

Beijing okays N-plants despite HK protests

BEIJING, Aug 13: China said today it has given the go-ahead for two more nuclear power plants in Guangdong province, ignoring anti-nuclear sentiment in neighbouring Hong Kong, reports Reuter.

The State Council, or Cabinet, has approved plants to build a nuclear power plant in Liangao, eight kilometres from the Daya Bay nuclear plant, and another near the Yangjiang River, the overseas edition of the People's Daily said.

The Liangao plant will have four generators of one million kilowatts each and the Yangjiang plant six similar generators, the newspaper quoted Wang Guanguo, chairman of the Guangdong Nuclear Power Group Co, as saying.

Construction of the Liangao plant will begin in 1997 and it will go into operation in the year 2002. The Yangjiang plant will begin construction in 1999 and begin operation in 2005. Chinese media have said.

The plan to build the Daya Bay plant provoked protest in nearby Hong Kong, where residents feared a repetition of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the Ukraine that spewed radiation over much of Europe. About one million people in the British colony signed a protest petition against Daya Bay but it failed to stop the plant's construction.

Chinese officials have said they must embrace nuclear power despite growing anti-nuclear sentiment in the developed world in order to meet the needs of a booming economy.

Myanmar PM willing to meet Suu Kyi soon

LONDON, Aug 13: Myanmar Prime Minister General Than Shwe is willing to meet pro-democracy leader and Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi within the next few days, the British Broadcasting Corporation said on Friday, reports Reuter.

A Myanmar monk, U Rewata Dhamma, who met members of the government and the opposition within the last week in Myanmar told the BBC World Service about the proposed meeting during an interview in Birmingham Central England.

The news was broadcast on the BBC's Myanmar Service.

"Aung San Suu Kyi ... has constantly reiterated her willingness to talk to the military leaders about any issue apart from her leaving Myanmar in return for the freedom," the BBC said.

The 48-year-old daughter of Myanmar's national leader General Aung San has been under house arrest in Yangon for five years. She won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

Western governments have criticised Myanmar's ruling

State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) for human rights violations and the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The SLORC, formed in



Aung San Suu Kyi

1988 after a military crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, has refused to recognise the results of a 1990 general election which was won by Aun San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy Party.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International says three prominent critics of Myanmar's mi-

litary junta have been arrested in Yangon, and the London-based human rights group expressed concern for their safety.

The three, opposition politician Khin Maung Swe, writer San San Nwe, and journalist Sein Hla Oo, "are well-known in Myanmar as critics of the military government ... and are prolific writers in support of their cause," Amnesty International said.

Myanmar is the official name of Burma bestowed by the junta that took power in 1988 after suppressing pro-democracy demonstrations.

"Amnesty International fears for their safety, especially in view of the reliable reports it has received of the torture and ill-treatment of detained government opponents," said the press release, received in Bangkok Friday.

One of the persons said to be detained on August 4 or 5, Khin Maung Swe, is a member of the National League for Democracy, the main opposition party, and was elected to parliament in a 1990 general election. The NLD won a landslide victory, but the junta never allowed Parliament to convene and still holds power.

Janata Dal MP demands protection of Muslims in Ayodhya

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: The Janata Dal MP, Syed Shahabuddin has demanded immediate measures to ensure the protection of life, property and religious heritage of Muslims in Ayodhya, saying VHP had plans to 'banish' all Muslims from the environs of Ayodhya, reports PTI.

In a letter addressed to the Union Minister of State for Internal Security, Rajesh Pilot, Shahabuddin said the Muslim community of Ayodhya was very apprehensive of VHP's continuing threat to attack and occupy and even demolish some Muslim monuments in Ayodhya.

He alleged the VHP had plans not only to demolish all monuments, mausoleum and mosques in Ayodhya and take over all the graveyards, but also to banish all Muslims from the town.

Shahabuddin also alleged that the local administration was working in collusion with the VHP not only by not repairing the monuments damaged during the December 1992 disturbances or rehabilitating its victims, but even by restraining Muslims from constructing their homes or repairing their shrines.

Police detain BJP leader

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: Police today detained a leading Hindu nationalist who planned to raise the Indian flag on property disputed by Hindus and Muslims in the southern town of Hubli, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says Reuter.

It said Sikkander Bhakti, leader of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Upper House of parliament, was detained as he arrived by plane in Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka state, ahead of India's National Day on Monday.

Bhakti had been named by the BJP to raise the flag on Monday in nearby Hubli on land claimed by both Hindus and Muslims.

BJP efforts to raise the flag there in the past two years led to violence as police prevented Hindu nationalist from entering the site, and this year local authorities declared a curfew around it until the National Day was over.

