

**South Africa to
stop mine export**

PRETORIA, July 29: South Africa announced Friday that it would stop exporting land mines, and concentrate on selling other countries its expertise in clearing land mine fields, reports AP.

Ronnie Kasrils, a former anti-apartheid guerrilla who became Deputy Minister of Defence after South Africa's first all-race election, said the new government was responding to a United Nations call for a moratorium on anti-personnel mines.

South Africa had gone "much further" by banning the export of all types of mines, Kasrils told reporters before a demonstration of anti-mine technology.

"With the lifting of the United Nations arms embargo many international programmes can now benefit from South Africa's expertise and equipment," he said.

In the past, South Africa had exported mines to rightists rebels in Angola and Mozambique.

**Vietnam seeks to build
second oil refinery**

HO CHI MINH CITY, July 29: Vietnam wants a second oil refinery and is willing to approve of full foreign ownership of the facility to attract the necessary investment, a Vietnamese refinery specialist said Friday, reports AP.

PetroVietnam, the state-owned oil and gas monopoly, needs two refineries to meet Vietnam's projected domestic demand for refined petroleum products, said Van Tu, a deputy director for the firm.

A foreign consortium is now making a feasibility study for one refinery, which will have an annual capacity of about 6 million tons. Construction could begin by the end of next year, Tu said.

PetroVietnam forecasts that the country's demand for gasoline, jet fuel, kerosene and other refined products will at least triple to 12.3 million tons

annually by the year 2010. Together with Vietnam's plan to export some of its refinery output, the surge in consumption requires that it build a second facility, Tu said.

But capital is scarce, and the company will consider all types of investment proposals, including joint-ventures and 100 per cent foreign ownership, to attract the needed funds, he said.

Tu spoke at an international conference, "Vietnam Oil and Gas '94."

France's Total SA and the Chinese Petroleum Corporation and China Investment and Development Company, both of Taiwan, are conducting the study for Vietnam's first refinery. The facility will probably be built at a deep water bay at Van Phong in Khanh Hoa province, 390 kilometers north-

theast of Ho Chi Minh City, Tu said.

Southern Vietnam, including Ho Chi Minh City, accounts for 56 per cent of the country's demand for refined products. PetroVietnam may plan to build its second refinery in the north, Tu said.

PetroVietnam's chairman, Ho Si Thoang, said earlier this week that Vietnam could produce refined products by 1998.

The company has also started to plan a petrochemicals industry to produce plastics, detergents and synthetic fibers using the ingredients of natural gas as raw materials, Tu said. Vietnamese plastics

consumption is rising, and PetroVietnam predicts that the demand for detergents and synthetic fibers such as polyester will double by the end of the century.

**Nigeria to stick
to forex, interest
rate control
policies**

LAGOS, July 29: Nigeria's military government said it has decided to stick with its policies of foreign exchange and interest rate controls, reports Reuters.

Finance Minister Kalu Idika Kalu said in a statement that after a review of the 1994 budget the government "had resolved that the exchange rate should remain pegged at 22 naira to the dollar while the interest and lending rates remain as provided for in the budget."

Beside fixing an exchange rate the budget scrapped the legal autonomous foreign exchange market where the dollar sold for 48 naira.

The measures, which marked a retreat from years of free market reforms, have been criticised by local producers and foreign creditor institutions.

**Australian investors cast
wary eye at US markets**

SYDNEY, July 29: Australian investors shrugged off improving trade data today and cast a wary eye instead at markets in the United States, analysts said, reports AFP.

Australia's current account deficit shrank in June to a seasonally adjusted 1.439 billion Australian dollars (1.1 billion US) from 1.699 billion dollars the month before, the Australian Bureau of Statistics said.

The date capped off a week of good economic news, with inflation data on Wednesday showing a rate of 0.7 per cent in the three months to June 30 and an underlying rate of 0.4 per cent.

But the news failed to encourage domestic fixed-interest markets analysts said, as dealers awaited the release of US economic growth figures later Friday.

Market rates on 90-day bills remained steady in afternoon trade with their opening level

of 5.43 per cent while 10-year bonds weakened, with yields rising to 9.71 per cent from an open of 9.66 per cent.

Dealers said the US data could give markets a clue to future moves on official US interest rates and, in turn, the future for the official rate in Australia.

"In a week that was seen the confirmation of current low inflation and the absence of a major current account constraint, the failure of the bond market to rally clearly demonstrates how insignificant domestic economic fundamentals are to the markets in the present climate of global market uncertainty," said a report by Citibank Australia.

"Only with a strong and sustained rally in the United States will the Australian bond market see buyers emerge."

