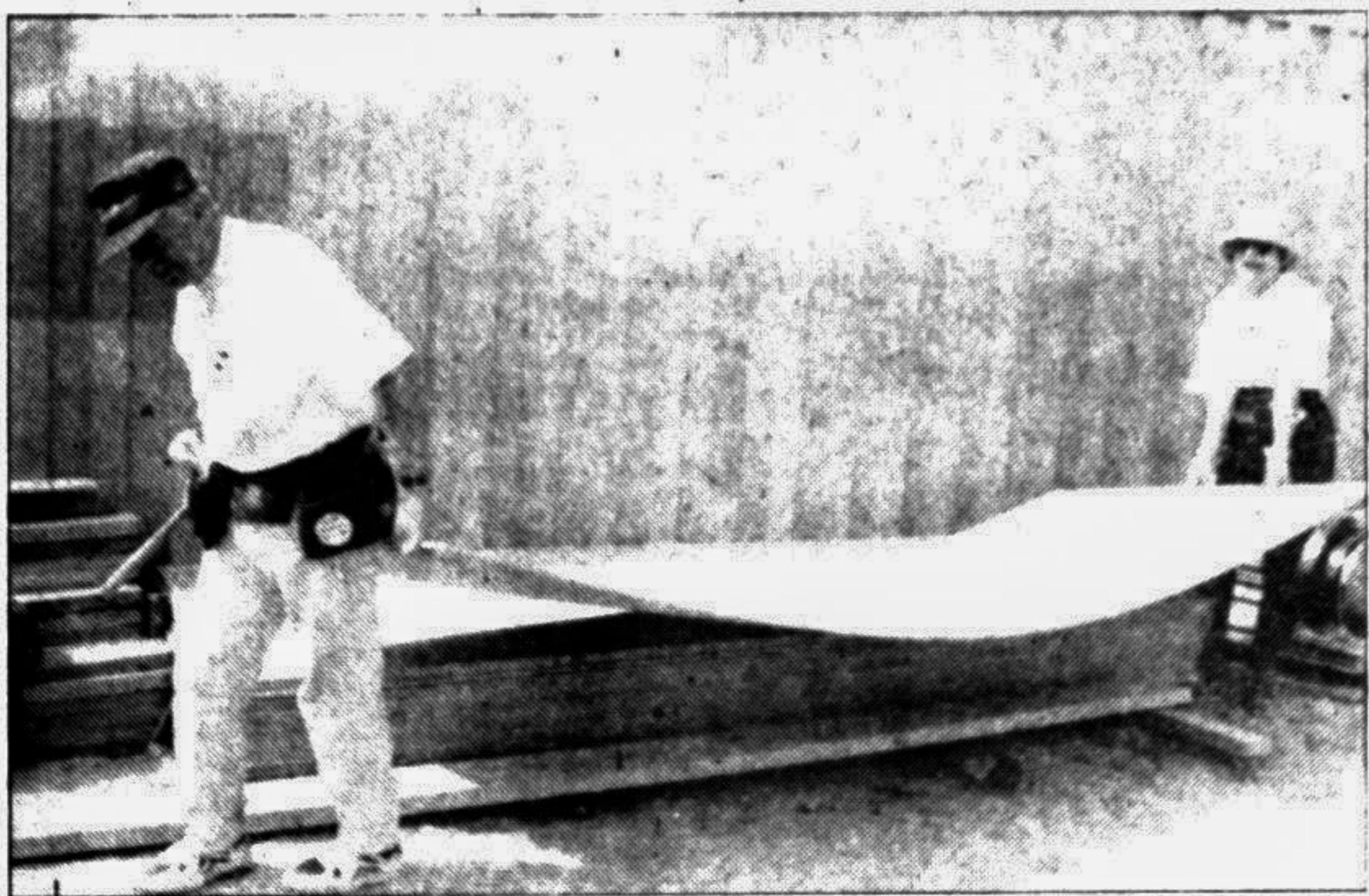


International



Former US President Jimmy Carter (L) and his wife Rosalynn (R) carry a panel, Monday, as some 800 volunteers from 11 countries began the construction of 10 homes part of the "Habitat for Humanity International" plan (HFHI). This project, organised by Jimmy Carter and other HFHI leaders, will be the first one to be realised outside the United States

— AFP/UNB photo

Kashmiri rebels gear up anti-election activities Nat'l Confe to contest polls despite death threats

Srinagar, India, Aug 13: Kashmir's main Muslim Party today vowed to contest state legislative elections next month despite death threats from a hardline separatist group, reports AFP.

