

## International

**Rafsanjani for resolution of Indo-Pak tensions**

NICOSIA, Aug 26: Iranian President Akbar Hashem Rafsanjani on Thursday called for a resolution of tensions between India and Pakistan to promote cooperation among Asian Powers. Tehran Radio said, reports Reuter.

"Ending the tension between India and Pakistan is in the interests of the region and the world," it quoted Rafsanjani as telling India's visiting Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

"Extensive political, economic and trade links among powerful Asian countries is possible only in an atmosphere on peace and stability," added Rafsanjani, who is due to visit India either in September or October.

The report made no reference to the increased tension between India and Pakistan in September. A report made no reference to the increased tension between India and Pakistan in September.

since former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said this week that Pakistan had nuclear weapons.

Pakistan is one of the closest friends of neighbouring fellow Muslim Iran, but Tehran has said this does not preclude equally good relations with New Delhi.

Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao visited Iran last September. In November Iran and India signed an agreement to build a live billion pipeline to carry Iranian gas to India.

Rafsanjani said that apart from politics and trade, Iran was interested in India because of its large Muslim minority.

Iran and other Islamic countries often complain about sectarian violence in India directed against Muslims.

**BRIEFLY**

**3 Chinese dissidents jailed:** Three of the 14 dissidents tried on counterrevolutionary charges in July after being held for more than two years have received sentences ranging from six to more than 10 years, sources said today. AFP reports from Beijing.

**Mexico to accept Cuban immigrants:** The Mexican government decided on Thursday to accept some Cuban immigrants who have family in Mexico, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. AFP reports from Mexico.

The Foreign Ministry said the measure was to "help reduce the number of Cubans who are risking their lives by fleeing the country by sea."

**US Senate okays crime bill:** The Senate passed President Clinton's 30 billion dollar crime bill on Thursday night, sending the controversial legislation to the White House for his signature. Reuter reports from Washington.

The final 61-38 vote came a few hours after a Republican point of order against the bill was overturned. 61-39. Six Republicans joined 55 Democrats in the crucial vote, which needed 60 Senators to succeed, while 30 Republicans and one Democrat opposed it.

**2 killed by mines in Kigali daily:** At least two people are killed and on average five severely injured daily by landmines in the Rwandan capital, the United Nations and local hospitals said on Thursday. AFP reports from Kigali.

Canadian and British UN troops who are clearing the mines and other explosives said they had detonated 400 pieces of explosives in the last few weeks in and around Kigali.

**Uruguay extradites 3 ETA rebels:** Three suspected members of the Basque separatist group ETA arrived in Spain under tight security on Thursday, extradited from Uruguay amid protests in the capital of Montevideo. AP reports from Madrid.

The three, who have been on a 15-day hunger strike and are wanted for several killings in ETA's name in Spain, were taken away in ambulances surrounded by a large police escort after landing at the Torrejon air base outside Madrid.

**Picasso's painting recovered:** Pablo Picasso's famous painting "La Femme Aux Yeux Noirs" (Black-Eyed Girl) that was stolen from the Stockholm Modern Museum last year was recovered in Brussels, capital of Belgium, on Tuesday. Xinhua reports from Stockholm.

According to the Swedish news agency, three Swedes tried to sell the painting to a Belgian for 10 million Swedish krona (about 1.33 million US dollars), but the Belgian reported the matter to the police, who subsequently arrested the Swedes when they met the Belgian in a hotel to conclude the deal.

**Chinese food queen Chen dies:** Chinese food queen Joyce Chen, who popularised Mandarin cuisine in the United States with her restaurants, cookbooks and television programme, has died at age 76. AFP reports from Lexington, Massachusetts.

Chen died on Tuesday in a nursing home of Alzheimer's disease.

Born in Beijing, Chen fled to the United States in 1949 and opened the first branch of a restaurant chain nine years later in Cambridge, New England.

**Russian envoy visits Gaza:** Russian envoy Victor Posuvaliu visited the autonomous Gaza Strip Thursday for two hours of talks with PLO leader Yasser Arafat. AFP reports from Gaza City.

"We raised all issues linked to the global peace process in the Middle East, as well as the situation in Gaza and special ties of friendship between Palestinians and Russia," Arafat said after the meeting.

**Young Spanish killed in Egypt:** Suspected Muslim militants opened fire on a tourist bus in the southern Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi yesterday killing a young Spanish child and injuring two other people, security sources said. Reuter reports from Assiut, Egypt.

The sources said no more information about the shooting was immediately available.