Analysts said Treasurer Ralph Willis had added to speculation over rates by telling reporters on Wed-

nesday that US rate moves would be a factor to be considered in Australian monetary policy.

Chris Knight, Foreign Exchange Dealer at Indosuez Australia, said the Australian dollar showed "a very small reaction" to the current account data, moving slightly up to 73.88 US cents from 73.76 US cents immediately before.

"We are moving in a very tight range with US GDP (Gross Domestic Product) figures out tonight," he said. "Willis has basically said that if the US increases its rates it will mean we will increase ours."

Ivana Bottini, chief economist at Societe Generale Australia, said the current account showed there was no major pressure for Australian authorities to tighten monetary policy.



Sardar Sakawat Hussain Bakul, MP, presiding over a meeting of the Board of Directors of Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) in the city on Thursday in which dividends of ICB funds were declared. M Syedullah, Managing Director, ICB, is also seen in the picture.

Indian bond scam**Opposition paralyzes
Parliament for 3rd day**

NEW DELHI, July 29: The Indian opposition paralysed parliament for the third day today, rejecting a government offer to amend its response to the country's worst financial scandal, reports Reuters.

The government earlier this week rejected key findings of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) report on the 11.28 billion US dollars scandal of 1992.

In the Lok Sabha, or Lower House, the opposition demanded the withdrawal of the government's 60-page response. Some carried placards saying "withdraw the fake report."

Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, one of seven ministers blamed in the all-party report, was prevented by

the furore from making a scheduled statement on it.

The Rajya Sabha, the Upper House, was also paralysed as opposition deputies echoed the lower house rage against Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's ruling Congress Party.

The government's response outlined actions it had taken against those blamed by the JPC report for the scandal. Most of what the government reported had been announced previously.

A congress spokesman said the party would welcome a debate on the government's response to the JPC report, which included rejection of criticisms of Singh, architect of India's radical economic reforms.

**Federal Insurance
executives
reelected**

Nazrul Islam



Ahmed Shafi



Rafiqul Anwar

Steel and Engineering Corporation, BCSIR & Bangladesh Tea Board.

Dr. Nazrul Islam, Alhaj Ahmed Shafi and Rafiqul Anwar have been reelected Chairman and Vice Chairmen respectively of the Federal Insurance Co Ltd, says a press release. The election was held at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the company recently.

Dr. Nazrul Islam held a number of responsible positions including member, Planning Commission, Rector, PATC and Chairman of Petrobangla, Bangladesh.

Alhaj Ahmed Shafi is the proprietor of Shafi & Co while Alhaj Rafiqul Anwar is the Chairman of Golden Inn Group of Companies and founder of Laila Kabir College, Chittagong.

The three-day meeting will significantly increase the knowledge base of aids and will be beneficial to the bank's Developing Member Countries (DMCS) in formulating policies and projects to limit the spread of the disease.

Co-sponsored with the United Nations development programme, the meeting will discuss the extent of the epidemic, its economic costs and the impact on different areas of the economy.

Eight countries are included in the study: China, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The study ranges from the cost effectiveness of blood testing to the impact of the epidemic on tourism.

The World Health Organization estimated that the number of aids cases worldwide has risen by 60 per cent to four million in the year to July and predicts a continued "explosive increase" in Asia.

**Wholesales of consumer
goods decline in Japan**

TOKYO, July 29: Japanese wholesalers of consumer goods suffered their first decline in sales in at least 21 years in the year to March, accompanied by double-digit declines in earnings, according to a survey published Thursday, reports AFP.

The survey by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun found that combined revenues of 929 wholesale companies fell one per cent from a year earlier to 26,400 billion yen (264 billion dollars), the first decline since it started the survey in 1972.

Eight of the 15 categories surveyed showed a decline in sales during the period, led by textile wholesalers, whose revenues plunged 7.6 per cent.

Sales fell seven per cent for wholesalers of stationery and office goods, five per cent for furniture wholesalers, 4.9 per cent for clothing wholesalers, and 3.9 per cent for wholesalers of watches and jewelry.

Wholesalers of bedding and interior materials suffered a three per cent slide in sales while revenues fell 2.7 per cent for sporting goods wholesalers and 1.8 per cent for wholesalers of photographic equipment and materials.

Only wholesalers of books, compact discs, videos, and musical instruments posted faster sales growth during the year.

The increase of 5.9 per cent compared with smaller increase of 3.7 per cent for pharmaceuticals, 3.4 per cent for detergents and cosmetics, 2.1 per cent for toys, 0.9 per cent for food and 0.4 per cent for wholesalers of other products.

