

BRIEFLY

China to get anti-illiteracy prize: China will be awarded this year's world anti-illiteracy prize, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) said. Xinhua reports from Paris.

UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza will present the prize to the Chinese Women's Federation on September 8. World Anti-Illiteracy Day, in Beijing, where the UN's fourth world conference on women will be held, the UNESCO said in a release in Paris, Monday.

5 shot dead in Philippines: Five men, including the provincial governor's brother-in-law, have been shot dead in an ambush on the southern Philippine island of Jolo, a government official said Tuesday, AFP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

One victim in the Monday attack was the brother-in-law of Al-Hasam Caluang, the Governor of Sulu province, which covers the island.

Iraq urges Iran to return aircraft: President Saddam Hussein Tuesday urged Iran to return 148 aircraft Iraq sheltered in Iran during the US-led Gulf War in 1991 if Tehran wants to improve ties with Baghdad, AFP reports from Baghdad.

In a televised speech marking the anniversary of the end of Iraq's eight-year war with Iran on August 8, 1988, Saddam said "we mistakenly believed" Tehran would return the aircraft because it had also been in conflict with what he called the "great satan."

Wildfire rages in California: About 2,000 firefighters are trying to contain a raging wildfire as residents of a threatened southern California town prepare to evacuate on a moment's notice, officials said on Monday, Reuter reports from Cabazon, California.

The fire, which started accidentally last Friday, has already charred more than 21,000 acres (8,400 hectares) of rugged terrain north of Palm Springs, according to the California Department of Forestry.

US army official to visit NZ: The commander-in-chief of the United States, Pacific military forces will visit New Zealand this month, in a move seen as evidence of the continuing thaw in relations between the two countries, Defence Minister Warren Cooper said yesterday, AFP reports from Wellington.

Admiral Richard Macke's scheduled visit from August 19 to 23 follows that of his predecessor, Admiral Charles Lawson, in April 1994, which was seen as a breakthrough in the military relations between the two countries after New Zealand's nuclear-free policy caused a rift in the mid-1980s.

12 die in Philippines road mishap: Twelve people, including two children, died when a bus and a truck collided in the northern Philippines, police said yesterday, Reuter reports from Manila.

Most of the dead, including the eight and nine-year-old boys, were from the passenger bus.

Police said 14 people were seriously injured in the accident early on Monday in Tarlac province.

Le Duc Anh in Phnom Penh: The Vietnamese President Le Duc Anh arrived in the Cambodian capital yesterday becoming the most senior Vietnamese leader to visit Phnom Penh since the formation of the government in Phnom Penh two years ago following UN-backed polls, AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

During his two-day stay Le Duc Anh is to spend two days in Phnom Penh, will meet King Norodom Sihanouk, co-Prime Ministers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, and Chairman of the National Assembly, Chea Sim.

Mild quake rocks Japan: A moderate earthquake, measuring 4.3 on the Richter Scale, rocked small islands off eastern Japan early yesterday but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the meteorological agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The epicentre of the quake, which struck at 5:48 am (2048 GMT Monday), was located 170 kms (105 miles) south of Tokyo in the Pacific Ocean, the agency said.

Arafat leaves Taba: PLO head Yasser Arafat left the Red Sea resort of Taba yesterday after talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and flew to Alexandria to confer with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Reuter reports from Egypt.

Peres and Arafat met in Taba for five hours on Monday night in an effort to break a deadlock on expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank.

US envoy allowed to see Wu: A US diplomat will be allowed to meet on Wednesday with human rights activist Harry Wu, a naturalised US citizen arrested in China and accused of stealing state secrets, the State Department said on Monday, Reuter reports from Washington.

US detainee freed in Siberia: An American serviceman detained last week near a Siberian nuclear installation was released after a few hours, ITAR-Tass news agency quoted the regional branch of the security service as saying on Tuesday, Reuter reports from Moscow.

The incident took place on August 3, Tass said in a report from the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk.

US gives \$ 2.1m to ILO: The United States had contributed 2.1 million dollars to a UN group to fight youth labour practices and child prostitution in Asia and Africa, officials announced Monday, AFP reports from Washington.

The money, authorised by Congress, will go to the United Nations International Labour Organisation, according to officials with the US Labour Department.

ROK prisoners on hunger strike: Hundreds of South Korean political prisoners entered the second day of a hunger strike yesterday calling for their release in an amnesty next week to commemorate liberation from Japanese rule, dissidents said, AFP reports from Seoul.

The strike launched Monday by 465 prisoners of conscience is still going on in 32 prisons nationwide," said Minkahyup or the Dissident Council for the families of democratic detainees.

