

BRIEFLY

Diabetese cases rise in China: The number of cases of diabetes in Beijing has grown five fold since 1980, and now strikes 5.3 per cent of people aged between 20 and 74, according to public health ministry figures released yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

More than 20 million people suffer from the disease nationwide, and 750,000 new cases are uncovered each year, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Gas well explosion kills 2 in US: A 40-foot (12 metre) fireball throwing off 1,000-degree (538 Celsius) heat raged from a natural gas well Sunday after an explosion, stymieing efforts to recover the bodies of two workers who died in the blast. AP reports from Dime Box.

Three deadly explosions rocked the rig 65 miles (105 kilometers) southeast of Austin Saturday night, sending up a fireball that illuminated the blackened sky like a rising sun and whose glow could be seen from 20 miles (30 kilometers) away. "It'll probably take a week to get this fire out," said Pat Campbell, vice president of Joe Bowden's Wild Well Control Inc.

Yeltsin cancels meet with Al Gore: President Boris Yeltsin cancelled a planned meeting Monday with US Vice President Al Gore and has gone on vacation for two weeks, a presidential spokesman said. AP reports from Moscow.

The cancellation immediately raised concerns about the Russian leader's flagging health, but Igor Ignatiev, chief of the presidential press service, said Yeltsin was not ailing.

He's OK, Ignatiev told reporters who had gathered at the Kremlin for the scheduled meeting. He just decided to take a vacation.

Suharto returns to work: President Suharto returned to work Monday after a detailed medical check up last week, and is ready to face scheduled meetings with other government heads, the foreign minister said. AP reports from Jakarta.

On his first day at work, Suharto met for an hour with Foreign Minister Ali Alatas as the presidential residence.

He is in good health and eager to get back to his regular work, and other programs in store for him during the rest of the year, Alatas told reporters.

Road mishap kills 13 in Angola: Thirteen people died Sunday in a traffic accident involving a truck owned by Angola's armed forces private broadcaster LAC reported. AFP reports from Luanda.

Twenty-six other people were seriously injured in the accident, which happened five kilometres (three miles) from the small town of Catete, north of Luanda it said. Local officials issued a call for outside help, but by nightfall they were still waiting for ambulances to arrive, it added.

Strong quake rocks France: A strong earth tremor shook the Alpine region of southeastern France early yesterday morning causing a number of power cuts, fire services said. AFP reports from Annecy.

They said the Annecy area in the Haute Savoie department as well as parts of neighbouring Savoie, were affected prompting hundreds of telephone calls from worried residents.

Gunmen kill 7 in Colombia: Seven people died Sunday after a right-wing paramilitary group stormed a small town in northern Colombia, police said. AFP reports from Bogota.

Officials said the gunmen entered the town of San Roque 700 kilometers (430 miles) north of Bogota in the department of Antioquia and read a list of names. The assailants then executed six people. A seventh person died in a retaliatory measure by leftist rebels.

Yemen's call for summit with KSA: Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Sunday called for a summit with Saudi Arabia to settle a long standing border dispute, state television reported. Reuters says from Ade.

The television said he called for a summit in Sanaa to speed up talks on the border issue. Yemen is committed to finding a final and acceptable solution on the border issue, he was quoted as saying.

Plane crash kills 1 in England: A pilot was killed Sunday when his WWII plane crashed during a low-flying routine at an air show in Duxford, police said. AFP reports from Duxford.

The P38, lightning apparently hit another aircraft on the ground during the display in front of thousands of spectators at the annual show at Duxford in eastern England.

Japanese ship sinks in Tokyo: A Japanese gravel ship sank early Monday after colliding with a freighter in thick fog in the Seto Inland Sea in western Japan, coast guard officials said. AP reports from Tokyo.

No injuries were reported from the pre-dawn accident, the Tokyo Maritime Agency said. All five Japanese crew members of the 353-ton No. 5 Kofuku Maru were rescued shortly after being thrown into the water, the agency said.