The survey also found that the combined operating profits of 929 companies dropped 18.4 per cent from a year earlier, led by wholesalers of toys, furniture, textiles and clothing.

Operating profits fell in all sectors except books, compact discs, videos and musical instruments, where earnings jumped 20 per cent, and food wholesalers, where operating profits grew 1.5 per cent.

**Floods threaten
rice harvests
in Vietnam**

HANOI, July 29: Early floods have hit parts of the rice-producing Cuu Long delta in southern Vietnam, and rising water levels threaten the summer harvest, the official Nhan Dan newspaper said today, reports AFP.

The floods present a serious threat because the delta annually provides two-thirds of Vietnam's rice output, and rice is a staple food here.

**NYU is setting up
global law school
to study economy
related issues**

NEW YORK, July 29: New York University is establishing the world's first global law school by bringing in professors and students from around the world to study legal issues related to the global economy, reports AP.

The school will bring in 20 professors, award 20 full scholarships to international students and establish a centre to study the impact of the emerging global economy on the legal concepts of property, ownership and trade.

"As law becomes more and more cross-cultural, no nation will be able to view its legal system in isolation," NYU President L. Jay Oliva said in a statement. "This will require profound changes in legal education, and we are proud to see our law school charting the course."

The faculty will be integrated into the regular teaching staff and will offer courses open to all law students. Some of the professors have already been hired and will be teaching this fall.

The students who apply for the scholarships will all be law school graduates from abroad. They will receive a master's of law degree or a master's of comparative jurisprudence from NYU. The first students will apply this year and will be enrolled in the fall of 1995.

**Washington denies using labour
rights as protectionist tool**

BANGKOK, July 29: The United States on Monday denied charges it was demanding certain labour rights and standards in other countries to protect its own economy from foreign competition, reports AP.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," a senior US official said in response to recent Asian allegations that some countries were including demands for better working and environmental conditions in world trade agreements.

Joan Edelman Spero, under secretary of state for economic and agricultural affairs, told a news conference that the United States and other industrialized countries were reviewing only labour rights that were internationally recognised when working out trade acts.

"We do not intend to talk about issues that would be perceived as protectionist such as wages, such as certain types of factory conditions," she said.

Some Asian officials have contended that the United States and other developed nations with high labour costs would try to penalise countries with low wages to offset their own competitive disadvantage.

Concerns about linking trade with labour and environmental standards were voiced in a communique Saturday by the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations. The bloc's foreign ministers held their annual conference here and this week are meeting with ASEAN's major partners, including the United States, Japan and the European Union.

Spero said the US delegation would stress the need for all nations to complete implementation of last year's Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and set up the World Trade Organisation by next

**India's external
outstanding debt
totals \$ 91b**

NEW DELHI, July 29: An Indian senior official said today that India's total amount of external debt outstanding against the country is estimated at 91 billion US dollars at the end of March this year, reports Xinhua.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Finance M V Chandrasekhar Murthy told the Senate that the total debt service payment were 8.22 billion US dollars in 1991-92, 8.16 billion US dollars in 1992-93 and 8.14 billion US dollars in 1993-94.

January 1. These moves would serve to liberalise the world's trade.

Another top priority in Bangkok, Spero said, was to strengthen the 4-year-old Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, which will hold a summit in Indonesia in November to be attended by President Clinton.

Spero described the upcoming meeting as a "major landmark in the Clinton administration Asia policy this year." APEC, which includes the ASEAN members as well as the United States, China and Japan, was set up to facilitate trade and economic relations along the Pacific rim.

ASEAN includes Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines.

Washington, a strong backer of APEC, has shown little enthusiasm for another regional grouping, the East Asia Economic Caucus. Now in its formative state, it was proposed Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.

Spero said the United States was "open-minded" about the caucus as long as it remained an open forum, was supportive of APEC and did not fragment the Pacific rim.

"We do not want a dividing line in the Pacific," she said, adding that it remained unclear just what kind of a grouping the EAEC would become.

**ADB to discuss
economic
implications
of aids**

MANILA, July 29: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will hold its final meeting on the economic implications of aids on August 2-4 in Manila, aimed at helping combat the rapid growth of the aids epidemic in Asia, reports Xinhua.

The three-day meeting will significantly increase the knowledge base of aids and will be beneficial to the bank's Developing Member Countries (DMCS) in formulating policies and projects to limit the spread of the disease.

Co-sponsored with the United Nations development programme, the meeting will discuss the extent of the epidemic, its economic costs and the impact on different areas of the economy.

Eight countries are included in the study: China, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The study ranges from the cost effectiveness of blood testing to the impact of the epidemic on tourism.

The World Health Organization estimated that the number of aids cases worldwide has risen by 60 per cent to four million in the year to July and predicts a continued "explosive increase" in Asia.