Dissidents ask junta to talk with Suu Kyi

BANGKOK, Aug 8: Dissident Myanmar students today called on Myanmar's ruling military to begin talks with freed democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and to release all political prisoners who remain in jail, reports Reuter.

Dozens of Myanmar dissidents rallied peacefully outside their embassy here today to mark the seventh anniversary of what has become known as the "four eights" massacre.

In reality, the only route to peace, justice and development in Myanmar is for all parties to come together in good faith for political dialogue, the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) said in a statement.

Bomb intended to assassinate Chandrika, minister

COLOMBO, Aug 8: A powerful bomb which killed 22 people at an office here Monday was actually intended to assassinate Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga or a senior minister, police sources said today, reports AFP.

Police made a breakthrough in Monday's bombing following the interrogation of a Tamil man who was already in custody on suspicion that he was linked to the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the source said.

The bomb was concealed inside a hand cart loaded with king coconuts and exploded outside the western province chief minister's office at the high security Torrington Square in Cinnamon Gardens, police said.

"The case is now almost solved. We have got the man who assembled the bomb and also found some cyanide capsules. They have said the bomb was intended for a VVIP (very, very important person) and it was to go off against a motorcade," a police source said.

Police said the bomb attack also could have been meant for power and energy minister Anuruddha Ratwatte who is a junior defence minister leading the campaign against the LTTE.

Ratwatte is known to take the route where the bomb went off, they added.

Tamil Tigers carry cyanide capsules with them to commit suicide to avoid falling into the hands of security forces.

On Monday, President Kumaratunga confirmed in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that the LTTE had sent suicide bombers to assassinate her.

The man who pushed the deadly cart Monday had been arrested earlier by the crime detection bureau and released after taking his photograph. However, his associate was kept under detention.

Police believe that the bomber may have panicked and set off the blast outside the chief minister's office because his accomplice was being questioned and he feared exposing himself before carrying out the job assigned to him.

Military sources said ball bearings packed inside the bomb were clearly aimed at killing a large number of people.

In March 1991, the LTTE set off a powerful car bomb to ambush a motorcade and kill junior defence minister Ranjan Wijeratne who at the time was leading a war against the Tamil Tigers.

Since then the LTTE has been accused of using suicide bombers to assassinate former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991. Sri Lanka President Ranasinghe Premadasa in May 1993 and opposition leader Gamini Dissanayake in October 1994, A Reuter report says.

A suicide bomber who killed 22 people when he detonated a cart full of coconuts and plastic explosives in Colombo had been questioned on the street with his cart the day before the blast, police said today.

The bomber, an Indian

Tamil, was stopped on Sunday with an accomplice pushing the cart but only the accomplice was detained, police said. On Monday the bomber set off the explosives.

"We questioned them. The bomber could speak Sinhalese and said he was merely selling king coconuts, and he was allowed to go off," the Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of Colombo, GB Kotakadeniya, told Reuters.

"But the other man could not answer."

The detained accomplice said after Monday's bomb blast outside government offices in the embassy district of Colombo that their mission had been to detonate the bomb "near a motorcade with tinted windows", Kotakadeniya said.

He said they had received their instructions from the intelligence chief of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have been fighting for a homeland in north and east Sri Lanka since 1983.

Antagonism among Serb leaders and factions has risen to a new pitch since rebel Serb territory in Croatia was overrun by government forces with neither the Bosnian Serbs or the Serbian-led rump of Yugoslavia moving to help.

