify the Cabinet ministers she found particularly troublesome.

But she says, "... if they didn't help our cause, they had to go."

"They had that Biblical weakness — some of them, not all of them. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity. They liked to be acclaimed, they liked to preen themselves."

Operation to recover blade

COLOMBO: A 32-year-old man died after an operation to recover a blade left inside his body by doctors during a previous open heart surgery, a newspaper said Wednesday, reports AP.

Francis Selvanathan, a government labourer, died on Sunday at the Colombo General Hospital where he was operated the first time on July 30, the island newspaper said.

But doctors could not find the blade even after the second surgery, and it was discovered later Sunday during post-mortem, the English-language newspaper said.

The blade was lodged in the pulmonary vein, which carries blood from the lung to the heart.

Another Mona Lisa?

TRENTON: Could there be a reason for that enigmatic smile on the face of da Vinci's Mona Lisa? Could it be because she'd been through all this before? reports AP.

As most every school child knows, the Mona Lisa hangs in the Louvre in Paris, enshrined as one of the world's great paintings. But what about that other, 'younger' Mona Lisa, the one that sits in a bank vault somewhere in New Jersey?

Former Madison Mayor Roger B Vernon insists that both were painted by the same person.

"We all believe that the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre is the original ... a masterpiece done by Leonardo, Da Vinci," said Vernon, one of eight cousins who jointly own the New Jersey oil painting. "We just believe that he did two."

She smiles broadly and waves



LONDON: Library photo of Sunday shows the Queen Mother of England visiting the Sandringham Parish Church. —AFP photo

LONDON: Cheering crowds greeted a frail-looking Queen Mother Elizabeth on Wednesday as she made her traditional appearance at the gates of her London home on her 93rd birthday, reports AP.

She smiled broadly and waved at hundreds of well-wishers — some of whom had waited overnight — as a pipe and drum band marched past playing 'Happy Birthday.'

"The Queen Mother — Britain's favourite granny — chatted happily to dozens of children who presented her with flowers and cards.

Using her umbrella to steady herself, she then set off on a walkout to meet members of the crowd lining the street outside her Clarence House home.

The Queen Mother is the widow of Britain's wartime monarch, King George VI and the mother of the present Queen Elizabeth II. She has been forced to limit her public engagements since throat surgery in May to remove a fish bone.

22 killed in Indian train accident

NEW DELHI, Aug 4: A passenger train jumped off the rails in eastern India, killing 22 people who were travelling on the roof of three coaches, news reports said Wednesday, according to AP.

The Awadh-Assam Mail was speeding through Mairwa station late Tuesday when its three coaches skidded off the tracks, broke loose from the train and crashed on the ground, United News of India news agency reported.

Another 15 people were injured, another national news agency, Press Trust of India, said. The region is 740 kilometers (460 miles) southeast of New Delhi.

Tanaka's daughter joins LDP

TOKYO, Aug 4: The daughter of disgraced political powerbroker and ex-Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka joined her father's former political party today, a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) official said, reports Reuters.

Makiko Tanaka won back her father's lower house seat in Niigata, Northern Japan, running as a conservative independent in last month's general election.

