

International

Bid to end 12-year old civil war

Lankan provinces likely to get more autonomy

COLOMBO, July 26: In an effort to end a 12-year civil war by Tamil separatists the government is considering giving the nation's provinces far more power to rule themselves, reports AP.

Wednesday, it would sharply reduce the nearly exclusive power of the central government by giving eight provinces their own legislatures and executive branches. Currently, the provinces only have elected councils with little power.

Muslim majorities would be merged with neighbouring provinces controlled by the Sinhalese, according to the copy of the package the AP received. Only 7 per cent of Sri Lankans are Muslim, and they often are targeted by Tamil rebels to drive them out of Tamil areas.

The central government would continue to control the provinces' defence, foreign affairs, currency, elections, airports, major seaports, and foreign trade.

BRIEFLY



Former cabaret dancer Susy Diaz (L) steps down from a podium after being sworn in as a new member of Congress Tuesday during a solemn ceremony at the Congress building in Lima, Peru.

Arafat leaves for Paris: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat left yesterday for Paris where his wife has just given birth to a baby daughter, Palestinian officials said.

Live WW-II bomb found in Manila: A live World War II vintage bomb was found at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport when workers were digging the ground.

Indian cop kills colleague: A CRPF jawan shot dead a colleague in a fit of rage inside the Berbera forest in Khurda district on Monday, and later surrendered before the authorities.

2 Arab rebels killed in Lebanon: Two Arab guerrillas were killed and one Israeli soldier was wounded in fighting in South Lebanon overnight.

Uzbek FM meets Leghari: Visiting Uzbek Minister Abdulaziz Hafizovic Kamilov held separate talks in Islamabad Tuesday with his Pakistani counterpart Asf Ali Khan Zardari.

Kozyrev arrives in Hanoi: Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev arrives in Hanoi yesterday for a two-day visit aimed at boosting bilateral economic and financial cooperation.

Opposition MP held in Lanka: An opposition member of parliament was arrested at a road block in Colombo after police found anti government posters in his car.

Bus mishap kills 29 in Hanoi: A bus crash in northern Vietnam has left 29 people dead and 19 injured, a provincial transport official said yesterday.

Mindanao city mayor killed: A mayor of a town in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao and his bodyguard were slain after an unidentified man attacked them, police said Wednesday.

Vaccine for cervical cancer: A vaccine is being developed which could eradicate cervical cancer, British doctors said in London Tuesday.

Fire claims 6 workers in Bangkok: Six workers were killed in a fire at a furniture workshop on the southwestern fringe of Bangkok, police said yesterday.

Call to revoke citizenship of Ghali: CAIRO, July 26: Egypt's Islamist opposition Labour Party on Tuesday called the government to revoke UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali's citizenship.

4 killed in Paris metro station blast: PARIS, July 26: Four people were killed and at least 40 others wounded in a bomb blast in a rush-hour underground train in a central Paris metro station on Tuesday.

Chechen war costs Moscow \$12b: MOSCOW, July 26: The war in separatist Chechnya has already cost Moscow some 12 billion dollars, experts said Tuesday.

Surajkund, India, July 26: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao will spell out in a traditional Independence day speech on August 15 his strategy for general elections next year.

Rao's August 15 speech to dominate party's polls strategy: SURAJKUND, India, July 26: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao will spell out in a traditional Independence day speech on August 15 his strategy for general elections next year.

Call to revoke citizenship of Ghali

CAIRO, July 26: Egypt's Islamist opposition Labour Party on Tuesday called the government to revoke UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali's citizenship because of his record in Bosnia, reports AFP.

The party's Vice President Helmi Murad, writing in the movement paper, Al Shaab accused Boutros Ghali of complicity with the Bosnian Serbs against the country's Muslims.

He said, the Egyptian nationality code authorises the stripping of nationality in cases where an Egyptian working for a foreign or international organisation threatens the higher interests of the state.

4 killed in Paris metro station blast

PARIS, July 26: Four people were killed and at least 40 others wounded in a bomb blast in a rush-hour underground train in a central Paris metro station on Tuesday, reports Xinhua.

The bomb exploded in one carriage of the southbound suburban rapid transit system at the Saint-Michel station in the left bank of the river Seine at 5.30 pm (1530 gm).

Chechen war costs Moscow \$12b

MOSCOW, July 26: The war in separatist Chechnya has already cost Moscow some 12 billion dollars, experts said Tuesday, considerably less than the Russian government has acknowledged, reports AFP.

Economists at the Institute of Economic Analysis said Moscow's military costs, including payroll, munitions and transport, have amounted to about six billion dollars.

Replacing destroyed buildings, infrastructure and weapons totals a similar amount, for a total of about 12 billion dollars, institute Director Andrei Illariyonov told a press conference.

The institute did not estimate the cost of the current peace mission, nor the cost of lost foreign trade or diminished international image," he said.

They said Rao would use a six-day conclave of his Congress Party now underway at Surajkund, near Delhi, to assess the group's ability to put him in power for a second term before deciding their actual plan.

The ministers said Rao may have to tone down what they believe to be a single-



US Secretary of State Warren Christopher (L) meets with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam (R) at Blair House in Washington, DC, on Tuesday.

Fahd asks UNSC to lift arms embargo on Bosnia

JEDDAH (Saudi Arabia), July 26: King Fahd of Saudi Arabia has asked the UN Security Council to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia and allow the Muslims to defend themselves, official sources said today, reports AFP.