Court rejects demands for Rao's arrest

NEW DELHI, July 15: The Delhi High Court today rejected demands that former Indian prime minister P. V. Narasimha Rao be arrested in connection with a cheating case, reports Reuters.

A group of civil rights lawyers had petitioned the court to issue an arrest warrant for Rao, saying a lower court judge's summons against Rao in the case was not good enough.

"The issue of warrant is a matter of exercise of judicial discretion. There is no reason to interfere with the jurisdiction. It is dismissed," High Court Judge N. G. Nandhi said, rejecting the petition.

Last week, a lower court judge ordered Rao to testify on July 24 in the case involving an expatriate India. Lakshubhai Pathak, who said he paid 100,000 US dollars to an acquaintance of Rao in a failed attempt to secure a government contract.

Pathak said Rao, who was a government minister at the time, assured him during a

meeting in New York in 1983 that "his work would be done" in the context of the promise by Rao's acquaintance, according to the lower court judge.

A spokesman of Rao's Congress party, which lost power in general elections earlier this year, said Rao would appeal to the High Court this week against the summons.

AP adds: The Congress Party that is propping up the minority coalition in India may pull down the one-month-old government because of critical remarks against its leader, news reports said Monday.

Interior Minister Inderjit Gupta was quoted by newspapers last week as saying that Congress leader P. V. Narasimha Rao might be forced out because of dissension in his party and his alleged involvement in shady deals.

Rao has resisted demands by many of his party leaders to resign from the post of president of the Congress after it lost power in the May general elections.

Stampedes kill 60 Hindu worshippers in India

NEW DELHI, July 15: Nearly 60 Hindu worshippers were killed in stampedes during ritual bathing in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh today, the United News of India reported, says AFP.

Thirty-eight Hindu devotees were killed and 40 injured during a stampede at a temple in the town of Ujjain in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, the news agency said.

Twenty-one people were trampled to death or drowned and 25 were injured on the banks of the Ganges River in the town of Haridwar in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, it added.

Earlier report says: Hindu pilgrims celebrating an astrologically auspicious festival Monday stampeded as they crammed into holy shrines in two towns.

