

International

# Tamil refugees in Lankan camps starve

COLOMBO, Aug 24: Tamil refugees in a Sri Lankan camp are suffering from malnourishment and virtually starving after failing to receive dry rations from the government for more than three weeks, a relief official said on Monday, reports Reuter.

"The situation is getting worse day by day. There is starvation and malnutrition," the official from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told reporters.

He said that 370 families at the camp in northern Vavuniya had been without dry rations since August 1 due to wrangling between government agencies responsible for their welfare.

The families had been staying in India since fleeing fighting between Tamil rebels and government troops in the north and the east in July 1990. They returned to Sri Lanka in January and were living in the

Vavuniya camp.

The official said a government store that distributes the rations had stopped doing so this month because they had not been reimbursed from the Rehabilitation Ministry, which in turn had not received funds from the treasury. A treasury official said sometimes there were delays in disbursements for rehabilitation work.

"But it depends on the priority. If some other government ministry has a more immediate need, then they get the money and there is a delay for the Rehabilitation Ministry which monthly gets funds from us for its work," he said.

Rehabilitation Ministry officials were not available for comment. About 24,000 Tamils have returned out of 100,000 Sri Lankans living in refugee camps in Southern India.

# Azad Kashmiris threaten to join struggle against India

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan, Aug 24: Militant leaders in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir say sentiment is growing here for people to join an uprising against Indian rule on the other side of the divided Himalayan region, reports Reuter.

They allege that Indian troops have killed, tortured or raped thousands of people in a drive against Muslim separatists, enraging relatives and kinsmen across the border in Pakistan's Azad (free) Kashmir.

"The youths from Azad Kashmir are demanding that we provide weapons and training to participate in the struggle," said Raja Muzaffar, senior vice-chairman of the separatist Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

"If the Indians want to declare open war on the Kashmiris, the people of Azad Kashmir will join in the struggle

practically. We will be armed and the Pakistani authorities will not be able to stop us."

Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Abdul Qayyum said in a speech on Monday: "a day will come when Azad Kashmiris have to shed their blood for the brothers in (Indian) occupied Kashmir."

Police and hospitals in Indian-ruled Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state in mainly Hindu India, say at least 12,000 people have been killed since the uprising began in earnest three-and-a-half years ago. The JKLF says 35,000 have died.

Violence has escalated after a series of army killings of civilians, including the shooting of a young boy and his parents inside their home in the state summer capital of Srinagar.

Kashmiri separatist groups have a big presence in Azad

Kashmir and send fighters across the ceasefire line, the de facto border, to battle against Indian security forces.

The militants say most of those who have crossed so far were refugees from Indian-ruled Kashmir, not residents of Azad Kashmir.

Thousands of Kashmiris from both sides have taken part in several unarmed protest marches from Azad Kashmir since early 1992, aiming to breach the ceasefire line. They were blocked each time by Pakistani troops and police, who shot dead at least 11 demonstrators.

Rashid Turabi, head of the Muslim fundamentalist Jamaat-I-Islami party in Azad Kashmir, said local patience was wearing thin as the violence worsened.

"If the situation prevails for a long time, I think it will be diffi-

cult to stop Kashmiris from here and even Pakistanis who are committed," he told in the Azad Kashmir capital of Muzaffarabad.

"They will come out and try to violate the ceasefire line with even more force."

Asked if he meant they would march with arms, he replied: "yes, it can be."

Turabi said perhaps "a few hundred" youths from Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan and some Arab countries had already slipped across the border in secret to fight with the Kashmiri Mujahideen (Islamic fighters) in Indian-ruled territory.

He said the situation could escalate into a regional war or even a nuclear conflict as both Pakistan and India have the capability to make nuclear weapons.

# Off the Record

## Hosokawa still a child to his wife

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa is not the "male chauvinist pig type" but remains a six-year-old child at heart, according to his wife Kayoko, reports AFP.

She made the remarks in an interview published Tuesday in the daily paper Mainichi.

"He's not the male chauvinist type. The worst I can say about him is he's a bit spoiled and self-centered. It's as if his body has kept growing but he permanently remains a six-year-old," she said.

She dismissed as a "pack of lies" rumours that their son had problems in the United States over marijuana use or that her husband might be implicated in some of Japan's scandals.

She also rejected the perception of her 55-year-old husband as something of a lady's man, saying "he's kind not only to women but also to men. I'm not particularly worried, although I sometimes tell him to be careful because he can be misunderstood."

