

NAM to adopt new action for socio-economic dev

CARTAGENA, Colombia, Oct 15: The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which has been in quest for justice and peace in the post-Cold War era, will adapt itself to new realities and adopt new action to promote social and economic development, reports Xinhua.

Rodrigo Pardo Garcia-Pena, Foreign Minister of Colombia, told an experts working session of the 11th summit of Non-Aligned Movement countries yesterday that the summit meeting will give top priorities to a series of urgent questions that concern the movement in the next few years.

On the extensive agenda of the NAM summit are such prominent issues as South-South Cooperation, North-South relations, the role of the movement as a peace broker in world affairs, as well as international peace and security.

Representatives of the 113 NAM member nations are expected to debate social and economic development

among them, the structural reform of the UN Security Council, disarmament, environmental protection and UN peacekeeping missions. Rodrigo Pardo said at the two-day experts session, which opened early in the day to prepare for the summit meeting dated for October 18-19.

He added that the head of state or government from NAM members also will discuss national sovereignty of NAM countries, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and efforts to enhance respect for the principles that the Non-Aligned Movement has embraced since its creation 34 years ago.

At least 48 heads of state or government will meet here next Wednesday for the triennial summit, and delegates from nine observer countries and 49 guest states or international organisations will be present at the summit, preceded by today's working meeting and another two-day of foreign ministerial sessions.

Residents flee to other parts of Kabul as Taliban advance

KABUL, Oct 15: Thousands of Kabul residents threatened by the advancing Taliban fled to other parts of the Afghan capital today while the government and Islamic students made counter claims about battlefield successes, reports AFP.

With the sound of heavy gunfire coming from the frontline south of the city, inhabitants moved away in trucks, on bicycles, in horse-pulled carts, or pulling carts themselves.

"This is the third time I have escaped the fighting," said Noor Mohammed, a resident of the Cheliston district of southern Kabul. "I didn't think it would start again."

Life in central Kabul was normal however with the streets packed with people and fruit and vegetable markets full of produce.

Unlike previous battles for control of Kabul, that have left 25,000 dead in three

years, no artillery barrage of the city has yet been carried out.

The Taliban and the forces of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani have instead intensified their psychological warfare against each other.

Radio Kabul, controlled by Rabbani forces, said the Taliban had been forced out of the strategic western provincial capital of Herat. But the Herat provincial governor, Ehsanullah Khan, denied the report and told AFP the city was calm.

Herat was captured by the Taliban religious student militia in early September.

Afghan sources in Tehran, said Saturday that a "coalition of pro-government Mujahideen" had taken positions in areas 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Herat and appeared to have seized a military base.

The Taliban, in turn, said they were still progressing

toward their declared aim of taking Kabul.

The militia, which has moved from the southern border since appearing on the scene less than a year ago, claims to have made several strategic successes in recent days.

Their forces were reported to be moving toward Kabul from the Argandah Valley in the southwest, from Paghman to the west and from the Khairabad Hills to the south, clashing with Rabbani's forces.

The Taliban said Saturday it had overrun several important government positions in south and west of Kabul in a two-pronged overnight offensive.

The positions included Qila Haider Khan, district centre of western Paghman province, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) west of Kabul which had served as headquarters of Rabbani's impor-

tant ally, Rasul Sayyaf, the movement said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), meanwhile, said Saturday that 550 people were being treated in hospital in Kabul following violent clashes to the south of the city.

Most of the casualties were soldiers wounded during fighting between forces loyal to Rabbani and the Taliban, said ICRC spokesman Tony Burgener.

The ICRC was attempting to deal with the situation, but its efforts were being hampered by a lack of blood, he said.

The Taliban have sworn to take Kabul unless Rabbani stands down and hands over the city. The ultimate aim of the militia is to disarm the traditional Mujahideen factions fighting for control of the country since 1992 and establish an Islamic state.

10 more killed in Karachi violence

KARACHI, Oct 15: Gunmen shot dead 10 people, including a politician, in the Pakistani city of Karachi on Saturday night and today, the start of a week in which planned opposition protests threaten renewed unrest, reports Reuters.

The ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) has called for a strike on Wednesday to protest against what it says was the killing of one of its activists in police custody last week.

Police say the activists Mufeez Farooqi died in a shoot-out with MQM gunmen in which his brother Fahim Farooqi and two other MQM detainees under police escort were killed on Tuesday. On Thursday, the main opposition Pakistan Muslim League plans to stage a nationwide "black day" of protest to mark the end of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's second year in power.

Police said unidentified attackers killed Ahmad Ali Soomro, 40, a former mem-

ber of Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) outside his house at midnight.

They said the son of a municipal councillor was shot dead on Sunday morning, seven other people including five members of a single family, were killed in separate incidents overnight.

Unidentified gunmen herded members of a family into a corner of their house in the north Nazimabad area of the city.

They killed five people, four of them women, and seriously wounded another woman. Another family member had been killed half an hour earlier. The motive for the attacks was not immediately clear, police said.

On Saturday, three policemen were killed by gunmen in a drive-by shooting in the neighbouring city of Hyderabad, also troubled by conflict between the MQM and security forces.

More than 75 people have been killed in Karachi this month.

BRIEFLY

UAE okays capital punishment:

United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan al-Nahayan on Saturday approved a law enforcing the death penalty for drug-traffickers, the official news agency WAM reported, AFP says from Abu Dhabi.

Sheikh Zayed endorsed the law which also included intensified prison terms of up to seven years for drug abusers. The federal cabinet introduced capital punishment for drug smuggling earlier this year after a surge in trafficking operation.

Rao leaves for Egypt:

Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao yesterday left New Delhi for Egypt on the first leg of an 11-day tour which includes an address to the United Nations general assembly in New York, officials said, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Rao is scheduled to hold talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and sign treaties on fighting terrorism and stepping up technical and scientific cooperation, they said.

1,161 rape cases in Philippine:

There were 1,161 rape cases recorded in the Philippines in the first six months of 1995, a prominent senator and anti-crime crusader said in a statement issued in Manila yesterday, AFP reports from Manila.

Senator Ernesto Herrera admitted that this was about seven per cent lower than the 1,242 cases recorded in the same period last year but he also said that there were likely to have been many unreported cases.

Lankan PM won't join NAM summit:

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike who is a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will not attend the summit in Colombia due to poor health, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Colombo.

Bandaranaike, 79, has been advised by her doctors against undertaking the 30-hour plane journey to Bogota for the conference ending October 20, a Foreign Ministry official said.

ROK hostages freed in Moscow:

South Korean tourists taken hostage in Moscow on Saturday and later released were in perfect shape a spokesman for the Seoul Embassy in Russia said, Reuters reports from Moscow.

Fourteen of the released hostages are in the Embassy. South Korean Embassy spokesman Lee Sok Bae told Reuters by telephone. They are in good health. It seems to me they are in perfect shape."

Blast kills 14 in Guinea Bissau:

An explosion at a munitions dump killed at least 14 people including some military personnel, at an army base in Guinea Bissau on Saturday, the Portuguese news agency Lusa reported, Reuters reports from Lisbon.

Lusa quoting an official source, said the blast took place at the base of Cufar 200 km (125 miles) south of Bissau capital of the small West African state.

Greek publisher Vlachou dies:

Greek Publisher Eleni Vlachou who closed her newspapers rather than submit to censorship under a 1967-74 military junta died on Saturday, aged 85, officials at the Press Ministry said, Reuters reports from Athens.

They gave no details on the cause of her death but she had been unwell for some time condolences were sent by President Kostas Stephanopoulos and Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu.

Road mishap claims 15 in Iran:

Fifteen people, including a seven-month-old baby, were killed and 20 others injured in a collision between a bus and a truck in northeastern Iran, a newspaper reported Saturday, AFP reports from Tehran.

The accident occurred Friday on the road from Neishabour to Mashhad in Kohrasan province, Kayhan daily said.

British author Ellis Peters dead:

Best-selling author Ellis Peters, creator of the Medieval Monk, Detective Brother, cadfael, died on Saturday aged 82, her literary agent Deborah Owen said, Reuters reports from London.

