

Gen Joshi in China for border talks

NEW DELHI, July 20: India's army commander flew to Beijing Wednesday for talks on reducing troops along the disputed border with China, 32 years after the two countries went to war, reports AP.

The visit, the first by a serving army chief, comes a day after China's vice premier and foreign minister, Qian Qichen, ended a trip to India. The exchange reflects the two countries' resolve to put their difficult history behind them and promote a new post-Cold War relationship.

General Bipin Chandra Joshi, who commands Asia's largest army after China's, will meet generals of the People's Liberation Army to discuss troop redeployment and increased border meetings, a military spokesman said.

He also is scheduled to visit military bases in Xiang, Dunhuang, Chengdu, and Shenzhen.

India has an army of 1.2 million men against China's 2.3

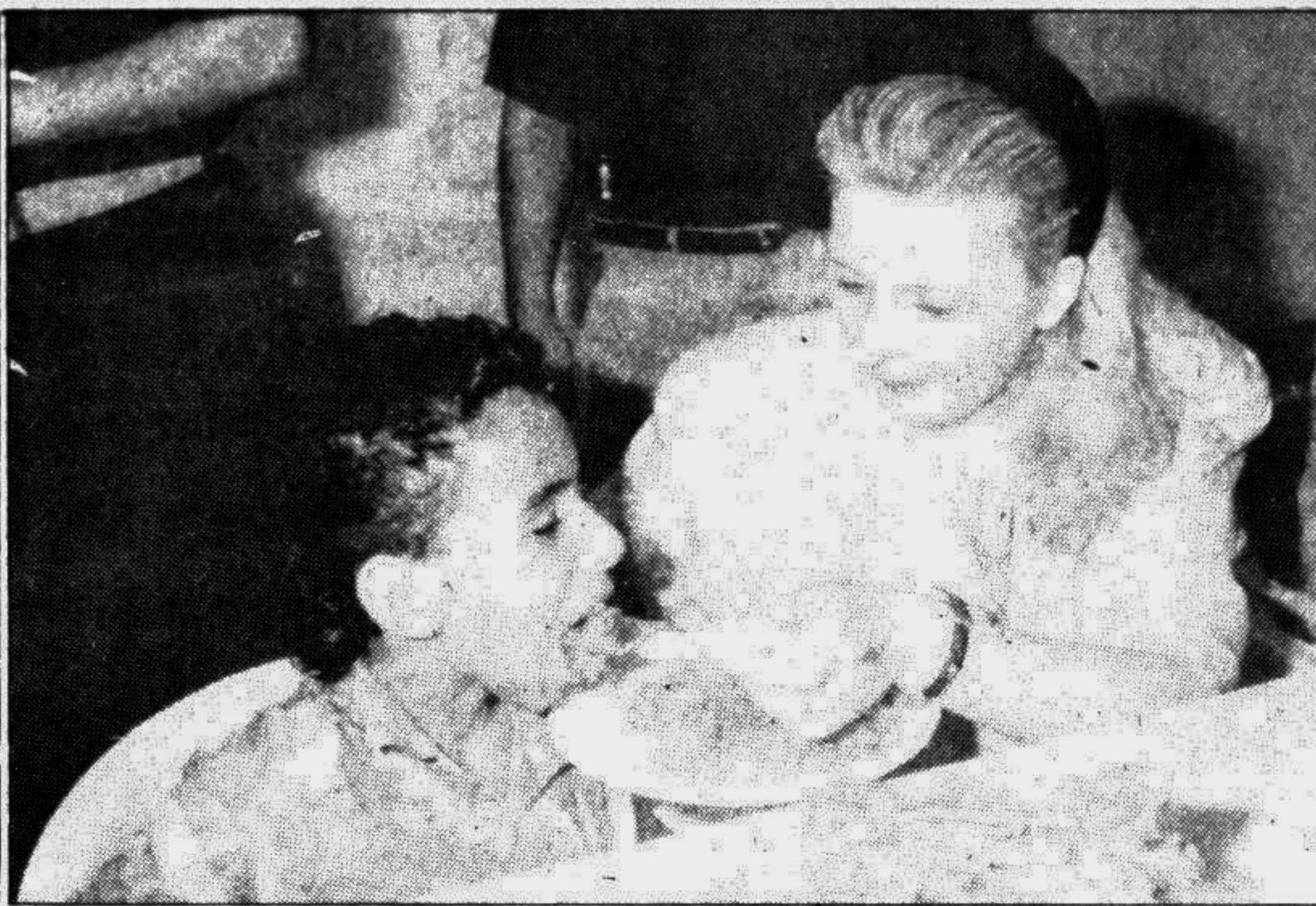
million. The Indians have 11 mountain divisions, or 154,000 soldiers, along the 4,000-kilometer (2,500-mile) frontier. China is believed to have as many or more.