The pro-India National Conference reiterated that it would run candidates in all 87 constituencies in the Himalayan state, and was ready to face casualties during the campaigning.

"We have to face the threats," its general secretary Bashir Ahmed Kichlu told AFP here. "A couple of casualties will take place. Nobody can help it. We are not going to run away."

The National Conference is the most influential party in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. It has ruled the state many times and won the last legislative elections held in March 1987.

Although many of its activists have been killed by Muslim militants, it retains a strong network throughout the Kashmir Valley. It is headed by former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, a Muslim.

The Awami League party, which was formed last year by scores of former Muslim militants, also echoed Kichlu's sentiments, saying only elections would end Kashmir's separatist campaign.

"The militants still around will continue to give threats, but now the Kashmiri masses know they are the ones responsible for the bloodshed in this state," said Javed Shah, the League vice-president.

"People are with us. People are sick and tired of all the violence. They want elections. The people want democracy. It is we who have helped to restore normalcy [in the state].

he said. On Monday, the Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Harkat-ul-Mujahideen group warned against participation in the upcoming elections, saying those who did would be killed.

"No one shall be allowed to construct a political empire on the graves of thousands of martyrs who laid down their lives for the cause of independence," a statement by the group said.

Earlier PTI says, forty-one persons, including 29 militants and five members of a family, were killed and five injured as militants intensified their activities in Kashmir in an attempt to disrupt Independence Day celebrations and sabotage the forthcoming assembly elections.

The deceased militants include some top ranking commanders and ten foreign mercenaries.

Off the Record

Attacking owls

HONG KONG: At least eight people have been injured in a series of attacks by two owls after their nest was destroyed in eastern coastal China, it was reported Tuesday, says AFP.

The owls began attacking villagers passing by their nest built on an old maple tree in a village in Sanmen county in Zhejiang province on June 3, the Hong Kong branch of China news service said.

The series of owl attacks started after a little boy destroyed the owl's nest with bamboo pole, and was attacked by the two owls nesting in it.

Unfortunate simians

KATHMANDU: At least 30 monkeys, thought to come from Kathmandu's famous "monkey temple," were accidentally electrocuted in the Nepalese capital early Tuesday, reports AFP.

Witnesses said the unfortunate simians were electrocuted when a high voltage electrical cable snapped and came down on a barbed wire fence.

The unsuspecting monkeys as usual tried to cross over to a nearby jungle by lifting the barbed wire but they got the shock of their lives, a witness said.

The monkeys were thought to come from the nearby temple of lord Pashupati Nath, a tourist hunt also known as the "monkey temple" due to thousands of monkeys living there.

Onlookers blamed the government for running high voltage lines overhead, instead of opting for an underground wiring system as used in other countries.

"It could have been people instead of the monkeys. It is sheer negligence by the electricity authority," Hari Prasad Upadhyay, another witness said.

BRIEFLY

Subash Mukherjee wins Akademi:

Noted Bengali poet Subash Mukherjee was awarded fellowship of the Sahitya Akademi at a function in Calcutta Monday, PTI reports from Calcutta.

The fellowship is the Akademi's highest honour conferred on Indian writers. Mukherjee was selected with six others for the fellowship at a meeting of the Akademi on February 23, according to the Akademi's regional secretary, N K Bhattacharjee.

Pandit Vishnu Kant dies: The freedom fighter and veteran journalist, Pandit Vishnu Kant Malviya, died at his residence in Allahabad yesterday after a protracted illness. He was 84, PTI reports from Allahabad. He was the grand son of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya. He was the chief reporter of the All India Radio (AIR) Allahabad till his retirement. He is survived by a son and two daughters.