Owen said she died in her sleep at her home in Telford, western England, after suffering a stroke last month.

Jiang unlikely to emerge as next strong man

BEIJING, Oct 15: Chinese patriarch Deng Xiaoping's chosen successor, president Jiang Zemin, acknowledged in an interview published today that he was unlikely to emerge as the country's next individual strong-man, reports AFP.

In the interview with US News and World Report, details of which were received here by fax Sunday, Jiang also reiterated that "Deng is healthy for a man of 91," appealing for him to be left in peace.

"He should be allowed to enjoy a happy old age," the president said of Deng.

India to rollout light combat aircraft this month

NEW DELHI, Oct 15: India is to roll out a prototype of an indigenous fighter plane this month touted as the answer to the developing world's future military aviation needs, reports AFP.

The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) moves from the design table to the tarmac on October 30 in what is being seen as the answer to the developing world's future military aviation needs.

The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) moves from the design table to the tarmac on October 30 in what is being seen as a major milestone in the ambitious Indian plan to build a multi-role warplane.

"This is a significant step,"

said Air Vice Marshal P Rajkumar, the LCA project coordinator, of the jet's roll-out in the southern city of Bangalore, hub of India's aviation and aerospace industry.

Test flights of the LCA, which has been under development since 1993, would begin next year if the government continues to fund the project, supported by several defence agencies.

Rajkumar and other officials voiced fears of a financial crunch affecting the project, saying the LCA needed an enormous dose of funds if it was ever to take to the air.

"It will be a long time before we see it being flown by

our air force," the project coordinator acknowledged. "We need 400 billion rupees (12.5 billion dollars) over the next 12 years."

India's current plan is to build 220 LCAs by the year 2007 to replace its ageing fleet of Mig-21 fighters.

The plane would carry a price tag of 20 million dollars but India has called for the participation of the aerospace community to try to save five million dollars off the cost and make it the world's cheapest fighter of its class.

The National Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) plans to assemble two LCA

"technology demonstrators" and five prototypes fitted with engines supplied by General Electric corp of the United States.

"We will install our own indigenous engines when the LCA goes for mass production," said an ADA official.

LCA programme director Kota Harinaraayana has promised the aircraft will stick to its schedule and said the plane will be 10 million dollars cheaper than comparable jet fighters.

India unveiled the LCA project in the 1980s with production slated for the end of 1995. The first funds —

one billion dollars — were only sanctioned in 1993 however.

ADA sources said British Aerospace, Sweden's Saab, Northrop Corp, and Martin Marietta of the United States had offered to take part in developing the LCA but have since developed cold feet because of the delays and financial fears about the project.

"They are now waiting for the aircraft to actually fly before making any commitment or investment," an ADA official said of the offers to develop the LCA's weaponry, sensors and other systems.

India has promoted the



Palestinian female students shouting slogans supporting Palestinian women prisoners still held in Israeli jails, Saturday. Some 6,000 students demonstrated in the Gaza City streets, protesting against the Israeli policy toward the Palestinian prisoners and the military redeployment from the occupied West Bank according to the Washington agreement. — AFP/UNB photo

India backs Rabbani: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Oct 15: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Saturday denied allegations that her country was supporting the Taliban faction in Afghanistan and in turn accused India of providing help to the embattled regime in Kabul, reports AFP.

It is India which is giving support to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his military commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) quoted Benazir as saying in an address to newspa-

per editors. India "is helping" the Kabul administration in a bid to fuel the conflict, she said, adding that "for this purpose India has a regular aerial contact from New Delhi with Bagram Air Base" near Kabul.

She said all such "tactics" were bound to fail and ultimately the Afghan masses would emerge victorious.

On Thursday India expressed concern at the escalating fighting in Afghanistan and accused Pakistan of fuel-

ing the conflict.

"The latest assault on Kabul by Pakistan backed Taliban militants marks a dangerous escalation in Islamabad's direct and continued interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan," an external affairs ministry spokesman said.

Benazir said Pakistan was maintaining a policy the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Conference for a peaceful solution.