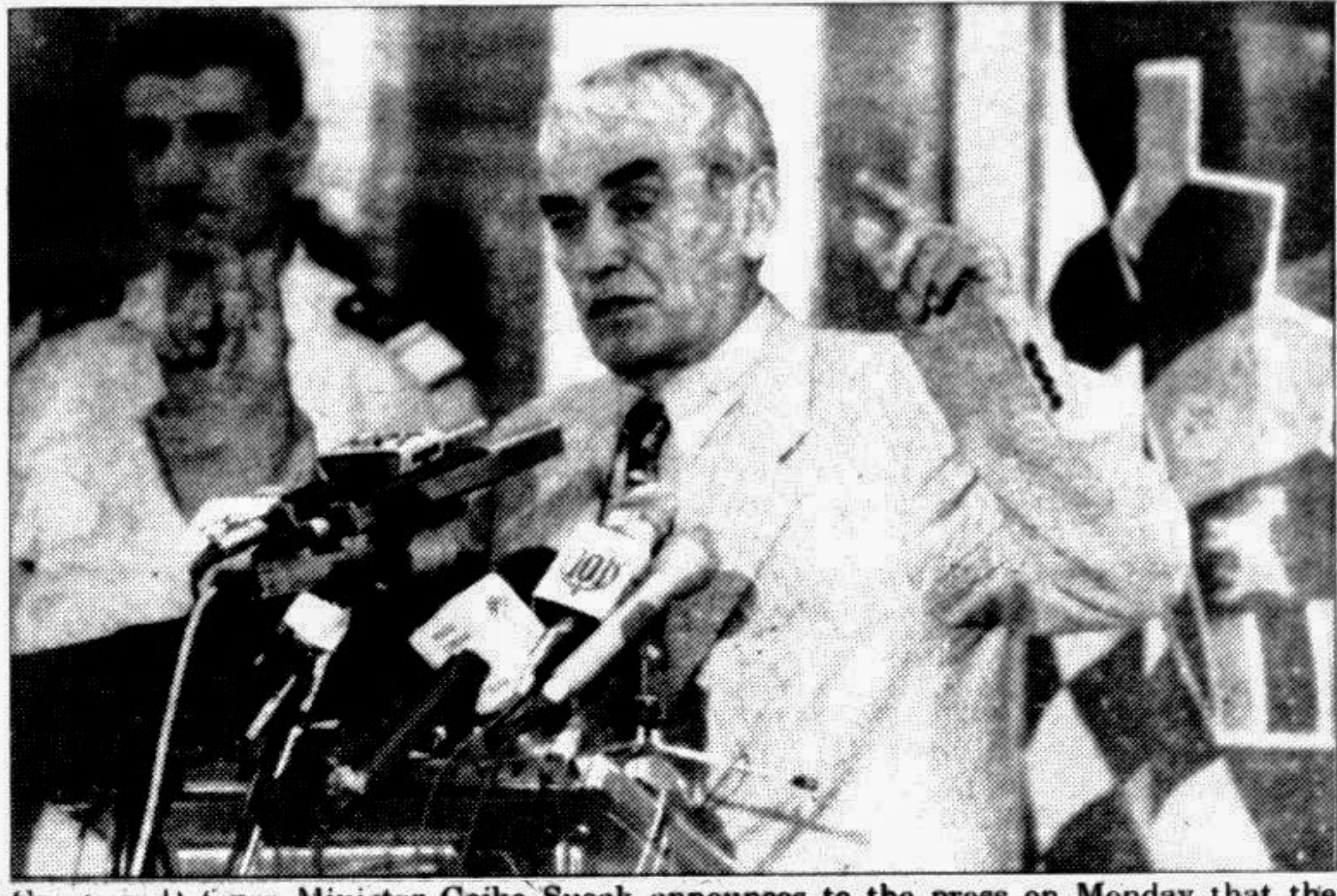
Karadzic also attacked army Commander General Ratko Mladic, who has defied his efforts to remove him, and the 18 top generals who backed his revolt.

"At this crucial historical moment for our survival in our centuries — old homes defence and unity are our only safety," he said in a statement broadcast on television. "Defiance and uncertainty in following orders are impermissible — they could destroy the state."

Belgrade news media also denounced Karadzic Monday.

Vecernji Novosti accused him of treason. Belgrade state television denounced his "lust for power" calling him and the members of parliament who support him "a handful of war profiteers."

Karadzic and his hardliners oppose big power proposals to settle the Bosnian war with a federation which would give Serbs local control in a almost half the territory. Milosevic supports the plan.



Croatian Defence Minister Gojko Susak announces to the press on Monday that the Croatian towns of Vojnic, Turanj, Skakavac, Gornji Zapac and Donji Lapac had been recaptured by Croatian forces, terminating Operation Storm. Susak reported that 118 Croatian soldiers had been killed and 620 wounded in the four-day operation to liberate the Croatian Krajina, occupied for four years by rebel Serbs. — AFP/UNB photo

Karadzic blames Milosevic for fall of Krajina

BELGRADE, Aug 8: Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic denounced Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic on Monday, blaming him for the weekend collapse of Krajina, the rebel Serb enclave in Croatia, reports Reuter.

Flanked by top aides who have been supporting him in a power struggle with his own generals, Karadzic appeared on Bosnian Serb Television to denounce Belgrade leaders.

Krajina Leader Milan "did not order withdrawal and the evacuation of civilians," he said. "That was directed from Belgrade."

Rebels kill 33 in Bogota

BOGOTA, Aug 8: At least 33 people were dead and more than 20 wounded in rebel attacks around the nation marking the first anniversary of President Ernesto Samper taking office, officials said Monday, reports AFP.

The dead included 14 police personnel, six soldiers and 13 guerrillas, according to police.