Sweden to host confee on child abuse: A total of 122 countries have signed up to attend a world congress in Sweden later this month on the sexual exploitation of children, the organisers said. AFP reports from Stockholm.

"We don't know whether representatives will come from all these countries. Some may not have the money. But we are counting on about 100 countries," said Lisbeth Palme, president of the committee organising the August 27-31 Congress. The Congress will seek to adopt a declaration against the sexual exploitation of children and a plan of action to put it into effect, Palme said at a press conference Monday.

Peace talks fizzle out in Mexico: Peace talks in southern Mexico fizzled out Monday after discussions on political reform deteriorated into bickering over democratic and legal changes, AP reports from Son Indres.

The six days of talks had been expected to bring a settlement between the government and Chiapas Indian rebels who staged an uprising in 1994. Discussions degenerated early Monday, however, with the lead rebel negotiator accusing the government of offering "miserable, feable proposals" on democratic and judicial reforms.

Typhoon heading towards Japan: A powerful typhoon was expected to sweep Japan's southern most main island of Kyushu as early as late Tuesday as it slowly continued to head northeast, AP reports from Tokyo.

Some 54,000 households on Okinawa, about 1,600 kilometres (1,000 miles) south of Tokyo, and several other small southern islands have suffered blackouts since Monday night because of the storm, local power company officials said. Electric supply was restored to some parts of Okinawa as the typhoon slowly moved away Tuesday morning. But most houses on Amami Oshima, a smaller island about 300 kilometres (186 miles) northeast of Okinawa, where the typhoon is currently approaching, continued to be affected.



Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (C) and Pakistani Premier Benazir Bhutto (L) walk together after his arrival on Monday.

— AFP/UNB photo

US freezes Stinger missile sale to Taiwan

WASHINGTON: Aug 13: The United States has frozen a Stinger missile sale to Taiwan because the White House promised China there would be no new arms sales to Taiwan this year, a defence publication reported Monday.

Defense news said Washington quietly had approved the 300 million dollar arms package in May, but that the State Department and White House were now reconsidering their commitment to Taiwan to move forward on the sale.

The Pentagon and the State Department confirmed the United States was currently processing such a sales request, but would not comment directly whether notification to Congress had been delayed.

Palestinian boys intrude into Israel to earn money for their families

BANI NAIM, West Bank, Aug 13: Just after dawn, 9-year-old Mahmoud stood tensed on a rocky path leading from the West Bank into Israel, waiting for a signal, reports AP.

A whistle sounded and Mahmoud, a dark-eyed Charmer clutching a sheaf of peacock feathers nearly his height, took off running. A minute later he was in Israel, crammed into a taxi and headed for Jerusalem.

Hundreds of Palestinian boys skirt Israel's six-month blockade of the West Bank every day to sell pencils and plastic dishes.

Their fathers face more than 100 dollars in fines and two nights in jail if they are caught in Israel, but children younger than 16 can only be sent home without their wares.

Plenty are willing to take the risk, working days that

Lanka to send more food convoys to Tamil refugees

COLOMBO, Aug 13: Sri Lanka plans to send more food convoys to hundreds of thousands of hungry Tamil refugees displaced by the latest fighting in the tropical island's north, aid officials said today, reports Reuter.

Seven mobile International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) medical teams were helping the refugees scattered in the dry zone jungle running low on food and water, a spokeswoman said.

We're very concerned about the shortage of food, water and shelter for the refugees, she said.

The army allowed 10 trucks of food into areas held by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on

Monday following a three-week blockade after it halted the bombardment of the northern rebel-held town of Kilinochchi.

This is clearly not enough, said a local Red Cross official in the frontline town of Vavuniya, 215 km (134 miles) north of Colombo. We expect more food trucks to go today.

Some 200,000 people fled Kilinochchi, 70 km (45 miles) north of Vavuniya, following an army assault that began on July 26.

Most of them were living under trees in snake-infested jungle near irrigation lakes because of drought while others sought sanctuary with friends and relatives.

The rebels said several Russian armoured vehicles managed to break through Monday night to the besieged building of the Federal Security Service, forcing separatist fighters to retreat. They told the Interfax news agency they surrounded the building and were fighting to retake it.