India and China fought a 21-day war in 1962. In 1987, the two armies came close to another confrontation when India was redeploying its troops. Though relations have improved since then, they have not reached the level of trust.

Joshi's visit is a part of confidence-building steps incorporated into September 1993 agreement to maintain peace along the 1962 cease-fire line.

Regular meetings between field commanders also have reduced border tensions, but neither army has thinned its troops from the front line.

China is also a major supplier of missiles and other weapons to India's arch-enemy Pakistan.



Suha Arafat, wife of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, feeds one of her husband's Palestinian adopted children at the PLO headquarters in Gaza City on Tuesday. Suha and Arafat made their first public appearance together since arriving in Gaza city last week when they welcomed the 50 adopted children. — AFP photo

Israel bans Palestinian minister from Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, July 20: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has banned the Palestinian Economy Minister Ahmad Korei, from Jerusalem for security reasons, an official spokesman said, reports AP.

Rabin rejected for security reasons a request made in recent days by Korei to visit Jerusalem, the spokesman said.

He refused to say if the ban was linked to Sunday's riots at the checkpoint from Gaza to Israel which left two Palestinians dead and dozens of Palestinians and Israelis wounded.

However, the authorities have allowed Korei to visit his family in the village of Abu Dis, which borders East Jerusalem but is technically part of the occupied West Bank.

Korei, known as Abu Alaa, negotiated for the PLO the economic track of the autonomy agreement with Israel and

returned to the territories last Thursday.

Israel annexed East Jerusalem after capturing it in the 1967 Middle East war and refuses to allow senior Palestinians to visit the city without permission.

Reuter reports: A majority of Palestinians are optimistic about the future after taking over Gaza and Jericho two months ago under a peace deal with Israel, according to an opinion poll published on Tuesday.

The Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC) conducted the survey of 1,920 Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank in the last week in cooperation with the Saudi-owned London based MBC television network.

Of those surveyed, 53 per cent were optimistic about the future. Palestinians following implementation of the self-rule deal in May. The poll showed 32 per cent were pessimistic

and 15 per cent had no opinion.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who moved to Gaza this month to cement the deal, also mustered majority support.

According to the poll 55 per cent were more confident and optimistic since the return of Arafat and the Palestinian leadership while 14 per cent were more anxious and pessimistic and 31 per cent said their feelings were unchanged.

The survey conducted at offices in main towns among people filling out application forms for identity cards and other documents, showed 41 per cent backed Arafat's Fatah organisation.

The faction with the most support after Fatah was the rival Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas which opposes the peace deal and had the support of 11 per cent, the survey showed.

Tibet China's autonomous region, iterates Koirala

KATHMANDU, July 20: Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen held talks here Tuesday with Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on bilateral ties and regional and international issues, a Foreign Ministry source said, reports AP.

Qian arrived here Tuesday on the latest stage of an Asian tour for a two-day official visit at the invitation of the Nepalese government.

They discussed matters of common concern during talks which lasted more than an hour, including the sensitive subject of Tibet.

Koirala reiterated Nepal's stance of Tibet, saying that the

Nepalese government regarded Tibet as an autonomous region of China.

He assured Qian that Nepal would not allow any anti-Chinese activities related to the Tibetan issue on its territory, the source said.

The two leaders also discussed the prospects of joint industrial ventures in Nepal, a source close to Koirala's office said the two leaders later held talks alone, without aides present.

Qian is scheduled to hold talks today with Nepalese officials on economic cooperation between the two states, and is expected to sign an agreement on economic assistance, fol-

lowing up an agreement reached during King Birendra's state visit to China last year.

The Chinese Foreign Minister, the first to visit Nepal in 16 years is scheduled to meet King Birendra today.