The rebel's objective in the attacks which broke out Sunday was to mark Samper's first year in office and press for peace talks, said army General Camilo Zuniga.

The heaviest fighting came in the town of Miraflores in the southeastern department of Guaviare where some 200 to 300 rebels from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) attacked Sunday.

Off the Record



The Enjalbert, a pocket photo-revolver, a rare spy camera designed to resemble a large pistol and believed to be the only example ever to appear at auction, is expected to fetch 25,000-35,000 at Christie's Cameras and Optical Toys Sale in London on August 31. — AFP/UNB photo

Scientists poke nose into paintings

LONDON: British scientists have "corrected" an apparent optical error in one of Henri Matisse's most famous paintings. The Daily Telegraph reported on Tuesday, says AFP.

The changes to the 1911 painting "Goldfish" which hangs in the Pushkin Gallery in Moscow, accurately re-arrange the refracted image Matisse painted, the paper said.

Professor Alan Crocker of Surrey University told The Telegraph that the image of the fish seen through the surface of the water in the bowl was "totally inconsistent with the image seen through the curved front."

To find out what it should really look like, Crocker asked Tamir Alam, a physics student, to examine the optical principles as part of a final year project.

Alam used model fish to conduct experiments to recreate what Matisse would really have seen through the top of the bowl and found that not all four fish would have been visible, as they are in the painting.

"We are not saying that Matisse was a poor painter", Crocker told the paper, adding however that he would be happy to give other artists a hand with their perspectives.

May be it's a step to keep equilibrium in air

BEIJING: The all-female bevy of powder-blue clad flight attendants who serve in China's planes will have new colleagues — men. Xinhua news agency said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Shanghai-based East China Airlines has selected its first eight stewards from more than 1,000 college students who replied to its advertisements. They have been given training programme and will start work in the air this year, it said.

East China recruits about 100 flight attendants each year and had previously junior middle school graduates, given three years of training, and senior middle school graduates, who received one year's training.

The graduates from colleges and universities need only three months' training before taking to the air.

East China has already employed more than 50 female graduates as flight attendants and will no longer recruit junior middle school students, a company spokesman said.

Barred from the bar

SYDNEY: The teenage son of Britain's Princess Anne, Peter Phillips, was asked to leave the bar area of an Australian casino for being under-age, a casino spokeswoman said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The spokeswoman for the Conrad Jupiters Casino on the Gold Coast in Queensland said Phillips, 17, was with a group of about 20 school friends on Monday night in the bistro area of an English-theme pub in the casino called the Prince Albert.

She said the bistro area became a bar after 10 pm and as the change-over time approached the group was asked to show identification as proof of age.

"Peter was one of the boys who was under 18 and asked to leave," the spokeswoman told Reuters.

"Others in the group were over 18 and they stayed on while the younger ones or ones without ID left. They were all very well behaved."

The spokeswoman said there was no under-age drinking involved and Peter did not try to order an alcoholic drink.

Phillips, the son of the Princess royal and Captain Mark Phillips, is in Australia with a touring rugby team from his Scottish school, Gordonstoun.

Russian, Chechen commanders move to disarm fighters

GROZNY, Russia, Aug 8: Russian and Chechen military commanders have made their first move on the ground to disarm hundreds of Chechen fighters, but the process promises to be slow and difficult as ad hoc self-defence units mushroom in the Caucasus republic, reports AFP.

Many fighters are in remote areas and the two sides face the additional problem of disarming Chechens who do not accept orders from separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev.

General Anatoly Romanov, Commander of Russian Interior Troops in Chechnya, and Chechen military commander Aslan Maskhadov went to the southeastern village of Zandak on Monday to set the disarmament process in motion.

"The aim was to introduce local field commanders to each other and inform them and the villagers about the military accord" signed by both sides on July 30, said Sten Wadensjoe, a Swedish member of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission, who went with them.

Under the military accord brokered by the OSCE in the devastated Chechen capital Grozny, the Chechen fighters are to hand over their weapons and self-defence units of up to 25 men are to be set up in each village, carrying only small arms.

At the same time, the Russian troops are to start a phased withdrawal, initially pulling back two to four kilometres from their present positions.

Wadensjoe told AFP the local commanders in the Zandak area started preparing a joint map showing troop locations and strengths and established communications links, but no weapons were surrendered.

He said Chechen fighters who had bought their own weapons would receive compensation of 300,000 to 500,000 rubles (60 to 100 dollars) for handing them in.

Israel postpones cabinet meet to okay self-rule

JERUSALEM, Aug 8: The Israeli government knocked back for the second time a meeting planned today to approve the handover of civilian powers to the Palestinian on the West Bank, officials said, reports AFP.