There also were clashes around the southern Minutka neighbourhood.

Houses were burning, and the oil refineries on the city outskirts were belching black smoke. City streets were nearly deserted.

The rebels said several Russian military leaders tried to set up talks with Russian military leaders Tuesday.

Lebed, Yeltsin's special envoy to the region, returned to Moscow on Monday after a secret meeting with rebel commanders, and blasted the Russian military for mishandling the war. He said he plans to take personal charge of Russia's military operations in Chechnya, where a ceasefire had been agreed to.

The Russians claimed to have destroyed five trucks full of arms and ammunition meant for the separatists.

The Russians claimed to have destroyed five trucks full of arms and ammunition meant for the separatists.

They began before dawn and end after dark to earn money their families need badly.

Early Sunday, Mahmoud and dozens of boys from Bani Naim, a West Bank village east of Hebron, spilled out of taxis a few hundred yards (metres) from the Israeli checkpoint on the main road from Bethlehem to Jerusalem.

The boys skirted the barriers of the checkpoint, cutting left off the main road onto a rocky path that runs through the walled grounds of a Christian centre.

The route never strays more than 1000 yards (metres) from the main road. For much of the trip, which takes less than 10 minutes, the Israeli guard tower remains visible.

Two days earlier, Mahmoud had been caught by city police, who confiscated his feathers and the bottles of skin cream he also sells. He moves around with care now, ducking into alleys when he sees a policeman, hiding his feathers behind his back.

On a good day, Mahmoud

said, he makes 17 dollars in profit to help feed his eight younger brothers and sisters.

Iran lodges law suit against US in ICJ

TEHRAN, Aug 13: Iran today lodged a law suit against the United States in the International Court of Justice at The Hague, reports Xinhua.

The state-run Iranian television reported in its evening English programme that the Iranian complaint was lodged by Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The announcement was made by Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi following the statement of Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati on Iran's decision to go to arbitration in protest against the US violation of international conventions.

On Monday, Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai announced a new procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of approval for building on the occupied lands. It did not elaborate.

More than 130,000 Jews live amid nearly two million Arabs in the areas.

The announcement came shortly after Netanyahu, at a news conference with Arab journalists, said Israel's interim peace deal with the Palestinians did not bar settlement building.

On Monday, Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai announced a new procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of approval for building on the occupied lands. It did not elaborate.

More than 130,000 Jews live amid nearly two million Arabs in the areas.

The announcement came shortly after Netanyahu, at a news conference with Arab journalists, said Israel's interim peace deal with the Palestinians did not bar settlement building.

The move was the first on

settlements since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on August 2 lifted restrictions on Jewish settle-

ment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed by the previous government.

Mordechai's statement also said he had approved a new

procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of ap-

proval for building on the occu-

pated lands. It did not elabo-

rate.

The announcement came shortly after Netanyahu, at a news conference with Arab journalists, said Israel's interim peace deal with the Palestinians did not bar settle-

ment building.

The move was the first on

settlements since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on August 2 lifted restrictions on Jewish settle-

ment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed by the previous government.

Mordechai's statement also said he had approved a new

procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of ap-

proval for building on the occu-

pated lands. It did not elabo-

rate.

The move was the first on

settlements since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on August 2 lifted restrictions on Jewish settle-

ment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed by the previous government.

Mordechai's statement also said he had approved a new

procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of ap-

proval for building on the occu-

pated lands. It did not elabo-

rate.

The move was the first on

settlements since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on August 2 lifted restrictions on Jewish settle-

ment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed by the previous government.

Mordechai's statement also said he had approved a new

procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of ap-

proval for building on the occu-

pated lands. It did not elabo-

rate.

The move was the first on

settlements since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on August 2 lifted restrictions on Jewish settle-

ment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed by the previous government.

Mordechai's statement also said he had approved a new

procedure aimed at "progressing" the stages of ap-

proval for building on the occu-

pated lands. It did not elabo-

rate.

The move was the first on

settlements since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on August 2 lifted restrictions on Jewish settle-

ment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed by the previous government.

Mordechai's statement also said