**Tokyo to provide
\$ 35.2m to update
radar system at
Kathmandu Airport**

KATHMANDU, Nepal, July 29: Japan will provide 35.2 million dollars to modernise the radar system at Kathmandu's international airport, fulfilling a pledge made after two airliners crashed in 1992, officials said Thursday, reports AP.

A total of 300 people were killed when Airbus of Thai Airways and Pakistan International Airlines slammed into mountains near the airport in July and September 1992. There were no survivors.

Nepal is an important tourist destination in Asia, receiving about 300,000 visitors every year.

US Congress approves debt relief for Jordan, aid for Rwanda

WASHINGTON, July 29: The US Congress responded to the Israeli-Jordan peace initiative Friday by approving the first installment of debt relief for Jordan, reports AP.

Members of the House and Senate, in working out a compromise version of the fiscal 1995 foreign aid bill, also approved 50 million dollars in emergency aid for Rwanda.

President Clinton announced the cancellation of Jordan's estimated 700 million dollars in official debt earlier this week after Jordan's King Hussein and Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met in Washington to officially end four decades of hostility between the countries.

The lawmakers agreed to add 99 million dollars to the fiscal 1994 budget for debt re-

lief. At the same time, they stressed that future consideration of debt relief would depend on progress towards a final peace agreement between the two countries.

Debate on the 13.7 billion dollars spending bill came close to collapse when at 3 a.m. 12 hours after the conference began, the House members unexpectedly accepted a Senate amendment that would cut off aid to the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza if the Palestine Liberation Organisation fails to amend its covenant calling for the destruction of Israel.

Senator Patrick Leahy, the head of the Senate said the language, which eliminates a clause saying the president can waive the restriction in the national interest, crippled

the president's ability to help the peace process.

Leahy agreed to continue the conference only after language was put in saying that the president could waive anything in the bill in the national interest. He said he reconsidered his inclination to walk out because of the urgency of getting aid to Rwanda.

The bill gives the West Bank and Gaza some 80 million in humanitarian and economic aid.

It also provides 850 million dollars for the former Soviet republics, but, with strong pressure from House Appropriations Committee Chairman Dave Obey, rejected Senate attempts to "earmark" or provide specific amounts for some countries.

Obey said earmarks make his committee vulnerable "for

the kind of demagoguery we have to undergo every day" from members demanding budget cuts while seeking money for their own pet programmes.

Instead of obligating the administration, Obey softened the language to read that the government "should" provide 150 million dollars to Ukraine, at least 75 million dollars for Armenia and 50 million dollars for Georgia.

The conferees also agreed to ban small arms sales to Indonesia because of that country's human rights record in the disputed territory of East Timor, and agreed to withhold 10 per cent of military aid for Turkey until the submission of a report addressing allegations of abuses against civilians in

Cyprus.

Ten per cent of military aid to Greece as well will be held back awaiting a report on Greek violations of UN sanctions against Serbia. Greece is to get about 20 million dollars and Turkey some 28 million dollars in military aid.

The total package of 13.7 billion dollars is more than 600 million dollars less than was budgeted for 1994. The compromise bill must still be approved on the Senate and House floors before going to the president.

The bill maintains military and economic aid amounts for the perennial big two — Israel again this year is budgeted 3 billion dollars and Egypt 2.1 billion dollars.

It earmarks 80 million dollars for refugees from the

former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe resettling in Israel.

Among other items in the bill were:

— 1,235 billion dollars for the International Development Association, the wing of the World Bank which provides soft loans for poorer nations.

— 802 million dollars for Sub-Saharan Africa.

— 671 million dollars for migration and refugee assistance.

— 359 million dollars for Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.

— 220 million dollars for the US Peace Corps programme.

— 105 million dollars for international narcotics control.

— 50 million dollars for United Nations family planning programmes.

**Japanese corpn
sets up jt
venture in China**

TOKYO, July 29: Japan Energy Corp. has set up a joint venture in China to manufacture and sell lubricating oil for automobiles, a company spokesman said Thursday, reports AFP.

Shanxi Japan Energy Lubricants Co. Ltd, capitalised at 28 million yuan (3.2 million dollars), is owned 51 per cent by the Japanese oil company and 49 per cent by an investment unit of Oil and Transport Corporations of Yangguan, Shanxi province.

The joint venture will start building a 25 million yuan (2.9 million dollars) plant in Yangguan next month to be completed by the end of next March, the spokesman said.



M Haider Chowdhury, Chairman of the National Life Insurance Company, planting a sapling as part of the company's tree plantation drive in the city on Thursday.