The meeting, during which the cabinet is to endorse the transfer of eight more powers to the self-rule authority, was originally planned for August 2 before being postponed a first time until today.

NZ will appeal ICJ to stop France resuming N-tests

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Aug 8: New Zealand will appeal to the International Court of Justice to stop France's plans for nuclear tests in the South Pacific, Prime Minister Jim Bolger said Tuesday, reports AP.

The government's legal advisers know their case is "not a strong one," Bolger acknowledged. But the Cabinet decided after a meeting with six of Parliament's seven parties that New Zealand should take every opportunity to oppose the tests.

New Zealand will ask the independent court, based in the Hague, the Netherlands, to reopen its 1973 case over French atmospheric nuclear tests, Bolger said. The court never ruled in that case because France had since rejected the court's jurisdiction, meaning action could only be taken by reopening an old case, making New Zealand the only country that could take this action.

Global warming may trigger deaths from tropical diseases

WASHINGTON, Aug 8: Scientists report that long-term climate changes caused by global warming could trigger hundreds of thousands of additional deaths each year from tropical diseases like malaria and yellow fever, reports AP.

Researchers using global climate models also point to the possibility of additional deaths in industrialised countries from a rising incidence of summer heat waves. Earlier this year over 500 people died in Chicago, a major US city, during a stifling five-day heat wave that included temperatures as high as 41 degrees Celsius.

But researchers expect global warming to have its most deadly impact on developing countries, predicting an increased prevalence of infectious diseases as mosquitoes and other pests expand their ranges.

According to Dr Paul Epstein, professor of tropical medicine at the Harvard School of Public Health, a warmer climate is believed to be responsible for Aedes aegypti mosquitoes prime carriers of both dengue and yellow fever extending their range higher into the mountains than ever before in regions of Costa Rica, Colombia, India and Kenya. The mosquitoes are being found above 2,000 metres, whereas previously they were limited by temperature to altitudes below 1,000 metres.

Researchers also report that mosquito species that host yellow fever parasites have established themselves in the southeastern United States. The occurrence of a yellow fever outbreak in the city of New Orleans would sicken 100,000 and kill 10,000 people, according to the National Institute of Medicine.

Michael Loevinsohn, an ecologist at the International Development Research Centre in New Delhi, India, has linked a one-degree-Celsius increase in the average temperature in Rwanda in 1987 to a 37 per cent rise in the incidence of malaria that year. Especially vulnerable were mountainous areas of Rwanda in which malaria had been rare, according to Loevinsohn's findings.

Researchers have also linked the warm spells and heavy rains caused by El Nino — a cyclical warming of the tropical Pacific Ocean that affects global climate — to outbreaks of illness and infectious disease.

Epstein and microbiologist Rita Colwell, president of the Maryland Biotechnology Institute, suggest that El Nino may have contributed to a cholera outbreak that caused thousands of deaths in 19 South American countries in 1991. The scientists believe the El Nino conditions stimulated the growth of plankton that harbor the cholera bacterium. They have also collected data suggesting a similar link between El Nino and recent cholera outbreaks in Bangladesh.

In Zimbabwe and western Mozambique, periods of drought associated with El Nino have regularly led to major infestations of rats, which are carriers for a number of pathogens.

Climate disruptions in the form of floods and drought are believed to have been indirectly responsible for an outbreak of hantavirus respiratory illness in the southwestern United States in 1993. Studies have linked emergence of the disease to a sudden increase in deer mice, which are carriers of the hantavirus, following heavy rains from an El Nino warming episode.

The rains produced an abundance of food for the mice, while the drought had eliminated many of their predators, leading to a ten-fold increase in the number of deer mice over a one-year period. As of June 1995, 106 cases of the unusual disease had been reported in 23 states. Half of those cases were fatal.

Scientists report that warming in the deep oceans may be driving El Nino conditions, which have occurred more frequently and persisted longer than usual since 1980.

While most scientists cite increasing evidence that the Earth is warming up the 1980s was the warmest decade on record — it still has not been determined whether this signals global warming caused by industrial emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases or a temporary rise in temperature due to climate variation.

Afghan factions urged to agree to peace formula

ISLAMABAD, Aug 8: Pakistan Foreign Minister Asef Ali, currently on a six-day visit to different places in Afghanistan, has urged all Afghan Mujahideen factions to agree to a peace formula so that reconstruction could be started, reports Xinhua.

Asef yesterday met General Rashid Dostum, leader of the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, in northern Afghanistan and discussed with him on the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan to restore peace.

During the talks with Rashid Dostum, the UN formula also came up for discussion, according to Pakistan state TV.