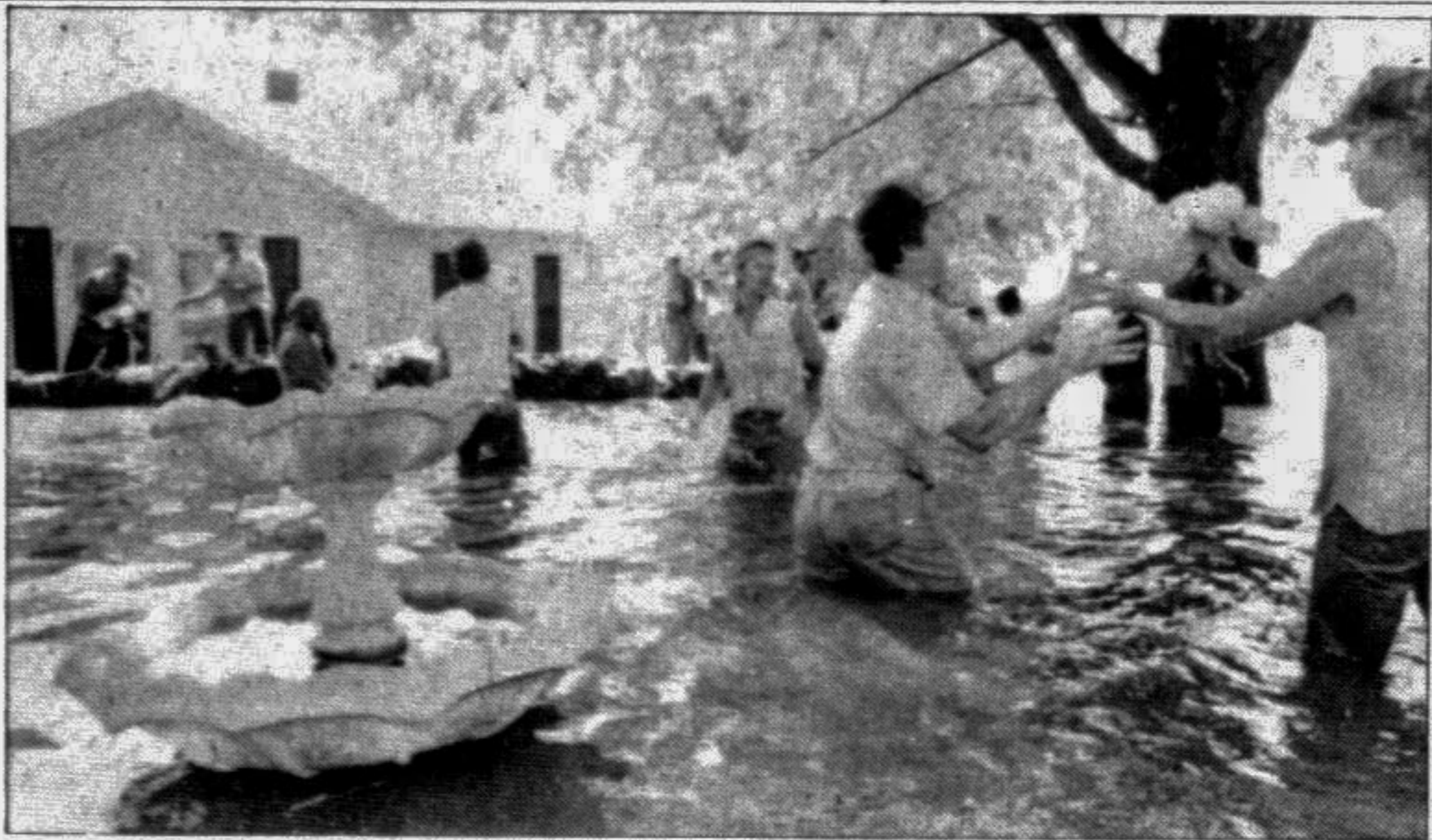
She joined the LDP on the eve of its handover of power to an eight-party coalition after 38 years at the helm.

Her move brings to 227 the number of seats the LDP holds in the powerful lower house.

Kakuei Tanaka, Prime Minister of Japan from 1972 to 1974, was the central figure in the 1976 Lockheed payoff scandal.

Although he technically left the LDP in 1976, he continued to act as the party's kingmaker until disabled by a stroke in 1985.

A first-time candidate, 49-year-old Makiko Tanaka spiced her campaign speeches with anecdotes about her father.



ILLINOIS: Volunteers try to save former Bill Kennedy's home from flood waters on Tuesday after the Army Corps of Engineers intentionally broke a nearby farmland levee to relieve pressure on the downtown's levee. The town is a historically significant 18th century French settlement. —AFP photo

Abdel Rahman was aware of bombing plot, shows tape

NEW YORK, Aug 4: Government transcripts show that Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman talked with his followers about the merits of targeting various buildings in an apparent guerrilla bombing plot, The New York Times reported today, says Reuters.

Eleven of the Sheikh's followers are charged with conspiring to bomb the United Nations building, the federal building which houses the FBI and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels connecting New York with New Jersey under the Hudson river.

The transcript records a May 23 meeting in which the blind Sheikh responds to questions from a government informer, Emad Salem. The Times said several other men were present, including Siddiq Ibrahim Siddiq Ali — a prime suspect in the plot.

Asked by Salem if the United Nations was the "house of the devil" and could be a target for "action", the Sheikh replied "it is not forbidden by Islamic law. But it will put the Muslims in bad light."

"Think of something else because the UN is considered to be the centre for peace. People will say that Muslim are against peace," the Sheikh said.

Salem then asked the Sheikh for his opinion about making a target of the FBI centre in central Manhattan. "By god, it needs to be studied," the cleric said.

The tapes, mostly in Arabic, have been translated by the government, the Times said.