"Sometimes women mistake his kindness toward them as being directed at them," she added.

The Hosokawas, who met when they were both students at Sophia University in Tokyo, have a son and two daughters.



## True romantic tour on a gondola

VENICE: A French couple who went for a romantic outing on a gondola came back fuming when they found out they had been taken for a ride, reports AP.

They complained they were charged 500,000 lire (dhs 310) for a one-hour tour, compared with the official dhs 80,000 lire (50 rate).

Anxious to save their reputation, a group of gondoliers passed their straw hats around to collect the 310 dollars among them.

"We don't know who overcharged them or even if it was another gondolier. But we felt obliged to excuse ourselves and send them the money to preserve our reputation," said Ivan Fasan, a gondolier along the Grand Canal.

Fasan said the gondoliers sent the couple a letter asking them to accept the money as a sign of solidarity and offered them a "true romantic tour on a gondola" if they come back to Venice.

## Beer drinkers' contest

PRAGUE, Czech Republic: Qualifying was hard enough — downing two pints (1 liter) of beer in one gulp. But that was only the prelude to an arduous bout of elbow-bending, reports AP.

The winner? A bus driver who rarely indulges in alcohol. The man, who was not identified by the state CTK news agency, put away 20 pints (nearly 10 liters) of brew Saturday to triumph at the annual beer drinkers' contest in Strakonice.

The contest, held about 75 miles (120 kilometers) southwest of Prague, was open to anyone who would by drain a two-pint (1-liter) glass of beer at one gulp.

Many cleared that hurdle. After a short break, the contest began in earnest — competitors had to down six pints (nearly 3 litres) an hour.

Only eight finalists survived into the evening. And only two made it till midnight, when the winner was announced.

The driver received 10,000 Czech crowns (dhs 320) in prize money, said CTK.

Czechs have one of the highest beer consumption in the world — downing an average of nearly 42 gallons (170 litres) each annually.

## Dogs eat new-born infant

VIZIANAGARAM (Andhra Pradesh): In a gruesome incident, a new-born infant, abandoned by her mother, was eaten up by stray dogs in Chinamerangi, village of the district on Sunday, reports PTI.

An unidentified woman dumped the baby on a garbage heap and disappeared, according to the villagers who could not hear the cries of the helpless infant even as dogs pounced on her.

They were later shocked to find the half-eaten baby near the garbage bin. They said the stigma of an illegitimate relation might have led the mother to disown her child.

## Royal treatment at Disney World

ORLANDO: Princess Diana and her two sons will get the royal treatment when the family arrives at Walt Disney World for a three-day visit, reports AP.

Orange County sheriff's deputies will escort the royal family to the Grand Floridian, one of Disney's plushiest resorts, after their scheduled arrival Tuesday afternoon, said sheriff's spokesman Deputy Carlos Padilla.

Diana is bringing Prince William, 11, and Prince Harry, 8, but not her estranged husband and heir to the throne, Prince Charles.

"Her request was to be here for a low-key vacation with her children," Orange County Capt. R. Roger Clark told The Orlando Sentinel for a story Tuesday.

The princess just three weeks ago had complained vacations are never relaxing because of persistent photographers.

But Princess Diana may find peace at the Grand Floridian — where the best room features French doors, marble floors and lots of mirrors; both bedrooms boast more-than-king-sized beds; plush robes, fresh flowers and magnificent views are included for 1,450 dollars a night; and tea is served from 3 to 5 pm daily.



# US to send 400 more troops to Somalia

WASHINGTON, Aug 24: President Bill Clinton is to send up to 400 extra US soldiers to Somalia according to a report by CBS on Monday, says AFP.

The television channel quoting unnamed administration officials, said Clinton had decided to send the troops following the recent spate of attacks against US troops by Somali bandits.

The latest attack came Sunday in Mogadishu when six American soldiers serving with the UN Peacekeeping Force were slightly injured when their military vehicle hit a landmine.

Four American soldiers, including two women, were injured when their vehicle was hit by a landmine in Mogadishu on Thursday.