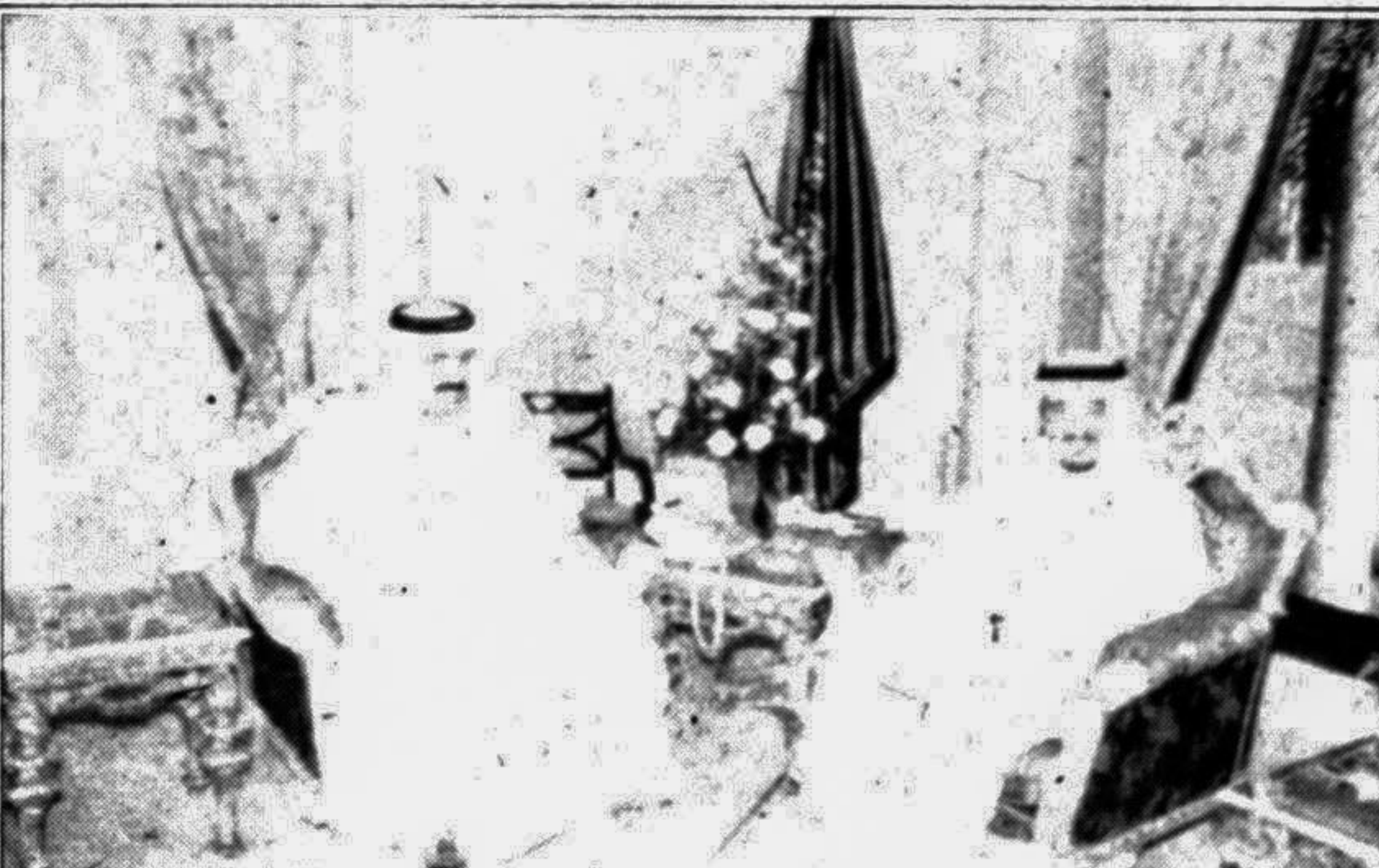
Thousands of people were pushing into the Mahakaleswar temple in the

holy city of Ujjain in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh when the crowd went out of control. The Press Trust of India and United News of India news agencies reported.

Police said people were killed and others injured when bamboo barricades regulating the flow of pilgrims gave way and several of the worshippers were impaled on them, said United News, quoting witnesses. Others slipped on the marble stairs leading to an underground idol of Shiva.

A similar stampede broke out in the holy city of Haridwar on the banks of the Ganges River, 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of New Delhi. United News said at least 12 people were killed in the stampede. Details were not immediately known.

Most of the pilgrims had just completed a ritual bathing in the Kshipra River in Ujjain just before dawn, the reports said, quoting local police.



Saudi King Fahd (R) receives the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani on Sunday in the Red Sea city of Jeddah. The Qatari leader, making his second visit to the kingdom since he took power in June 1995, will examine with King Fahd "the ways to bring a solution to Saudi mediation" in a territorial dispute between Qatar and Bahrain over islands in the Gulf. — AFP/UNB photo

Saudi prince opposes moving US troops to new housing

RIYADH, July 15: A sharp split between the United States and Saudi Arabia has emerged, with a top Saudi prince saying he opposes moving American soldiers to new housing the Pentagon says would be less vulnerable to terrorists, reports AP.

The comments Sunday by Defence Minister Prince Sultan came during a visit to Saudi Arabia by FBI Director Louis J. Freeh, who continued to press Saudi officials to grant his agents access to all evidence gathered on the bombing of a US military housing complex in Dhahran last month.

In the latest report on evidence, official sources said Sunday they have found the getaway car used by the terrorists who killed 19 US service-

men and injured hundreds of people in the June 25 attack.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the white Chevrolet Caprice Classic was found in Damman, 10 kilometers (six miles) from Dhahran, a few days after the bombing.