On his arrival after a three-day trip to India, Qian said: "China and Nepal are amicable neighbours linked by common mountains and rivers and enjoy a long standing friendship."

The Chinese government and its people treasure this traditional friendship, he said.

I hope this visit will help enhance understanding and deepen our friendship and promote cooperation, he said.



Rwanda's new Hutu president Pasteur Bizimungu and his vice president Paul Kagame (R) share a joke on Tuesday in Kigali. — AFP photo

One charged with threatening to kill Clinton

PHILADELPHIA, July 20: A man who was said to be angry about a gun control law and had dozens of weapons was charged Tuesday with threatening to kill President Clinton, reports AP.

Paul F. Walling Jr, 46, allegedly told a police officer he would like to shoot Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno "for what they have done to the American people by trying to take guns away from them," court papers said.

Secret Service agent Ernest Kun said authorities have no evidence Walling ever came near Clinton, who visited Philadelphia on Friday.

Walling was charged with threatening the president, 16 counts of illegally obtaining weapons and interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle.

Searches of his home, a van and a New Jersey house where he was staying, yielded about 40 weapons, all allegedly bought illegally in the name of Walling's dead brother, court papers said.

560 killed in Indian floods

NEW DELHI, July 20: At least 560 people have died in floods, landslides and collapsed houses since monsoon rains hit India last month, the Press-Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says Reuter.

The agency said the worst problems were in the western state of Gujarat, where the army had been called out to help rescue marooned people in some areas, and in central Madhya Pradesh.

At least 125 people died in Gujarat after being swept away by swollen rivers or being buried in landslides or collapsing houses.

At least 100 people died in the western state of Maharashtra, PTI said. Other high death tolls were in the southern states of Kerala, where 92 died, and Karnataka, where 59 were killed.

The rain-driven devastation, which has also hit eastern and northeastern states, has damaged crops and destroyed or severely damaged tens of thousands of homes.

Haitian police raid opposition offices

PORT-AU-PRINCE, July 20: Police raided an opposition coalition's offices and roughed up activists while the United States belittled diplomatic efforts by military rulers to end their international isolation, reports AP.

Firing into the air, police and gunmen in civilian clothes Tuesday raided the downtown headquarters of K-16, roughed up several people and arrested at least one person, said Sen Turne Delpe, a coalition spokesman. The man later was released.

Police also used belts and switches to control a crowd of about 1,000 people.

UN Council asks Mozambicans to demobilise troops

UNITED NATIONS, July 20: The Security Council on Tuesday again warned parties in Mozambique to demobilise their troops and make sure elections were held in October as envisaged under a peace agreement to end the country's civil war, reports Reuter.

In a statement read at a formal meeting by Council President Jamsheed Marker of Pakistan, the 15-member body said it could not accept delays in demobilising forces and forming a new Mozambican army made up of government troops and former rebels.

It is essential that the demobilisation of all forces is completed by August 15 as agreed by the parties, and that difficulties in forming the army be addressed quickly and with flexibility, the statement said.

Off the Record

Deadly French kiss

TAIPEI: A Taiwan court has sentenced a prostitute to eight and a half years in jail for what prosecutors called a deadly French kiss in which she slipped sleeping pills down customers' throats before robbing them, reports Reuter.

The prosecutor told the Taichung court in central Taiwan that the prostitute, identified only as Lin, slipped sleeping pills under her tongue and forced them down clients' throats while kissing them, local newspapers said on Wednesday.

Lin stole hundreds of thousands of Taiwan dollars over two years by using her "deadly French kiss," the newspapers quoted the prosecutor as saying.

Lin was arrested after one man realised a pill was being forced down his throat and called police before passing out. Police caught Lin as she was leaving the hotel with the client's wallet, the newspapers said.

Ruling the prostitute had endangered the lives of her victims, the court sentenced her to eight and a half years in jail.

A bloody mistake

STOCKHOLM: The chief of Sweden's largest white-collar trade union resigned Tuesday following a public uproar over a visit he made to a topless club three years ago, reports AP.

Bjorn Rosengren said the visit was "a bloody mistake," by resigning, he said, "I have paid my debts."

Rosengren heads the Confederation of Professional Workers, which represents 1.3 million members. Half of them are women.

After Rosengren's visit was revealed by the Swedish press last month, female members blasted their leader for visiting an establishment they consider degrading to women.

