

700 activists of UPF arrested in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Aug 18: anti-Koirala slogans. The demonstration later turned into a public meeting. State-run transport operated in the Nepalese capital guarded by security personnel but private cars, taxis and diplomatic vehicles were kept off the roads to avoid possible attacks during the strike.

A police source confirmed only that 400 people had been arrested both before and during the dawn to dusk strike to prevent a planned UPF march late Tuesday and avoid trouble in the capital during the strike.

The UPF, headed by convenor Babu Ram Bhattarai, called the strike to denounce the interim government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and to protest the dissolution of Parliament by the King in July.

UPF Secretary General Purnima Bhusal was among those arrested on Tuesday while Bhattarai had gone into hiding to avoid arrest. On Wednesday some 2,000 UPF supporters held a protest demonstration in Kathmandu shouting anti-monarch and

Schools were also closed and many civil servants were forced to walk to work because of the lack of transport.

A senior police officer said there had been no reports of incidents in outlying districts of the capital until later in the day, adding Kathmandu City was peaceful.

Protests against the caretaker government and the Nepalese monarch began soon after the King dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls for November, on Koirala's advice.

BRIEFLY

Rao to visit Vietnam: Prime Minister Narasimha Rao of India will make his first visit to Vietnam during the first week of September, the Foreign Ministry announced Thursday. AP reports from Hanoi.

India is one of the countries which has encouraged political, economic and trade relations with Vietnam and has always sympathised with and supported Vietnam. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Ho The Lan told a news conference.

Indian army chopper crashes, 3 die:

An army helicopter crashed in the northern Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh Thursday and at least three soldiers were killed. United News of India news agency said. AP reports from New Delhi.

Policemen found three bodies near the crash site, but it was not immediately known how many people the helicopter was carrying when it crashed.

Rocket attacks hurt 37 in Kabul:

Thirty-seven people were wounded when opponents of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani rocketed residential areas of the capital Kabul on Wednesday. The official Kabul Radio said. Reuter reports from Islamabad.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, said the anti-Rabbani forces led by Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum fired 52 rockets, which also damaged government buildings and private homes in the capital.

IRA bomb destroys pub in Belfast:

An IRA bomb destroyed a pub on Wednesday in a Protestant part of Belfast, while British army specialists defused a firebomb dumped in the doorway of a second pub, AP reports from Belfast.

No one was reported injured. A dozen customers were in the Grove Tavern when two men burst in, identified themselves as Irish Republican Army members and left behind a bomb in a gym bag. It exploded about 15 minutes after pubgoers fled, witnesses and police said.

14 die in ROK hostess bar fire:

Fourteen people were killed when fire swept through a hostess bar in Seoul late on Wednesday, police said. Reuter reports from Seoul.

Ten clients and four female employees were suffocated by smoke and toxic gas caused by burning carpets and furniture in the bar on the fourth floor of a five-storey building, they said.

Pakistan detains 22 Afghans:

Pakistani police detained 22 Afghans at Islamabad Airport on Wednesday when they arrived from Kabul on a Saudi diplomatic plane without visas. Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar said. Reuter reports from Islamabad.

He told reporters the Afghans had probably come to attend an opposition rally held in Islamabad on Wednesday to mark the sixth anniversary of the death of military ruler General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq. Their identities were not immediately known.

Chinese Gen meets Perry in US:

Defence Secretary William Perry met a top Chinese General on Wednesday in a sign of improvement in military relations frozen by Washington in 1989 after Beijing used the army to crush pro-democracy protests. Reuter reports from Washington.

Perry met General Xu Huizi, Deputy chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army — a visit strongly criticised by a Republican Senator.

Palestinian boy shot dead:

Israeli troops on Wednesday shot dead a Palestinian teenager who tried to enter Egypt near the Rafah crossing point in the autonomous Gaza Strip, Palestinian and Israeli officials said. AP reports from Gaza City.

Imad Ramen, 17, was from Rafah town. Palestinian members of the Joint Liaison Committee protested to Israeli military officials over the incident, Palestinian sources said.

Peres due in Gaza today:

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres will visit the Gaza Strip on Friday with his Norwegian counterpart, Bjorn Godal, as a guest of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Wednesday. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Gunman kills Tajik TV official:

A Tajikistan state television executive was killed outside his home Thursday by a gunman who escaped, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported, AP says from Dushanbe.

Davatali Rakmonaliev, 41, was on his way to work when he was attacked, police said. Rakmonaliev, director of the republican television programme, had strongly advocated the restoration of a republican form of government in Tajikistan.

Nobel laureate Canetti dies: Elias Canetti, winner of the 1981 Nobel prize for literature, has died, a relative said Thursday. He was 89. AP reports from Zurich.

The writer — a Bulgarian-born British citizen who wrote in German — died last Sunday, said the relative, who asked not to be identified. The cause of death was not disclosed.

Quake shakes N Japan: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.4 struck off Japan's northernmost main island on Thursday, but no injuries or damage were immediately reported. AP says from Tokyo.

The quake struck at 1:43 pm (0443 GMT). The Central Meteorological Agency reported, it was centered about 300 miles (500 kilometres) east-northeast of Kushiro on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido, and about 120 miles (200 kilometres) south of the Russian island of Ushuaia, part of the Kuril Chain.

International

First extension of self-rule in West Bank

Israel will transfer education, cultural affairs to PLO Aug 29

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt, Aug 18: Israel and the PLO on Thursday set a date for the first time for giving Palestinians more control over their lives in most of the West Bank still under Israeli occupation.

other responsibilities. In lieu of a terrorism statement, Shatah told reporters the Palestinians were committed to the maintenance of peace and doing everything possible to stop violence.

In response, Peres said: "I take the declaration by Dr Nabil Shatah as a real commitment."

He added, "We never said that the Palestinian Authority would have 100 per cent success (in dealing with extremists) but we would like to see 100 per cent effort to do so as we are doing because this is very serious."

Peres' talks with Shatah followed a meeting Wednesday between him and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and a statement by Peres that saw progress in talks between Israel and Syria.

Other points of agreement included:

— The release of 249 Palestinian prisoners still held by Israel.

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