On August 8, four American soldiers were killed in another mine explosion in southern Mogadishu. The area is controlled by warlord Mohamed

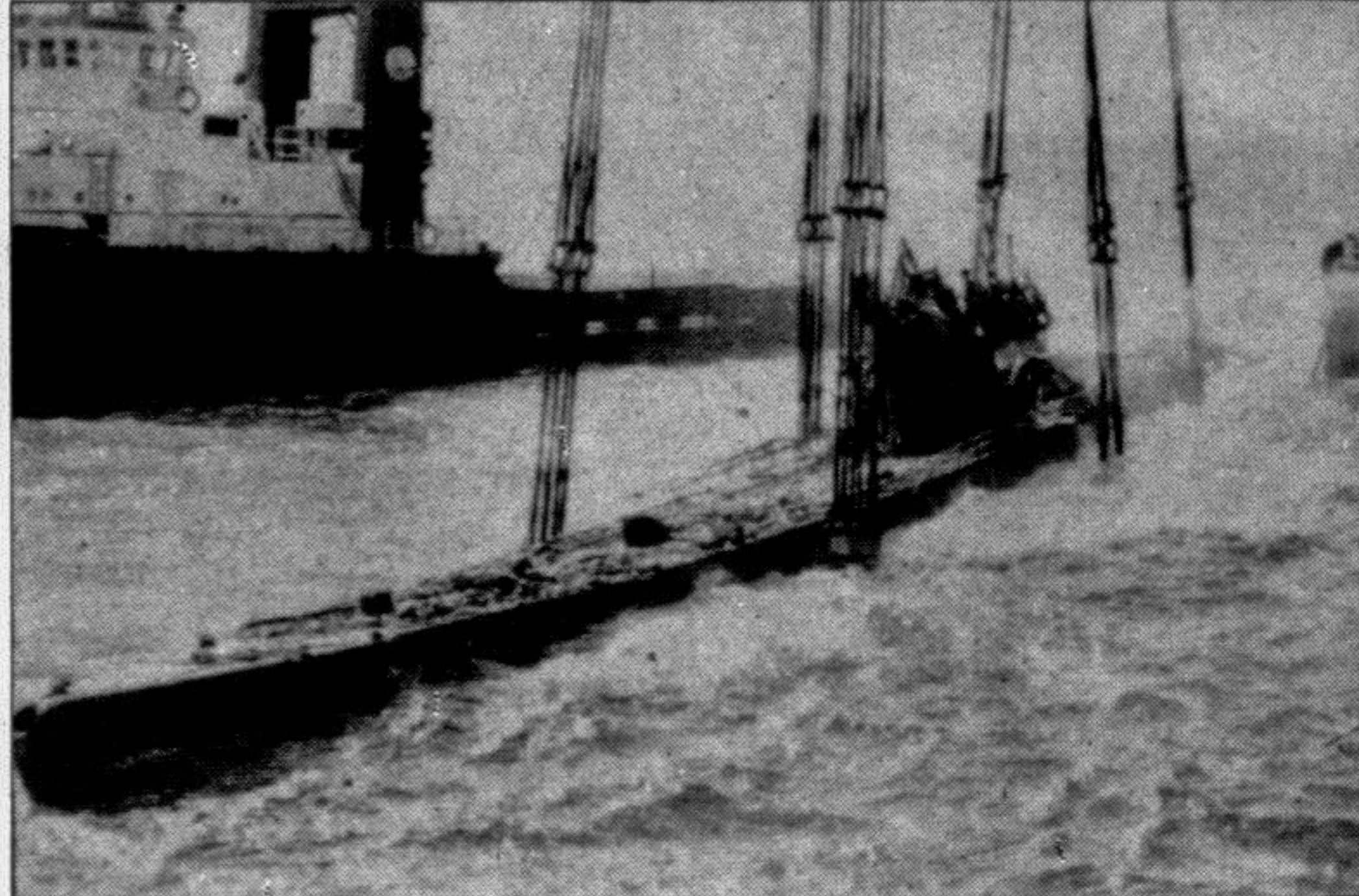
Farah Aidede.

Another report from Mogadishu Adds: Somali gunmen fired four mortar shells into Mogadishu Airport late Monday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

Foreign journalists staying at the Al Shahafi hotel, not far from the airport, heard several explosions, followed by the sound of small arms fire from the direction of the airport.

Helicopter gunships belonging to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Somalia (UNOSOM II) could be seen hovering over the airport.

The UN on Saturday closed Mogadishu Airport saying it had information that militiamen loyal to fugitive Somali warlord Mohamed Farah Aidede possessed anti-aircraft weapons which could be used against UN troops.



ANHOLT ISLAND, Denmark: A Dutch salvage team raises a German submarine "U534" from the seabed August 23. The submarine was sunk by British aircraft on May 5 in 1945, just a few days before the end of the World War II, and could be carrying secret Nazi documents or gold — AFP photo

# 3 more ministers in Lankan cabinet

COLOMBO, Aug 24: Sri Lankan President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga appointed two new cabinet ministers and a deputy minister on Monday, statement from the Presidential Secretariat said, reports Reuter.