The word bombing is never used in the conversations. But lawyers involved in the case say it is clear that Salem was referring to the plot to bomb four New York city targets that was foiled by federal agents in June the report said.

Abdel Rahman is in prison awaiting a decision on his appeal against expulsion from the United States on the grounds that he entered illegally while on a banned list.

Egypt has asked for his extradition for trial in connection with riots that occurred while he lived there.

The transcript provides the closest look yet at the Sheikh's possible involvement in the plot.

In a transcript of another meeting, Siddiq told Salem that he wanted to go to the Philippines for a holy war on behalf of Muslims there. Salem persuaded him to stay in New York, according to defence lawyers.

Barbara Nelson, the Sheikh's lawyer, said on Tuesday she had not heard the tapes nor seen the transcripts. She said the Sheikh was not aware of any bomb plot and had condemned any suggestion of violence.

Some of the Sheikh's followers are also awaiting trial in connection with February's bombing of New York's World Trade Center, in which six people were killed and more than 1,000 injured.

Court orders Demjanjuk's return to US

CINCINNATI, Ohio, Aug 4: An appeals court panel on Tuesday ordered John Demjanjuk's return to the United States, demanding a full examination of the record because of Demjanjuk's acquittal by the Israeli Supreme Court of being Nazi death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible," reports Reuters.

The appeals court for the sixth district said the overriding consideration in the case must be the question of whether Demjanjuk was fraudulently extradited.

The court said in its oral ruling that Israel had no right to detain the former Cleveland car worker for any crimes other than for being the notorious Nazi death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible" of Treblinka.

Meanwhile, AP adds: If Israel

tried Demjanjuk on new war-crimes charges, as is now contemplated, it would violate its extradition treaty with the United States, a three-judge panel of the 6th US Circuit Court of Appeals said Tuesday.

And, if Israel frees him, Demjanjuk must be allowed to return to the United States while his 1986 extradition is investigated, the judges ruled.

"In the search for the truth, it is important that the petitioner gets to the United States," Judge Damon J Keith said.

Israel's Supreme Court on Thursday overturned Demjanjuk's 1988 conviction and death sentence on charges he was "Ivan the Terrible," a guard who tormented and mutilated prisoners and operated the gas chambers at the Treblinka death camp in Poland. About 850,000 Jews were killed at Treblinka.

But on Sunday, the court ordered the 73-year-old retired auto worker held while prosecutors consider allegations he was a guard at another death camp. It scheduled a hearing Aug 11 to learn the prosecutors' decision. The court on Tuesday refused Demjanjuk's request to move up the hearing.

Israeli officials said Wednesday they will keep Demjanjuk in jail until the hearing. The state of Israel is sovereign. At this stage we work by Israeli court decisions," Prison Services spokesman Dudi Ben-Ami said.

The US appeals court extradited Demjanjuk "to be tried only for the charges in the war-

BRIEFLY

Elizabeth to attend funeral: Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip will attend the funeral on Saturday of Belgium's King Baudouin, Buckingham Palace announced in London Tuesday, AFP reports from London.

It is the first time the Queen will take part in a state funeral outside Britain, a palace spokesman said.

Baudouin and Queen Elizabeth last met in June when the British monarch visited the site of the Battle of Waterloo.

Somali gunmen, UN troops clash: Somali gunmen and UN troops exchanged gunfire Tuesday in southern Mogadishu as US helicopter gunships buzzed overhead, AFP reports from Mogadishu.

Bursts of gunfire rang out during a two-hour spell starting 8:30 pm (1730 GMT), with the fighting centred near the airport and a strategic roundabout.

A hotel used by foreign journalists was hit in cross-fire from Somali gunmen and Pakistani UN troops in a building adjoining the hotel.

3 Turks hurt in blast: A firebombing early Wednesday that police blamed on right-wing radicals injured three Turks in a town outside Cologne, AP reports.

The attack burned a house containing a Turkish restaurant in Pulheim and injured three members of the family who run the establishment, police said. Their injuries weren't life-threatening, they said.

Swastikas spray-painted at the site indicated the fire was motivated by hatred for foreigners, police said.

14 die in S African bus mishap: A public bus crashed into a disabled truck early Wednesday, killing 14 people and injuring 38, police said AP reports from Linderberg, South Africa.

The accident occurred in the western region of Natal Province when the bus taking passengers to the Transkei black homeland slammed into a timber truck parked on the road side, said police Lt Jim Wilken.

"The visibility was good so we don't know what happened," he said. "This is one of the worst accidents we've had in this area." A helicopter carried the seriously injured to a nearby hospital, Wilken said.