The incident reflects a change of attitudes about sex in Sweden since the 1960s, when Scandinavia was in the forefront of the sexual revolution.

In recent years, feminist groups have stepped up their campaigns against pornography and prostitution. Porn shops and cinemas for X-rated movies that were popular two decades ago have become rare. Sex clubs are strictly regulated and live-sex shows are banned.

The bar that Rosengren visited, then called "Tabu" (taboo) but since renamed "King's Club," features semi-nude women who entice guests to buy non-alcoholic drinks.

Just 52 years late

LONDON: An elderly Briton received a love letter, written to him shortly after he married his wife during World War Two, 52 years late, newspapers reported Wednesday, says Reuter.

Walter Mason, 74, from Wolreton Garth in northern England, received the letter eight days ago but is unable to open the letter from his wife Vera, whom he married in 1942 and who died eight years ago, because it would be too upsetting.

The letter, which she posted from her home in the northern town of Hull four months after their marriage, followed him from one warship to another where he served as a sailor during the war before ending up in a naval sorting office where it lay untouched for years.

In 1986 it was forwarded to Mason's former shipmate Ray Osgerby, but he did not pass it on as Vera had just died. Afterwards he forgot about the letter and it was only recently that he remembered it and sent it along.

"In the last week, I've turned over the envelope so many times," Mason said. "It will contain her usual expressions of love and kisses which kept me going through the darkest days. It will be heartbreaking to me."

Libya won't support IRA 'militarily'

LONDON, July 20: Libya will never support the Irish Republican Army "militarily" again, but remains sympathetic to its cause, an aide to Libyan leader Moamer Gadhafi says in a television interview today, reports AP.

"We supported Ireland at the beginning as a national liberation movement. Until the Irish people, Irish movement or the IRA went into a bombing spree in London, then we stopped," said Foreign Affairs Secretary Saad Mujber in an interview to be broadcast on Channel 4 today.

"We stopped because of two reasons, moral and selfish. The moral one is that we cannot agree that we be helpers of those who go out and kill people indiscriminately... to go to London which is not in Ireland and to start killing people, this is something we can never condone... the selfish one is that we have thousands of Libyan students there (in the UK)."

In the interview, cited by The Independent newspaper, he claims: "You can be certain that at no point in time in the future will be support the IRA militarily."

However Mujber, formerly Libya's envoy in Paris and now ranked third in the regime's hierarchy, said that the regime would not supply any new information on its relationship with the IRA to Britain.

Mujber admitted that much of the information passed to the British government by the Libyans last year describing their relationship with the IRA

was bogus.

Britain has had no diplomatic relations with Libya since the killing of a woman police constable, Yvonne Fletcher, outside the Libyan embassy in London in 1984.

Relations between Libya and Britain have also been soured by investigations into the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people were killed.

Two Libyan nationals are wanted in connection with the bombing. Mujber said the two men were prepared to stand trial in a Scottish court in the Hague.

Gunmen kill 7 of a SA family

JOHANNESBURG, July 20: Unknown attackers firing AK-47 assault rifles killed seven people at a family dinner in Kwaulu-Natal province, police said Wednesday, reports AP.

The attack occurred Tuesday night in Ndwedwe, a rural town north of Durban in the traditional Zulu homeland where fighting has previously occurred between rival political groups.

Police Maj Bala Naidoo said the Ngcobo family was sitting down to dinner when an unknown number of gunmen entered the home and opened fire.

Seven people — the two parents and five of their children — were killed, while another child was injured and a 2-year-old child was reported missing, he said.

Nigerian students briefly hold governor captive

LAGOS, July 20: Students briefly held a state military governor captive and rioters clashed with police for a second day Tuesday in unrest sparked by protests against the government, reports AP.

Police and soldiers used tear gas to disperse students who had detained the governor in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state in southwestern Nigeria.

The students were demanding the release and immediate installation as president of Mashood K O Abiola, the apparent winner in last year's election before it was annulled.

Nigeria has been in turmoil since July 4 when the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers called a strike to protest the arrest of Abiola. Strikes by other workers have paralysed many basic services.

Human rights hottest topic in runup to tomorrow's ASEAN meet

BANGKOK, July 20: The hottest topic in Bangkok in the runup to the annual ASEAN meeting here this week is human rights — a topic which appears nowhere on the official ASEAN agenda, reports AP.