It said Paul Perera was the new Minister of Lands and John Amararatne Minister of Home Affairs and Provincial Councils.

Perera is also Deputy Minister of Science and Technology and Amararatne is Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, both have retained these posts.

The lands portfolio was earlier held by Gamini Athukorale, who retains his posts of Forestry and Irrigation Development. The Provincial Councils post was held by Festus Perera who remains Minister of Public Administration.

Wijetunga also appointed Dharmadeva Jayasinghe as Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Provincial Councils.

# Angolan forces retake Camanongue

SAO TOME, Aug 24: Angolan government forces have retaken the town of Camanongue in Eastern Angola from UNITA rebels, Angolan state radio said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The radio, monitored in the island state of Sao Tome and Principe, said government troops inflicted dozens of casualties on UNITA fighters in the weekend battle for Camanongue, 52 km (32 miles) from the previously besieged city of Luena.

Camanongue is on the road north from Luena, capital of Mexico province, to Sauroimo, capital of Luanda south province, which has also been under rebel siege for several

months.

The World Food Programme (WFP) resumed aid flights to Luena and Sauroimo last week. It had suspended them after UNITA fired at a UN plane in northwestern Angola in mid-July.

UNITA (the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), occupied Camanongue last October when it went back to war against the ruling MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola).

The two sides signed agreements to end 16 years of civil war in 1991 but UNITA took up arms again last year after losing elections to the MPLA.

State radio and UNITA radio both reported that government and rebel representatives were due to take part in a series of meetings in the Zimbabwean capital Harare on Monday with the aim of resurrecting the peace process.

The radio said the UN special representative in Angola, Aloune Blondin Beye, Angolan Foreign Minister Venancio De Moura and UNITA's acting secretary for foreign affairs, Paulo Lukamba Gato, would all meet Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe.

Beye and De Moura flew into Harare at the weekend. Beye's predecessor, Briton

Margaret Anstee, organised UN sponsored peace talks in the Ivory Coast capital Abidjan earlier this year, but they collapsed after six weeks when UNITA refused to sign a peace protocol which the government accepted.

Beye said on Sunday that no date had yet been set for a new round of peace talks, which were expected to start in Harare or another African capital by September 15 at the latest.

The U.N. Security Council meets on September 15 to review the Angolan situation. It has threatened UNITA with sanctions if it does not honour the 1991 peace agreements by then.

# Azeri troops flee Dzebrail

DZEBRAIL, Aug 24: Azerbaijani troops have withdrawn from this key city, south of Nagorno-Karabakh, after several days' siege by Armenian forces, correspondents on the scene reported today, says AFP.

A T-72 tank and several anti-aircraft pieces, including a Grad multiple rocket launcher, fired on Armenian positions for two hours late Monday to cover the withdrawal of the last Azerbaijani soldiers from the television station in the southwest of the city.

The Armenian forces took over the Azeri positions around Dzebrail, but respected their commander's orders not to enter the city.

An AFP correspondent with five Armenian reconnaissance scouts in an outlying village saw that the city was virtually deserted.

All but the aged seemed to have fled. The city's buildings were not heavily damaged.

The retreating Azerbaijanis fled toward the Iranian border,

a mere 15 kilometres (9 miles) south.

The fall of Dzebrail means that the Armenians now control the national highway linking the regions of Zanguelean and Kubatly in the southwestern

# Saudis to inspect Chinese cargo

DUBAI, Aug 24: A Chinese ship said by Washington to be carrying chemical weapons materials for Iran is on its way to a Saudi Arabian port and China hopes the Saudis will inspect the cargo, a Chinese diplomat in Riyadh said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"The ship now is going to Damman Port," the Chinese diplomat told. "There are contacts between the Chinese and the Saudi side on how to conduct the inspection."

"We agree that inspection be conducted by the Saudi side in the presence of a Chinese representative, but we don't agree to inspection by the Americans."

corner of Azerbaijan with the Eastern two-thirds of the country.

The Azeris still hold the secondary roads along the Iranian border.

Meanwhile, AP quoting a local official from Baku, said: At least two people were killed Tuesday and three were wounded in clashes with gunmen loyal to a separatist warlord in southern Azerbaijan.

Opposition demonstrators on Monday ousted Alikram Gumbatov from the main government building in the Caspian Sea city of Lenkoran, only 35 kilometers (20 miles) from the Iranian border.