**4 die in Indian plane crash:** At least four people were killed when a state-owned plane crashed in a flooded field in the northern Indian state of Rajasthan, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

The Environment and Forest Ministry said one of its aircraft, on a routine trip, crashed late Thursday in the desert state's Sawai Madhopur town, some 250 kilometres (156 miles) south of here.

**30 killed in Turkish bus mishap:** Thirty people were killed and 25 were injured when a packed passenger bus slammed into the back of a military vehicle and exploded in southeastern Turkey. Anatolian news agency said yesterday. Reuter reports from Ankara.

Anatolian said the bus struck the other vehicle on Thursday night near Silvan, 100 km (60 miles) east of the provincial capital of Diyarbakir. Most of the victims were women and children.

**US soldiers leave Zaire:** The last of 300 American soldiers sent to Zaire to bring humanitarian aid to Rwandan refugees in the "Support Hope" operation left Goma on Thursday. AFP reports from Goma.

Some US troops have stayed behind for a few more days to act as liaison officers, a spokesman for the UN High Commission for Refugees said.

**Quake shakes western Japan:** An earthquake registering 4.1 on the Richter scale shook parts of Tokushima prefecture in western Japan yesterday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injury, the Meteorological agency said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

No tidal wave is expected, an agency official added. The epicenter of the quake, which occurred at 11.13 am (0213 GMT) was 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) under the earth in the eastern part of Tokushima.

**Pakistan to raise Kashmir issue at UNGA session**

ISLAMABAD, Aug 26: Pakistan is to raise the issue of Kashmir at the United Nations General Assembly session in September. Foreign Minister Sardar Aslam Ali said Thursday, reports AFP.

Pakistan pledged moral and political support for the Kashmiri uprising, calling it a legitimate struggle for self-determination. But, it denies Indian charges that it has been training and arming Kashmiri militants.

The Kashmir dispute has been a catalyst for two of the three wars between the South Asian neighbours since their independence in 1947 and continues to bedevil their relations.

Another report from Washington adds: Human rights abuses in Kashmir have escalated in recent months, partly because international pressure on New Delhi to halt the violations has eroded, a human right group said Friday.

"India seems to have been largely successful in a campaign to counter international criticism of its human rights record in Kashmir, despite the fact that it has done little to end the abuses," human rights Watch Asia said in a report on Kashmir.

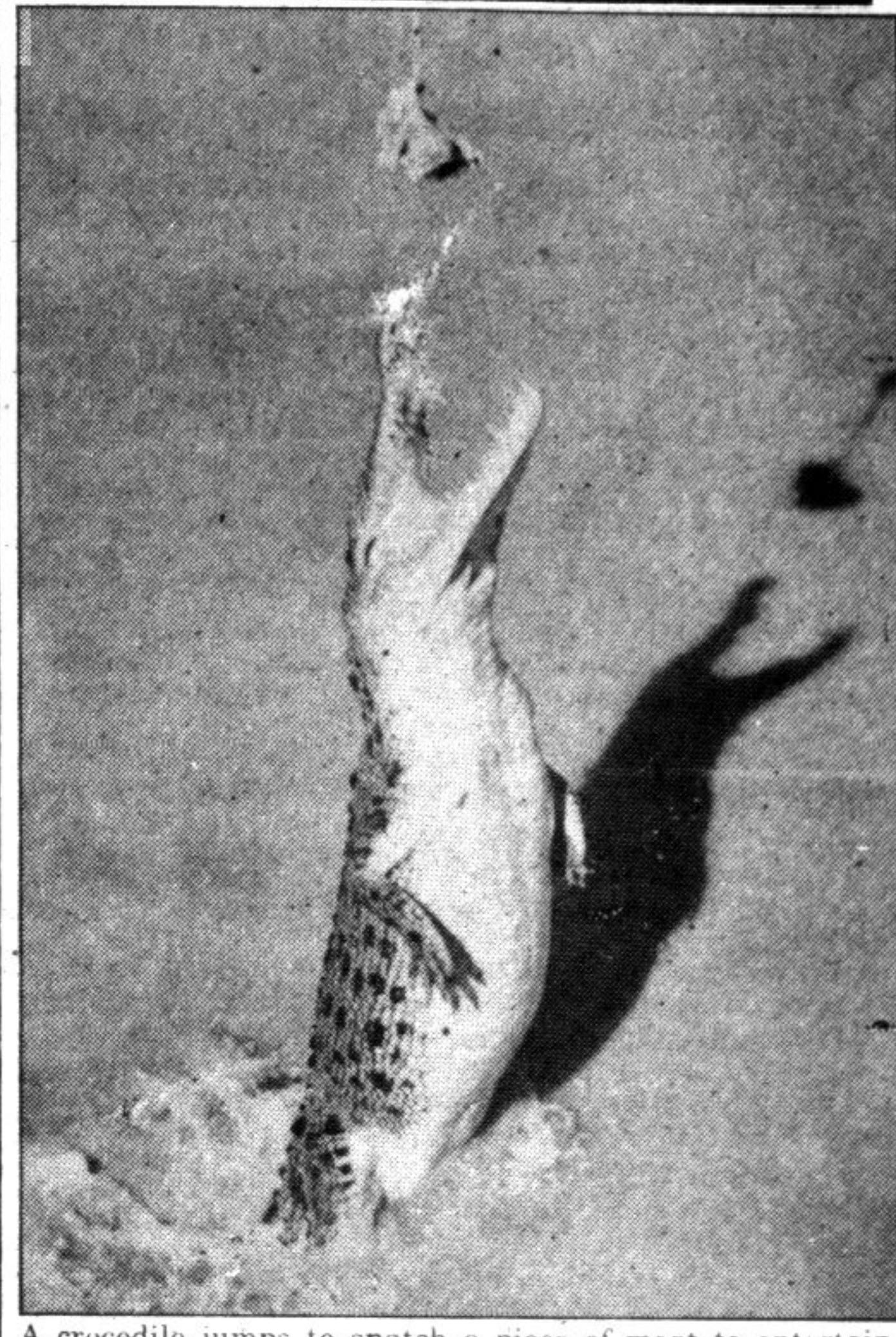
Kashmir straddles India and Pakistan and the two sides have fought two wars over it since independence in 1947. Indian-controlled Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, has been rent by a violent Muslim-led separatists