There was no explanation as to why authorities did not disclose the discovery of the car until now.

Meanwhile, a US embassy source in Riyadh said Americans living in the kingdom have received more phone calls threatening attacks from people speaking Arabic or broken English.

A recorded embassy hotline message warned US citizens living in the kingdom: "Individual Americans and companies in Saudi Arabia have been

receiving phone calls threatening further attacks... it is likely that some of these reports reflect planning for further attacks."

Last week, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said it was virtually certain that some of the 1,500 US troops based in the Saudi capital of Riyadh will be moved to Saudi bases more easily defended against terrorists.

The question is when and how many will be moved, he said.

Saudi Arabian officials appeared to squash the idea, however.

"If we have to move them from where they live now, this means that we have to prepare for them another lodging," Prince Sultan said Sunday.



Investigators from ICTY, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, carry a body bag containing human remains collected from a massgrave outside the village of Cerska, some 65 km southeast of Tuzla on Sunday. So far some 60 bodies have been uncovered. — AFP/UNB photo

Chandrika leaves for London unannounced

COLOMBO, July 15: Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga has suddenly left the country on an unannounced visit to London accompanied by her two children, officials sources here said today, reports AP.

Kumaratunga flew out of the country over the weekend and most of her cabinet ministers were not aware that she had gone because the trip was kept top secret, officials said.

It was not immediately clear for how long she will be out of the country but officials said it was likely to be a week-long visit.

'Most patients can rest easy about heart attack triggers'

PORTSMOUTH, New Hampshire, July 15: Heart disease patients can get a heart attack from having sex, getting angry or exerting themselves. But for most patients, an expert has this advice: Don't worry about it, reports AP.

In most cases, the risk of a heart attack is still small even after one of the potential heart-attack triggers, says Dr. James Muller.

"Our general message is one of reassurance for heart patients," said Muller, director of the Kentucky Heart Institute at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

Although heart attack triggers should not worry most people, they do account for at least 17 per cent of heart attacks, Muller said. So he said

it's important to study them and find ways to keep them from causing harm.

Muller spoke in an interview before discussing heart attack triggers Sunday at a meeting of the American Heart Association. His don't-worry message about sex received wide publicity in May when he published a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

About 11 million Americans have heart disease, which narrows the blood vessels that feed the heart muscle.

Muller stressed that people with heart disease should talk to their doctors to see if the don't-worry message about triggers applies to them.

It wouldn't apply to people with unstable angina, who get chest pain without any exertion. Nor would it apply to patients who have a narrowing of the aortic valve, which is one of the main valves of the heart, Muller said.

In addition, sedentary heart disease patients should be cautious about sudden heavy exertion, he said. And people who are angry all the time, even if they're not heart patients, should get counseling or learn stress-reduction techniques.

Dr. Sidney Smith, chief of cardiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said a further research is needed to determine which groups of patients are particularly vulnerable to triggering. That knowledge should lead to recommendations for doctors,

he said. Research shows that in anybody, heart patient or not, the risk of having a heart attack in a given hour doubles if the person gets angry, has sex or just gets up in the morning, Muller said.

If a person goes through sudden heavy exertion, like singles tennis or running through an airport with a suitcase, the risk of a heart attack goes up six-fold, he said.

That all sounds scary, but Muller said the real question is what a person's risk ends up being after a trigger. It's extremely low without a trigger, and so even a stiff boost leaves it very low, he said.

For a healthy 50-year-old man, or a healthy 60-year-old woman, he said, the risk of a heart attack in any given hour

without any trigger is about one in a million. Even in a typical heart disease patient, this ordinary risk is 1 in 100,000.

So in that patient, even the doubling of risk with getting angry or having sex leaves only two chances in 100,000 of a heart attack within the hour he said.