Israeli air strike death toll 132: The bodies of four civilians killed in Israel's week-long air, artillery and naval bombardment of Lebanon were found Tuesday raising the death toll to 132, Health Minister Mawan Hamade said, AFP reports from Beirut.

He said around 500 people, most of them civilians, were injured in the assault. More than one third of them were seriously hurt and still hospitalised.

But Hamade told Lebanese Television the toll was not final because more bodies could be found buried under rubble in devastated villages of south Lebanon.

Rafsanjani sworn in: President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was sworn in before parliament yesterday for a second term in office, AFP reports from Tehran.

Rafsanjani, who won reelection in a June 11 presidential election, is expected to present a list of his cabinet to the parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri on Sunday.

Meanwhile: President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani delivered a speech at the 'Majlis' (parliament) open session after taking the oath on the 2nd term of his presidency in Tehran on Wednesday.

My health excellent, says Yeltsin: President Boris Yeltsin, leaving on a visit to Southern Russia Wednesday denied reports that he was in poor health, Reuters reports from Moscow.

Speaking at the airport before flying to the city of Oryol, he told Itar-Tass news agency: "The state of my health is excellent. I work intensively. The work is very intensive."

The newspaper Rossiskaya Gazeta, mouthpiece of the conservative parliament which is locked in a power struggle with the Kremlin leader, suggested last week that his health could be failing.

30 extremists held in Egypt

CAIRO, Aug 4: Security forces arrested some 30 Islamic militants on Tuesday suspected of involvement in anti-government attacks during raids on the Cairo region, police said, reports AP.

A spokesman said the militants were suspected of involvement in 'terrorist operations' and had been rounded up following a tip-off from Mustafa Awai Zaki, a member of the radical Jamaa-Islamiyya.

Zaki was captured Monday following a shoot-out with police, which left one person dead and three injured.

Japan admits forced sex slaves during World War II

TOKYO, Aug 4: The government admitted Wednesday that the Imperial Japanese Army had forced or tricked tens of thousands of Asian and European women to serve as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II, reports AP.

Chief government spokesman Yohel Kono did not mention the issue of compensating the women now, although he said the government would study how best to apologize.

"There are many examples in which the women were gathered contrary to their will, by means of coercion and cajolery," Kono said in a prepared statement.

The government offers its heartfelt sentiments of reflection and apology to all the women for their many sufferings and the injuries to the mind and body that cannot be healed from their experience as comfort women," he said.

Kono's statement followed a recent Japanese government investigation in South Korea. It came after nearly a half century of denials that the military had forcibly rounded up women, mostly Korean, for front-line Japanese troops up until Japan's surrender in 1945.

Kono said it was not possible to estimate how many women were involved.

The South Korean government and civic groups had demanded that Japan conduct a full investigation into the recruitment of women as sex slaves.

A team of officials from the prime minister's office went to South Korea and took testimony from 16 former sex slaves over a period of five days beginning July 25.

Historians say that between 70,000 and 200,000 women from Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan and the Netherlands, as well as Japan, were recruited.

In July last year, the government admitted to the army's involvement in recruiting prostitutes during World War II, but would not admit that the army used force. It claimed that private groups were responsible for procuring sex slaves and operating brothels near the front-lines.

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa and other government officials offered a vaguely worded apology to South Korea last year for the action.

Records show that the extensive system of front-line Imperial Army brothels was unique in the history of the two world wars. But it was only early this year that the Education Ministry allowed textbook authors to include a euphemistic reference to sex slaves in school textbooks for use in 1994.

Several South Korean and Filipino women have filed suit in Tokyo seeking compensation. The Japanese government has refused to pay compensation, insisting that such claims were waived with the peace treaty that ended World War II on Aug 15, 1945, and by subsequent agreements.

A North Korean committee on Japanese war crimes has identified 131 women it says were victims. The North's Korean Central News Agency, monitored in Tokyo, said Monday that 34 of the 131 were willing to "take the witness stand."

The announcement came after a year long search for survivors, KCNA said.

During 35 years of colonial rule in Korea, Japan also conscripted hundreds of thousands of Koreans as slave labourers.

422 Uruguayan troops leave Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Aug 4: Some 422 Uruguayan soldiers left Cambodia for home today, the second contingent from the 16,000 strong UN military peacekeeping force to leave, reports Reuters.

The troops were part of an 848-member Uruguayan infantry battalion based in the remote North-East, an area rife with malaria.

On Monday, 400 Tunisian soldiers left for home after evacuating their operational area in the North-West.