drive.

"Indian troops continue to execute detainees in custody, kill civilians in reprisal attacks and burn down neighborhoods and villages as collective punishment for those suspected of supporting the militants," the report said.

The report accused the US government of backing of criticism of India's human rights record in Kashmir early in the administration of President Bill Clinton, in the face of criticism that Washington was favouring Pakistan and potentially damaging Indo-US relations.

The report said human rights groups in Kashmir recorded more than 200 deaths in custody

**Off the Record**

A crocodile jumps to snatch a piece of meat to entertain tourists during the so-called 'Jumping crocodile cruises' east of Darwin on August 20. — AFP photo

**Benazir puts off Gaza trip**

ISLAMABAD, Aug 26: Pakistani Premier Benazir Bhutto has indefinitely postponed a planned official visit next month to the autonomous Gaza Strip, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said today, reports AFP.

The visit, which was to take place September 4, has been put off because of "scheduling problems," and not because of rumored obstacles put up by Israeli authorities to the visit, spokesman Munir Akran said.

Bhutto, who has to be in Cairo in the evening of September 4 to participate in a UN conference on population and development, cannot meet Yasser Arafat on that date because the Palestine Liberation Organisation chief will be in Jericho for a visit by US vice president Al Gore, he said.

**Russia joins debate over Jerusalem**

JERUSALEM, Aug 26: Russia joined the debate over Jerusalem today, demanding through its Middle East envoy that I have some say over the future of the holy city, reports Reuter.

"We have all rights in our opinion to take part in all the efforts, when the time comes, in all the efforts related to Jerusalem, the holy city," Victor Posuvaliu, in Israel on a peace mission, said in remarks broadcast by Israel radio.

The plan would grant Bosnian Serbs 49 per cent of territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina instead of the 70 per cent that they currently hold.

Meanwhile AP reports: The United Nations will consider easing sanctions against Serbia if President Slobodan Milosevic permits international monitors to verify that he has ended aid to Bosnian Serbs. Britain's ambassador said Thursday.

The contact group comprises representatives of the United States, Russia, Germany, France and Britain.

**Belgrade still supplying arms to Bosnian Serbs, says UN envoy**

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 26: Bosnia's UN envoy charged Thursday that Serbia was continuing to deliver military supplies to the Bosnian Serbs despite claims by Belgrade that it had sealed the border with Bosnia, reports AFP.

"We have information (...) that indicate that the border continues to be the sources of transfer of war material from Serbia and Montenegro to the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina," Mohamed Sacirbey told journalists.

Sacirbey raised concern that the so-called contact group that helped draft the peace plan has not taken measures to push Bosnian Serbs towards accepting the settlement.

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