The story with heavy exertion is a little different for sedentary heart patients, he said. Their risk shoots up 100-fold, to one in 1,000, Muller said. That's high enough to justify a caution, he said.

But if sedentary patients embark on a regular exercise programme first, building up to exertion like singles tennis five days a week, then heavy exertion gives a risk of only about one in 50,000, he said.

Uneasy calm prevails in N Ireland

BELFAST, July 15: An uneasy calm descended on Northern Ireland after the worst nationalist violence for years and the first bomb for 22 months made finding a peace formula for the troubled province look even more remote, reports Reuters.

A suspected Republican bomb which wrecked a hotel at Enniskillen raised the prospect of an end to a two year truce by militant Protestant gunmen against Catholics but on Sunday night Belfast and Londonderry were quite for the first time in a week.

There was a big Sinn Fein rally in north Belfast but Gerry Adams told them to go home peacefully, a police spokesman said of a meeting addressed by Adams, president of the IRA's Sinn Fein political wing, another rally in Derry passed peacefully.

'Great powers exploiting war in Somalia'

CAIRO, July 15: The world's great powers are exploiting the civil war in Somalia to "pillage and pollute" the country's natural resources, Somalia's representative to the Arab League said here on Sunday, reports AFP.

"With the absence of central government, Somalia is facing acts of pillage of its natural resources," Abdullah Hassan Mahmud told journalists.

The fishing boats of the great powers operate in Somalia's territorial waters," he said, specifying "Indian, British Japanese and Spanish" boats.

Chechen rebels kill 4 Russian servicemen

GROZNY, July 15: Russian troops kept their blockade on villages in Southeastern Chechnya Monday while the military command said four servicemen were killed and 31 were wounded in rebel attacks, reports AP.

The military command reported 15 rebel shootings at rebel positions since mid-day Sunday. There were no reports of fresh fighting Monday.

The Russian blockade in southern Chechnya began with last week's massive offensive on two villages said to be separatist bases, including Makhkety, where military commanders say the rebel leader has his headquarters.

Food poisoning sickens 2836 pupils in Japan, schools closing

TOKYO, July 15: The number of schoolchildren sickened from food poisoning rose to 2,836 in a western Japanese city Monday, prompting health authorities to close all 32 public elementary schools there, reports AP.

It was the largest number of food poisoning cases in a single city in recent years in Japan, said Sakai city spokesman Takashi Tsuji. Sakai is near Japan's second largest city of Osaka.

The affected children from 47 elementary schools have suffered diarrhoea and bloody stools, and 146 of them have been hospitalised since last Friday night, but none of them were considered gravely ill, Tsuji said.

The closure affects some 50,000 schoolchildren in the area. Tsuji said the schools should reopen in the next few days after sanitation checks of the schools' dining facilities and bathrooms are finished.

8 Arab states urge Iraq to comply with UN resolution

MUSCAT, July 15: Eight Arab countries urged Iraq on Sunday to comply with United Nations resolution linked to its 1990 invasion of Kuwait and to refrain from further threatening its neighbour, reports AP.

"Iraq is called on to totally comply with UN Security Council resolutions, linked to its invasion of Kuwait, and to completely cooperate with the UN Special Commission on Disarming Iraq (UNSCOM)," a statement here said.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman are meeting here as members of the Damascus Declaration.

Off the Record



A model wears a see-through short dress during the first fashion show in Rome on Sunday of the Italian designer Rocco Barocco's collection for autumn-winter of 1997. — AFP/UNB photo

Movies, music banned

KABUL, Afghanistan's new prime minister closed the movie houses and banned music from television and radio on Sunday saying both were repugnant to Islam, reports AP.

When he was sworn in as Afghanistan's new prime minister last month Gulbuddin Hekmatyar vowed to run a strict Islamic government and turn the capital into a devout town.