Gumbatov was reported to have fled the city on Monday, but on Tuesday he was holed up in a military base in the center of the city, the head of the regional government said.

A retired army colonel and former Communist Party leader who is said to command 3,000 men and scores of tanks, Gumbatov proclaimed the region an autonomous republic within Azerbaijan on August 7.

# Thai hotel collapse: One more body recovered

BANGKOK, Aug 24: Workers on Tuesday recovered the body of a Swedish businessman who died along with his Thai family in a hotel collapse 11 days, authorities said, reports AP.

The body of Barry Ahrens was retrieved from the ruins of the six-story Royal Plaza Hotel in Korat, 210 kilometers (130 miles) northeast of Bangkok.

The hotel collapsed August 13. As of Tuesday, a total of 131 bodies had been retrieved. Among them, the only other foreigners were a British woman and an American soldier.

The bodies of Ahrens' Thai wife, Sukanya, 32, and two young daughters were recovered last Wednesday.

# Hosokawa's apology to help wartime victims seek compensation

UNDATED, Aug 24: The Japanese government's apology for wartime aggression has drawn a guarded response from the neighbouring Asian countries. It was attempting to appease, reports AFP.

Perhaps surprised by the frankness of the apology, regional governments were slow to react officially to Monday's speech by Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, in which he expressed "profound remorse and apologies" for Japan's wartime role in Asia.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said Beijing had taken note of Hosokawa's speech, adding that "the past, if not forgotten, can serve as a guide for the future."

"To adopt a correct attitude

towards that period of history and keep to the road to peaceful development are in the fundamental interests of the Japanese people and also countries to peace and stability in Asia," the spokesman said.

Hosokawa's remarks are the most candid ever by a Japanese premier in parliament, although he did not mention the issue of compensation.

There were also reactions from South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines, all embroiled in the long-running "comfort women" saga, involving compensation claims from women forced to serve as prostitutes for Japanese troops during World War II.

"In principle, we view his remarks as going one step fur-

ther than what was said by his predecessors," a South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

"In this sense, we appreciate them, but his perspective on the history cannot rectify the Japanese perspective on the past once and for all," the spokesman said, adding: "We would like to see his remarks reflected in the education of Japanese youth."

The spokesman said Seoul would not make an official statement because Hosokawa was speaking in the Japanese parliament and it was "not appropriate" for the foreign ministry to react to a domestic speech of that nature.

On the issue of compensa-

tion, he noted that President Kim Young-Sam himself had said after taking office earlier this year that Seoul would not seek reparation from Japan for its sexual enslavement of up to 200,000 Korean women during the war.

The spokesman said Hosokawa's call for improved ties with China, South Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - grouping Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand - would "contribute to building forward-looking relations."

The Philippine government's press secretary, Jesus Sison, said Manila also welcomed the apology and hoped it would expedite a resolution of the com-

ensation issue.

"The gesture of the Japanese Prime Minister is most welcome, even if no mention was made of monetary compensation. It is the position of the government that it will help victims to seek compensation," Sison said.

He also thanked Tokyo for "the sincere efforts of the Japanese people atone for Japanese abuses during the war."

In Taiwan, a foreign ministry statement said it viewed Hosokawa's speech as a positive step, although it called on Japan to deal fairly and sincerely with the issues arising from its wartime excesses.

The speech indicated "that the Japanese government can finally look at this matter prop-

# Bid to solve Sino-Vietnamese territorial disputes

BEIJING, Aug 24: China and Vietnam launched high-level talks today to try to settle sensitive territorial disputes including a row over oil drilling rights in the Tonkin Gulf, reports Reuter.

"We hope that, with concerted efforts by both sides, these talks can yield positive results," Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tan Juxuan said at a greeting ceremony for his Vietnamese counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Yu Khoan.

"In order to further promote our relations, we have both decided to hold these talks to help resolve various problems left over from history," Khoan said.

erly, knowing what was wrong, and that it is willing to adopt a more far-sighted vision to devote itself to international development," the statement said.

While such remarks might help improve Japan's relations with Asian countries, Tokyo "must remember the lesson of the history and handle the problems arising after the war with fairness and sincerity," it added in an apparent reference to the comfort women issue.

In Bangkok, the Deputy Director General of the foreign ministry's information department, Revue Hongsaprabhas, described Hosokawa's remarks as "a good gesture," although he stressed the Thai government had yet to provide an official response.