Zhirinovsky in Iraq to back 'democratic process'

BAGHDAD, Oct 15: Russian ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky arrived here Saturday to back "the democratic process" in Iraq on the eve of a referendum to give Saddam Hussein seven more years in power, reports AFP.

The Russian politician hailed Saddam he was to meet later Saturday and the "heroic Iraqi people."

France detains Comoros coup plotters

PARIS, Oct 15: Mercenaries involved in a failed coup in the Comoro Islands were arrested on their return to France on Saturday and may face charges of illegally confining Comoros President said Mohamed Djohar and others, justice sources said, reports Reuters.

The mercenaries were flown from the Comoros capital Moroni as prisoners escorted by Comoros police aboard a French government aircraft.

Justice sources admitted there was confusion as to their number which was put at 37 or 38, including two women. All were thought to be French except one Belgian.

Off the Record

Housewives to hold world confce!

BUENOS AIRES: Tired of ceding the international limelight to feminists, a traditionalist Argentine women's group has invited sisters from across the globe to the First World Congress of Housewives.

"Feminists, lesbians and homosexuals are all occupying the stage, so why can't we too?" Lita De Lazzari, President of Argentina's League of Housewives, told Reuters on Thursday.

Lost Pharos found under water

CAIRO: French and Egyptian divers retrieved a huge Ptolemaic statue and five other ancient artifacts from an underwater site off the coast of Alexandria, the head of the archaeological team told AFP on Wednesday.

"We took out Thursday the torso of a colossal statue of a Ptolemy depicted as a Pharaoh, a piece of another giant statue, a papyrus-shaped column and two Sphinx of Ramses II, one complete with its head," Jean-Yves Empereur said.

The pieces came from an underwater site which includes a sunken temple, a palace and the remains of the lost lighthouse of Alexandria or Pharos, one of the seven wonders of the world, off the coast of the Mediterranean city.

The French-Egyptian team of archaeologists brought out the first piece, the torso of the statue of a woman, on October 4.

Empereur said the divers also found the head of the Ptolemaic statue but it was stuck between giant concrete blocks laid to protect the Qaitbay Fort built on the old site of the Pharos.

Revenge taken in a unique way

COLOMBO: A jealous lover who found out his mistress was having an affair with a younger man stole her false teeth, a Sri Lankan newspaper said Sunday, reports Reuters.

"Recently he heard his mistress was carrying on with a 30-year-old man. So he took away the pair of dentures he had bought for her," the Sunday Times said.

The 38-year-old woman, from Nawagamawa, southeast of Colombo, chewed over her plight and eventually went to the police who immediately realised something was wrong.

"It was without teeth and in grandmother-like words that she told the story," the newspaper said.

Rao strongly opposes early elections

NEW DELHI, Oct 15: India's once confident opposition is in a state of disarray ahead of general elections next year but Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao is dead set against early polls, reports AFP.

Rao 74, who will be leading his Congress (I) Party's parliamentary election campaign for the first time, does not want the ballot to be held before April. Congress officials said.

In a democratic process it is essential that representatives elected by the people should have their full five year term as much as possible, party spokesman Ved Prakash told AFP.

Rao was contemplating political retirement when the last general elections were announced for May 1991.

The vote was staggered into June when former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated after the first round of polling.

Rao was elected president of the Congress, India's oldest political party, after Rajiv Gandhi's Italian born widow Sonia declined to take up the mantle. Rao became India's ninth Prime Minister on June 21, 1991.

The present parliament's term expires in June 1996, and Congress officials say Rao does not want the elections to be held during the hot summer months of May and June.

Most opposition parties want the polls in February or March. The polling dates will be decided by the election commission after consulting the parties.

Pakistan won't shelter Al-Faran

ISLAMABAD, Oct 15: The Al-Faran group of kidnappers holding four Western hostages in Indian-administered Kashmir will never be allowed to enter Pakistani territory, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Saturday, reports AFP.

Addressing newspaper editors, Benazir said Pakistan and all Kashmiri parties had condemned the "savage" act of kidnapping.

The abductors have caused "immense" damage to the ongoing Kashmiri "struggle for self-determination", she said, in a reference to the more than five-year-old Muslim separatist campaign.