"We gave more than 1.5 million sacrifices for the implementation of an Islamic government," said Information and Culture Minister Qayyumuddin Khashi, referring to the number of people who were believed killed during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

The communist regime was thrown out of Kabul in 1992. During communist rule Kabul was relatively liberal. Women wore skirts, alcohol was served in local hotels and theatres and music stores did a thriving business.

The first Islamic rulers that followed the fall of communism in Kabul tried to impose a strict Islamic government, closing movie theatres, banning music, destroying mountains of alcohol, banishing women to the homes and insisting they wear veils in public.

But within months the regime relaxed its control. Movie theatres reopened and women, although they wore traditional scarves, returned to the offices and streets.

"This is the repeat of an unsuccessful experiment," said Abdul Hafeez Mansour, chairman of the state-run Bakhtar news agency. "We tried to close everything four years ago and we failed. People don't want this."

Hekmatyar has issued several harsh Islamic edicts since taking office last June 26. While he has not banished women to their homes, he has ordered them to wear veils.

Finding her husband in bed with another woman

CAIRO: An Egyptian woman brandishing slippers chased her naked husband down a crowded Cairo street after she found him in bed with another woman. Al-Akhbar newspaper reported on Sunday, says Reuters.

It said the woman went out for shopping and returned to find her 30-year-old spouse with another woman.

The wife hit her husband's lover with a bottle — cutting her face — and then turned on her husband. She was later arrested for attacking the woman.

Settlers want to triple Jewish population in WB

TEL AVIV, July 15: Jewish settlers in the West Bank, encouraged by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pro-settlement stance, said they want to triple their numbers in the next four years — building eight new settlements and expanding existing ones, reports AP.

Opponents angrily responded Sunday that increasing the Jewish population in disputed areas could spell the death of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Palestinians view the settlements as a key impediment to resolving their territorial dispute with Israel, complicating any Israeli disengagement from territories the Jewish state captured in the 1967 Mideast war.

Settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein said Sunday he would ask Netanyahu to cancel the freeze on building new settlements imposed by the previous Labour Party government.

Wallerstein said he wants to see the settler population grow by at least 300,000 over the next four years — a figure in line with estimates mentioned by some officials of Netanyahu's Likud Party.

A detailed plan is being drawn up by the Amman movement, which represents thousands of settlers.

"I am sure we will get the full support of the prime minister," said Wallerstein, adding he did not know when the proposals would be submitted.

Netanyahu, who appears committed to blocking the Palestinians' goal of turning their limited autonomy into full statehood, has been evasive about settlements since his election victory in May.

Netanyahu says he supports expanding the Jewish presence in the disputed areas but has not specified whether he would allow new settlements or the enlargement of old ones. He reacted coolly Sunday to the settlers' plans.

Construction of China's largest N-plant to begin next year

HONG KONG, July 15: Construction of China's third, and largest, nuclear power plant will begin next year, a nuclear official was reported today as saying, reports AP.

Construction of the plant at Lin Ao, near the present Daya Bay plant in southern China, will begin in May next year, according to Seng Wenxing, general manager of China's state-owned Lin Ao Nuclear Company which is charged with building the plant.

Groundwork for the plant, in Guangdong near the Hong Kong border, has already been

completed, the China-backed Wen Wei Po newspaper quoted Seng as saying.

Guangdong is China's fastest-growing province.

The plant will be equipped with two 985-megawatt generators. It is scheduled to be operating in 2002 and completed in 2003.

The newspaper report said the company would inform overseas suppliers that contracts to supply the plant would take effect this week.

The plant will mainly supply Guangdong province.

Chandrika leaves for London unannounced

COLOMBO, July 15: Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga has suddenly left the country on an unannounced visit to London accompanied by her two children, officials sources here said today, reports AP.

Kumaratunga flew out of the country over the weekend and most of her cabinet ministers were not aware that she had gone because the trip was kept top secret, officials said.

It was not immediately clear for how long she will be out of the country but officials said it was likely to be a week-long visit.