

BRIEFLY

Kim Young-Sam pardons 3,000:

South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Friday granted a special mass amnesty affecting more than 3,000 people to mark the peninsula's liberation from Japanese colonial rule, a top official said. AFP reports from Seoul.

Kim granted clemency to a total of 3,169 ex-convicts and "exemplary" prisoners who fully repented their crimes "to foster national harmony," Justice Minister Ahn Woo-Mahn said.

Taliban free 7 Russian crews:

The seven crew members of a Russian cargo plane held by Afghan militants since the plane was found to be carrying military supplies have been freed, Russian radio reported Friday. AFP says from Moscow.

The Taliban rebel group freed the crew and its plane, an Ilyushin 76 belonging to the Russian Aerostan Company, said Echo Moscow radio, quoting the Afghan embassy in Moscow. An embassy spokesman told AFP that it had heard unofficial reports to that effect, but could not confirm them.

Silajdzic to remain as PM:

Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic withdrew his resignation Thursday at the request of President Alija Izetbegovic, an aide to Silajdzic said. AFP reports from Sarajevo.

Silajdzic withdrew his resignation following conversations with the Bosnian president in the course of official meetings Thursday. Bosnian television reported.

Blast kills 7 in Algiers:

A bomb attack on a train south of the Algerian capital killed seven people and wounded 20, an Algerian newspaper said on Thursday. Reuter reports from Paris.

The bomb went off in a train carriage on Tuesday near Medea, some 70 km (43 miles) south of Algiers, El-Watan Daily reported.

Sino-Indian talks next week:

China and India will conduct an eighth round of talks August 18 and 19 in an effort to resolve their long-standing border dispute, the official Xinhua news agency reported. AFP reports from Beijing.

The talks in New Delhi will focus on how a border peace accord signed by the two sides in 1993 should be applied, the report said.

Flood claims 8 in Rajasthan:

Eight People have died and tens of thousands have lost their homes in flooding caused by heavy monsoon rains in the Indian desert state of Rajasthan, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Friday. AFP says from New Delhi.

Four people were killed in the town of Dausa on Thursday when their house collapsed on top of them, the news agency said. Two deaths were reported from the town of Bharatpur and two from Alwar, it said.

50 feared drowned in Patna:

Nearly fifty persons, mostly women and children, were feared drowned when a country boat capsized in the swollen river Ganga near Bakhtarpur in Patna district Wednesday, according to official reports reaching Patna on Thursday. PTI reports from Patna, Bihar.

Six bodies have so far been fished out while efforts to trace the remaining bodies were continuing, the district room in Patna said.

Iranian newsmen blast UN role:

About 300 Iranian journalists Thursday blasted the United Nations' "impotent and biased" role in the Bosnian conflict, accusing it of failing to live up to its legal and moral responsibilities. AFP reports from Tehran.

In a petition published in Iranian newspapers, the journalists criticised the "lazy" UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, saying his hands were "smeared by the blood of innocent Bosnians."

6 escape from Surat jail:

Six under-trials escaped from the sub-jail in Bardoli of Surat district in Gujarat Thursday. PTI reports from Ahmedabad.

The under-trials broke open the bars of a window in the bathroom of the sub-jail and escaped, police said. An offence has been registered against the accused at Bardoli Police Station.

Kurds on hunger strike in Turkey:

Around 15,000 prisoners and members of their families mainly Kurds were still on hunger strike in Turkish prisons after nearly a month a human rights campaigner said in Geneva Thursday. AFP reports from Geneva.

Etienne Jaudel of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) gave details of the mass hunger strikes during a press conference at the UN's Palais des Nations in Geneva after returning from a six-day trip to Turkey to review prisoners welfare.

China-Philippines accord over Spratlys

MANILA, Aug 11: The Philippines and China have reached agreement on a "code of conduct" to reduce the chances of military conflict over the disputed Spratly Island, a senior Filipino official said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

But they remained far apart over a row that erupted last February when Manila discovered that Beijing had built structures over mischievous reef in a part of the Spratlys claimed by Manila, Philippine Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rodolfo Severino told reporters.

"We agreed that such a code of conduct would be necessary," Severino said in a briefing after two days of talks with a Chinese delegation headed by Assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yingfan.

"Eventually, we hope all countries concerned would get on board," he said, adding that the code would govern the behaviour of Chinese and Filipino military forces in the Spratlys.

Differences between the two nations over dismantling Chinese structures built on mischievous reef were not resolved.

"They know the basis of our concern. We want the situation to be restored," Severino said, referring to when no Chinese structures existed on mischievous reef.

The potentially oil-rich cluster of reefs are also claimed in whole or in part by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

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