The BJP, the Hindu nationalist flag bearer in parliament, has backed campaigns for control of sites it says were originally Hindu but taken over by Muslims during centuries of Moghul rule.

Kabul fighting claims 36 more

ISLAMABAD, Aug 13: At least 36 people, including 25 fighters loyal to opposition leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, were killed and 103 wounded in Kabul on Friday, radio Kabul said, reports Reuter.

The radio, controlled by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, said 11 people were killed and 103 wounded when scores of rockets fired by the opposition forces rained down on the Afghan capital.

It said 15 houses were destroyed during the barrage of 18 rockets fired by militia loyal to Prime Minister Hekmatyar and his ally, former communist warlord General Abdul Rasheed Dostum.

The rocket attack intensified after pro-Rabbani forces repulsed an attack launched by the opposition fighters at Qila-i-Ahmad Khan in the south of the city, the radio said on Friday night.

8 die as troops, militants clash in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Aug 13: Six soldiers and two civilians were killed Saturday during battles with guerrillas in Kashmir, and one of the clashes closed a major area of Srinagar city, reports AP.

three of them and injuring four, police said.

About 3 am, Border Security Forces cordoned off Batmalo district, where 50,000 people live in Srinagar, and began searching for militants. Rebels hiding in homes fired machine guns and tossed grenades, killing three Border Security Force soldiers, including battalion commander N C Sharma, police said.

Border Security Forces shot and killed one civilian on the streets, and the body of another one was found in a nearby building, witnesses said on condition of anonymity. Three apartment buildings caught fire, and the witnesses accused the military of setting them on fire to drive out suspected rebels.

Sporadic fighting continued long after sunrise in the cordoned off area, and soldiers were removing thousands of people from their homes and forcing them to sit in a nearby bus station.

In Pampore, a town 25 kilometres (15 miles) south of Srinagar, militants hurled grenades at a Border Security Force convoy Saturday, killing

Kashmiri radical held in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: Police in the Indian capital arrested a Muslim radical from Kashmir, who was plotting to kill political leaders and carry out terrorist bombing, a top anti terrorist official said Saturday, reports AP.

Friday's arrest of Mohammad Ramzan Nazir came two days before India celebrates its independence day on August 15 when Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and his cabinet colleagues attend an open air ceremony in the capital.

Nazir was arrested from the Kirti Nagar area in the Western District and documents seized from him have confirmed that he was plotting to carry out terrorist attack, said BS Bhola, chief of Special Branch's Anti-terrorist wing.

UNSC defers sanctions against UNITA

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 13: The UN Security Council deferred plans Friday to slap sanctions against UNITA, saying that more time should be given for diplomatic efforts to win a peace agreement in Angola, reports AFP.

In a unanimously-approved declaration, the council said it could impose new measures if the union for the total independence of Angola "does not accept the mediation proposals on national reconciliation during the course of the month of August."

Members acknowledged however that more time should be accorded to South African President Nelson Mandela's mediation efforts between UNITA and the Angolan government.

BRRIEFLY

Nine beheaded in Saudi Arabia: Nine people were beheaded in Saudi Arabia on Friday, including five Saudi men who sexually assaulted and killed a young boy, Gulf news agencies reported. Reuter reports from Dubai.

Saudi Arabia's official SPA news agency quoted an Interior Ministry statement as saying two convicted Pakistani drug smugglers and a murderer were beheaded on Friday. Gulf news agencies said later on Friday another Pakistani man was beheaded for drug smuggling.

9 hurt in Istanbul blast: A bomb exploded at a major Istanbul bus terminal during the evening rush hour on Friday, injuring nine people, a news agency reported. AP says from Istanbul.

The semiofficial Anatolia news agency said the bomb was planted near a small grocery shop at the entrance of the terminal and exploded around 5:30 pm (1430 GMT). There were no immediate claims of responsibility of the bombing.

Israelis kill 2 Palestinians: Two Palestinian gunmen were shot dead by Israeli police north of Jerusalem on Friday after an earlier shootout in which three Israeli policemen were wounded, a police spokesman said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

"They shot at our forces in the Aram neighbourhood and we returned fire, killing two of them," said spokesman Shmulik Ben Rubi. "These were the gunmen involved in this morning's attack."

Iranian held in Argentina: An Iranian with a forged French passport was arrested in Argentina on Friday as he tried to board a boat to Uruguay, the coast guard said, shortly before the Argentine government announced it expected a new bomb attack. Reuter reports from Buenos Aires.

The Iranian was travelling on a forged passport in the name of Laurent Fabre, state-run Telam news agency quoted coast guard officials as saying.

Vietnamese bus crash kills 8: Eight people were killed and 14 others injured in a bus crash in Vietnam's northern Hoa Binh Province, the tri-weekly trade union newspaper Lao Dong reported yesterday. AFP says from Hanoi.