Senior officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were Tuesday in the midst of three-day preparations for the foreign ministers' session, opening Friday.

But their work, and the many topics of regional interest the ministers are to discuss have been overshadowed by human rights concerns in Myanmar and East Timor and their potential for embarrassing ASEAN members.

Wednesday marks the fifth anniversary of the detention of Myanmar's leading dissident, Aung Sang Suu Kyi. Two days later representatives of Myanmar's ruling junta will attend the ASEAN meeting as guests of host Thailand.

Also on Wednesday, a regional human rights seminar is scheduled to open, focusing attention on both Myanmar and East Timor, a troubled former Portuguese colony which Indonesia, an ASEAN member, invaded and annexed in the 1970s.

The Thai government has warned Myanmar dissidents to keep their protests in check, and it has sought to ban foreign participation in the human rights seminar.

"These are not issues for the ASEAN agenda," a senior official from an ASEAN country said. "They are matters for individual members."

Deputy Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan defended Bangkok's stance Tuesday, saying Thai people could choose to express their opinions on human rights issues, "but not

to damage ties with neighbouring countries."

But human rights activists and Thailand's crusading press saw it differently.

Organisers of the human rights seminar said the meeting would go ahead, and participants would defy a government requirement that they obtain working visas because, they held, they were not coming to Bangkok for employment.

But with less than 24 hours to go, organisers were still looking for a venue after state-run Chulalongkorn University reconsidered its agreement to provide space.

Meanwhile, 14 demonstrators, outnumbered by security officials and reporters, braved fears of arrest Tuesday to protest outside the Myanmar embassy against Bangkok's invitation to the Myanmar junta. Other protests were sched-

uled.

In an editorial Tuesday, The Nation daily regretted that human rights concerns had been forced to give way to the "ASEAN spirit," a reference to Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsri's explanation of why Thailand had moved against seminar participants.

"As Prasong is ready to shake hands with his Myanmar counterpart Ohn Gyaaw, invited as his special guest for the ASEAN meeting, he is making sure that all voices of dissent from the Myanmar will not be heard in Bangkok," The Nation said.

Commentaries in The Nation and The Bangkok Post the past two days called for ASEAN pressure on Yangon to release Aung San Suu Kyi.

Commentators reminded Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as the seminar organisers had been

instrumental in ousting the military and installing a civilian government in Thailand.

Chulalongkorn University law professor Vitti Muntaribhorn, writing in The Nation Tuesday, accused the Chuan government of trying to suppress the freedom of opinion and expression "by means of distorted local legal provision."

This was especially regrettable, Vitti said, "When NGOs are trying to exercise those rights in good faith and to act on behalf of fellow humans whose rights are being violated elsewhere. The latter are the ones being killed, tortured and maimed in not-so distant lands."

Another report from Washington says: US lawmakers called on Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Tuesday to rally support at the upcoming ASEAN meeting for pressure on Myanmar's mili-

tary rulers to stop human rights abuses and begin democratic reforms.

Torture and ill-treatment, forced labour and portering, denial of freedom of speech and association and other gross human rights violations continue unabated" in Myanmar, said a letter signed by 53 representatives and senators.

The legislators said the July 25-28 post-ministerial conference (PMC) in Bangkok of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would be a prime opportunity to coordinate opposition against Myanmar's military regime.

"We believe that the ASEAN PMC could signal an important turning point in the international community's relations with Myanmar and significantly enhance prospects for the future of peace and democracy in Myanmar," said the letter.

Fresh fighting in Chechnya

MOSCOW, July 20: Fighting erupted the breakthrough southern region of Chechnya on Wednesday after opposition forces blew up a highway bridge leading into the capital, a news agency said, reports AP.

The Interfax news agency said the battle pitted gunmen loyal to President Dzhokar Dudayev against fighters loyal to opposition leader Ruslan Labazanov, Interfax said.

The fighting began after opposition forces blew up a major highway bridge across the Argun River leading into Grozny, the capital, Interfax said. It said there was no information on casualties.

A clash between the same two groups last month claimed at least 140 lives, including those of nearly 100 non-combatants, Interfax said.

Also killed in the June fighting was Labazanov's brother.