"The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina must exercise its legitimate right to self-defence in line with article 51 of the United Nations charter," King Fahd said in a message to council members.

"There fore it must lift the embargo," he said.

The King also urged the council members to assume their responsibilities in ensuring peace in the world and opposing Serb aggression against Muslim enclaves in Bosnia."

Serb forces overran Srebrenica on July 11 and captured Zepa on Tuesday. Both were declared safe areas in 1993 by the UN Security Council.

King Fahd on Monday asked Muslim countries to ignore the embargo in line with a decision taken Friday in Geneva by representatives of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Saudi Arabia has provided political and financial support to the Muslim-led government in Bosnia since the war erupted in 1992.

AFP from Bandar Seri Begawan adds: ASEAN members are expected to discuss the "failure of the United Nations and the western powers to halt fighting in Bosnia but have not yet agreed on whether to call for

the lifting of the arms embargo, an official said today.

"It was not too difficult for us to look at Bosnia and see the failure of the United Nations, the failure of the western powers and the tragedy..." Malaysian Foreign Minister Secretary General Kamal Jaafar said after a meeting of senior ASEAN officials.

"There's a consensus with respect to what the Serbs have done in Bosnia," he said, referring to the recent attacks against UN safe havens.

Foreign Ministers from the seven Asian countries are expected to issue a separate statement on Bosnia during their meetings in Brunei capital July 29.



Soong Chang-chih, a strategy adviser to the Taiwanese president and former defence minister, is surrounded Wednesday by journalists after a ruling Kuomintang meeting.

Rao's August 15 speech to dominate party's polls strategy

SURAJKUND, India, July 26: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao will spell out in a traditional Independence day speech on August 15 his strategy for general elections next year, government ministers said today, reports Reuters.

They said Rao would use a six-day conclave of his Congress Party now underway at Surajkund, near Delhi, to assess the group's ability to put him in power for a second term before deciding their actual plan.

Without the support of Harijans and Muslims, the Congress cannot survive for a single day," Social Welfare Minister Sitararam Kesri, a senior Congress ideologue, told Reuters.

The Prime Minister will renew our commitment to these important components of our party on independence day," he said.

Muslims form 12 per cent of India's 920 million population. Harijans, or 'children of God,' was a name coined by Mahatma Gandhi for Hindu outcastes who together with other lower caste Hindus form a formidable majority of Indian voters.

Both have deserted the Congress, accusing it of upper caste bias.

Rao has used his independence day speeches, delivered from the ramparts of Delhi's 17th century Moghul Red Fort, to announce major policies.

Muslims accused him of not keeping one such promise of rebuilding a 16th century mosque destroyed by Hindu militants in the northern town of Ayodhya in December 1992.

Off the Record

'Teeth tower' BEIJING: A Chinese dentist trying to raise awareness of dental hygiene has created a 2.5-metre (8-foot, 2-inch) tower out of 28,000 human teeth, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday, says AP.

Washington, July 26: In her debut as a newspaper columnist, Hillary Rodham Clinton mused about her loss of anonymity and the end of such mundane pleasures as driving her own car, reports AP.

LONDON: A British woman was so overcome with remorse at motoring after drinking alcohol that she stopped her car at the local police station and confessed to the offence, a court heard on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

An honest confession: The anecdotes illustrate 'the odd duality of my role as first lady,' Mrs Clinton says.

Clinton admn asks for Congress' green signal

WASHINGTON, July 26: The Clinton administration has asked Congress for permission to deliver to Pakistan more than 370 million dollar in military equipment as part of a six-year plan to break a six-year impasse of over arms transfers.

The weapons transfer would not include 28-F-16 combat jets for which Pakistan has paid 658 million dollar but that cannot be delivered under law.

Quoting unidentified administration officials, The Post said the United States was seeking new buyers for those planes - possibly Indonesia and the Philippines - and would give the sale proceeds to Pakistan.

US shouldn't interfere in Thai affairs, warns FM

BANGKOK, July 26: Thailand's new Foreign Minister, Kasem S Kasemsri, has warned the United States that it should not interfere in Thai affairs, reports Xinhua.

In a meeting with US Ambassador to Thailand David Lambertson Tuesday Kasem conveyed the message diplomatically but clearly that the US should not interfere in Thai affairs in the absence of concrete evidence substantiating its allegations that certain Thai politicians have been engaged in narcotics trafficking.

Kasem told reporters afterwards, I drew attention to what in the eyes of the Thai people is US intervention in Thai affairs, which may cause bad feeling.

When Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa was forming his cabinet early this month, US State Department spokesman Nickolas Burns said that if Thai politicians with links to drug trafficking were to be included in the cabinet, the US-Thai relationship could be complicated.

Both Watana and Narong have denied the US allegations and none of them has entered cabinet.

Kasem told the US envoy "it cannot be said that the US is not interfering with us. People have different perceptions of what is at stake."

There is no major difference among the parties on the issue of the reforms. They are a mere carbon copy of each other," Rao said.

If you are not convinced about our economic policy it's useless to expect you to dispel the confusion in the voter's mind," he said.

India's third major contender for power next year is an alliance of leftists and low-caste Hindu group which hopes to seek mileage from their campaign for greater economic and political benefits to the poor.

Rao accused the Congress leaders and workers of not doing enough to understand and spread the message of his reforms, saying they were a major poll issue.

His stress on economic reforms offered a major contrast to the BJP which last week announced a campaign targeting the government's 'soft' policy on Kashmir and its alleged appeasement of Indian Muslims.