The bus, with 25 passengers and five tonnes of rice on board, toppled over at the foot of a hill after the driver apparently lost control on a sharp bend, the paper reported.

3 Asian PMs to visit Singapore: The prime ministers of Japan, South Korea and India will all visit Singapore before the end of September at the invitation of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. It was announced yesterday. AFP reports from Singapore.

2 suspected FIS members held: Two suspected Islamic militants were arrested in Rouen and charged with having links with a terrorist group and illegal possession of arms, informed sources said yesterday. AFP reports from Rouen, France.

The two suspected members of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Tassadit Rehani, who is French, and Mourad Bellazoug, an Algerian national, were both students at Mont-Saint-Aignan, in the Rouen suburbs, police said.

Cholera claims 4 in Philippines: A cholera epidemic sweeping through four villages in the southern Philippines has killed four people and affected 340 others since early this week, health officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Ragayan, Philippines.

Doctor Ramona Santiago, health officer in Kitao-Tao town, Bukidnon province, said the victims were mostly women and children from the Talaandig tribe, which is scattered throughout remote mountain villages.

Singaporean tanker blast kills 5: An explosion rocked the Singaporean oil tanker ASBAN Princess, killing five sailors, while it was pumping refined oil into reservoirs near Ho Chi Minh City, a port official said yesterday. Reuter reports from Hanoi.

"The explosion in the ship's engine room occurred at 11 pm (1600 GMT) on Tuesday when the five, two South Koreans and three from Myanmar were working there," he told Reuters.

Mandela cancels Tanzania trip: President Nelson Mandela, following doctor's orders to slow down on Friday cancelled a scheduled visit to Tanzania. AP reports from Cape Town.

Mandela, 76, was to have attended a ceremony in Tanzania marking the dissolution of the Organization of African Unity's Anti-apartheid Liberation Committee.

Floods, drought cost China \$ 11.5b: Flooding and drought in China this year have caused losses estimated at a massive 100 billion yuan (11.5 billion US dollars), with many areas suffering the worst disasters since 1949. Xinhua said yesterday, reports AFP from Beijing.

The report quoted a Flood Control and Drought Relief headquarters official as saying the southern provinces of Guangxi and Guangdong, central Hunan and southeastern Jiangxi and Fujian has suffered the worst losses, estimated at more than 10 billion yuan each.



Nabil Shaath (C), senior Palestinian peace negotiator and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, is given a hero's welcome by Palestinians from Jerusalem as he arrives to pray at the Al-Aqsa and Dome of the Rock Mosques on Friday. Shaath's visit to the holy Muslim site has been criticised by the Israeli right-wing. — AFP photo

Iraq wants peace with Israel

JERUSALEM, Aug 13: Israel television reported on Friday that Iraq had expressed readiness to make peace with the Jewish state, whose cities Baghdad targeted with Scud missiles in the 1991 Gulf War, reports Reuter.

No official comment was available on the surprise report broadcast to Israelis accustomed to perceiving Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government as a hard-line foe.

The report carried by the state-run TV organisation said Iraq had relayed a message to Israel expressing readiness to discuss peace.

According to the report, the message was delivered through a third party to Israel's ambassador at the UN three months ago.

The message, written by a senior Iraqi official, said Baghdad no longer had a dispute with Israel now that the Palestinian problem was about to be resolved.

79 students arrested Police crush pro-North Korean rally in ROK

SEOUL, Aug 13: Police fired volleys of tear gas to prevent some 5,000 students from entering a university to join a massive pro-North Korea rally Saturday, reports AP.

Outnumbered by thousands of police deployed to shut down the rally, students dispersed after a short scuffle near Konkook University.

Meanwhile, in an abrupt about face, organisers postponed the opening of the weekend commemoration of Monday's anniversary of the Korean liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945.

In postponing the rally by a day, the dissidents said in a statement they would refrain from violence if the government were to permit the rally.

But they also said further violence was inevitable if police were not called off.

Israel warns Argentina of another terrorist attack

BUENOS AIRES, Aug 13: The government said Friday that Israel has warned of another possible terrorist attack in Argentina or in neighbouring countries, reports AP.

The government said in a statement it would take measures "to prevent this threat," but gave no details.

The information was obtained and confirmed by national and international intelligence agencies," the statement said. "The threat isn't limited to Argentine territory, but terrorist actions could extend to some neighbouring countries." It did not mention any countries by name.

The statement said the government's information came from various sources, but only mentioned Israel.

"The government of Israel, through its ambassador in our country, informed the Argentine Foreign Minister today," it said.

Israeli Embassy officials were not immediately available for comment.

The government said it was making its statement public "to avoid a climate of alarm and confusion in the face of the inevitable measures that must be adopted to prevent this threat."

Another report adds, Iranian officials intensified a campaign Friday to discredit an informer who told Argentine authorities that Iran planned the deadly July 18 bombing of a Buenos Aires Jewish community centre.

Manotchehr Motamar claims he was a deputy minister in the Iranian government and says he attended meetings in Tehran last March at which plans for the bombing were discussed.

Iran has denied any involvement in the bombing that killed 95 people and wounded

6 S African cops killed

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 13: Six South African policemen have been killed in separate incidents in the past two days, victims of a surging crime wave in which police have suffered a heavy toll, reports Reuter.

A police spokesman said today the latest to die was shot in the head on Friday night in Kagiso, west of Johannesburg. His revolver was stolen.

more than 200. It claims Argentina was pressure by the United States and Israel into blaming Tehran for masterminding the attack.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was quoted Friday as saying Motamar was only a shopkeeper with no access to official circles.

A senior Iranian cleric called Motamar a disenchanted Iranian refugee and said Argentina had been "trapped" into blaming Iran for the bombing because of false testimony.

On the basis of Motamar's information, Argentine Federal Judge Juan Jose Galeano ordered four Iranians detained for questioning. He named as suspects three others, all diplomats at the Iranian Embassy in Argentina.

Velayati warned that four of the suspects intend "to legally pursue those who have made malicious accusations against them." Meanwhile, a Lebanese man was detained in Paraguay on Friday for questioning about the bombing. Had Farah Mohamed, 30, who has been a resident of Paraguay for two years, travelled to Buenos Aires in May and June. Criminal Court Judge Carlos Monges told reporters.



About 300 Turkish Muslims pray in front of a burnt out Turkish cultural centre in Sindelfingen, Germany, on Friday in a ceremony held by the Hoca of Frankfurt Mosque. The Turkish centre was the target of an arson attack on August 9. — AFP photo

Off the Record

Air hostess sacked for giving birth to third child

NEW DELHI: India's national carrier Air India has sacked an air hostess for giving birth to a third child, a newspaper reported Saturday, says AFP.

Air India officials said they had served termination orders on Audrey Coutinho, 34, after she bore a third child in a Bombay hospital in June, the Indian Express reported.

The service contracts for air hostesses stipulate that they will be removed from the job if they have three children, the newspaper quoted airline officials as saying.

Coutinho, who served the airline for 12 years, said she was aware of the rule, but her "conscience" did not allow her to abort the child.

"I have suicidal tendencies and my doctor advised me to have the child since he was sure I would commit suicide otherwise," she told the newspaper.

"The child was growing very fast and I changed my mind about abortion when I heard the baby's heart beats."

Criticising the airline's move, the newspaper said no action had been taken against another air hostess, who delivered twins in her first pregnancy and bore another child later.

Air India's two-child stipulation is in keeping with the government population-control measures.

Calcium controls recycling of brain nerve cells

WASHINGTON: Calcium controls the recycling of the brain nerve cells and in turn enables the cells to communicate with each other, Australian researchers say, reports Xinhua.

The researchers at the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle and the University of Newcastle wrote in Friday's Journal Science that the findings could help treat neuro-degenerative diseases.

Calcium activates a key protein known as calcineurin, which functions like on-and-off switches for recycling brain nerve cells, according to the study.

As the 'switches' are subject to chemical controls, the researchers believe that neuro-degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy could be treated with new drugs.

Left-handers more intelligent?

LONDON: Left-handed Britons think they are more intelligent than the average person but feel they get short shrift from makers of consumer goods, a survey published on Saturday shows, reports Reuter.

Britain's left-handers club said a poll of members showed they faced special problems in a right-handed world even though 56 per cent of them claimed to be more intelligent than average.

One fifth of members said they had had an accident as a result of being left-handed, two-fifths said they were clumsy and most admitted to handwriting difficulties.

Among the improvements demanded by those polled were cookers with left-handed opening doors, pepper mills that turn anti-clockwise and crossword puzzles with clues on the right.

Iran pursuing N-plan, says US arms control chief

WASHINGTON, Aug 13: The US arms control chief asserted on Friday that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons programme even though international inspectors have not turned up evidence, reports AP.

John D Holm, director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, also said he expects China to continue testing nuclear weapons until 1996 but not block negotiations for an international ban.

President Clinton, reversing the policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations, last July suspended US nuclear weapons testing and has sought adoption of an international ban.

China has continued to test, though.

"We deplore it, that the Chinese will conduct some additional tests," Holm said "I would expect that they would. And we strongly encourage them not to do that. At the same time, the Chinese did join in the consensus at the United Nations last year in favour of negotiating a comprehensive test ban treaty."

Separately from that, he added, "they have said that they are prepared to join a comprehensive test ban in 1996."