

## International

## Move to help children take exams

### Lankan army, Tigers may hold ceasefire next month

COLOMBO, Aug 18: The Sri Lankan army and Tamil rebels are expected to hold a ceasefire next month to enable Tamil school children to take their school examinations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Sunday, reports Reuters.

It said the government had asked the ICRC to help conduct the national examinations for 'A' level students on the northern mainland, where a three-week old battle near a rebel-held town has displaced more than 200,000 civilians from their homes.

"We will be discussing the logistics of the exams with the Defence Ministry soon," ICRC spokesman Marco Well told Reuters.

"We expect a ceasefire from September 2 to September 22 to allow the children to take their exams," he said. Under the proposed agreement the

ICRC would escort government school examiners to the northern Wanni mainland where hundreds of students were expected to do the tests. He said AP adds Navy patrol vessels destroyed a small Tamil rebel boat off Sri Lanka's northern coast, killing at least eight rebels, a military official said Sunday.

Eight other rebel boats in the area were also damaged in Saturday's skirmish off the coast of Vettalaikerni, about 300 kilometres (187 miles) north of the capital Colombo, said Maj. Tilak Dunuwilla, a military spokesman.

There were no fatalities among the navy, but one of its boats was slightly damaged. The guerrillas are fighting for a homeland in the north and east for minority Tamils, accusing the majority Sinhalese of discriminating against them.

## Fightings cast doubts on Chechnya ceasefire

GROZNY, Russia, Aug 18: Sporadic clashes between Russian and Chechen forces cast doubt on whether their commanders would be able to work out final details on Sunday for lasting ceasefire to the 20 month war, reports AP.

Gen Konstantin Pulikovskiy, the top Russian commander, and Chechen chief of staff Aslan Maskhadov were to create a commission Sunday to monitor a truce that has been shaky since it was agreed to four days ago.

Pulikovskiy promised to issue an order for his soldiers to respect the truce and the "zones of responsibility" in devastated Grozny. Maskhadov has given a similar order to rebel fighters, the Interfax news agency said.

These orders should be considered the first serious step toward stopping the bloodshed, Pulikovskiy said Saturday after meeting with Maskhadov in southern Chechnya.

As he spoke, both sides were firing on each other with artillery, mortars and machine guns. Russian warplanes staged several air raids on Chechnya's capital, which the rebels overran on August 6.

Russian troops are surrounded at three spots in Grozny. Separatists control the rest of the city.

Civilians, caught once again in the crossfire of the war, have deserted the city by the tens of thousands. Pulikovskiy said he refused Maskhadov's request not to use aviation and artillery in Grozny. He also said a rebel attack on a military train near Grozny was repelled by Russian helicopter gunships Saturday.

Issa Aslamirov, the Chechen chief of staff in Grozny, said his fighters also rebuffed several Russian attacks.

"We don't have any hope that the Russians will honor any ceasefire," he said. "Russia's policy is based on the principle of the fewer Chechens, the better."

The rebel command said five Russian armored vehicles were destroyed Saturday night in fighting according to Interfax.

AFP adds Some 10,000 people took part in a rally in northeast Chechnya on Saturday to voice their support for Russian presidential envoy Alexander Lebed's initiatives to end the hostilities in the republic. Interfax news agency reported, reports AP.

## Gujral Defends India's stand on N-test ban treaty

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 18: Visiting Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral today defended his country's blocking of the nuclear test ban treaty, alleging it was drawn up in the five nuclear powers' interest, reports AP.

Gujral, who arrived in Malaysia today for a three-day visit, said the purpose of the conference on disarmament in Geneva to discuss the treaty "is defeated by those who want to sustain their monopoly of nuclear weapons power."

The draft text of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) "has been so framed that they (the nuclear powers) can go on making their weapons more sophisticated," Gujral was quoted by the official Bernama news agency as saying.

India derailed 31 months of talks last Wednesday by blocking agreement on a draft text that was to have been adopted Thursday by a plenary meeting of the UN conference on disarmament.

India rejected the draft, claiming it omits a commitment for the five nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — to scrap the estimated 21,000 nuclear weapons in their combined arsenals.

## Opposition says Iraq launches attack on Shiite Muslims

NICOSIA, Cyprus, Aug 18: Iraqi army units have been attacking Shiite Muslims, communities in the southern marsh lands as they search for army deserters and opponents of President Saddam Hussein, an Iraqi opposition group said Saturday, reports AP.

The army units have staged intermittent roundups and attacks since early July on civilian areas around Sili, a marsh area north of Basra, the main city in the south, the group said.

The marsh lands around the southwestern city of Nasiriyah have also come under attack, threatening the lives of civilians, the opposition group said.

The Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, based in Iran, said Iraqi security forces have been authorized to arrest and execute army deserters.

The group gave no casualty figures and its account could not be independently confirmed. But Iraqi forces have staged similar sweeps in the past against Shiite Muslim communities in the south, many of which are opposed to Saddam.

## Bodos kill 8 border guards in Assam

NEW DELHI, Aug 18: Tribal guerrillas today killed eight border guards and a policeman in an ambush in the far-east Indian state of Assam, the United News of India (UNI) reported, says AP.

The eight members of the paramilitary Border Security Force were slain in Nalbari district by an outlawed tribal group, the Bodo security force, the news agency said.

A policeman travelling with the border guards was also killed by the guerrillas, which the UNI said were armed with AK-47 rifles.

Hundreds of paramilitary troops have launched a massive hunt in the largely rural area to catch the attackers, who are fighting to carve out an independent homeland for Bodo tribals in Assam.

## 65 coup plotters held in Sudan

CAIRO, Egypt, Aug 18: Sudanese police have arrested at least 65 army officers following reports of an attempted coup last week, an opposition group said Saturday, reports AP.

The officers were detained "in the last few days" from Port Sudan on the Red Sea and Kassala, east of Khartoum, the National Democratic Alliance said in a statement. Some were reportedly tortured.

The report could not be immediately verified, but Egypt's state run Middle East News Agency reported Wednesday that police had arrested 10 officers in connection with plotting a coup.

## Perot wins nomination for presidency

VALLEY FORGE (PA), Aug 18: Ross Perot, the Texas billionaire who founded the Reform Party, won its first contested nomination for the presidency on Saturday night, according to a report on CNN, reports Reuters.

Perot, defeated former Colorado governor Richard Lamm 32,145 or 65.2 per cent of the vote. Lamm had 34.8 per cent and 17,121 votes.

The announcement of the results was delayed for several hours by what a party spokeswoman called the complexity of the process.

Perot was scheduled to give an acceptance speech today before about 2,000 party members in the second of a two-stage convention that began Aug 11 in Long Beach, California. A party spokesman said that of the ballots cast, 88 per cent voted by mail, eight per cent by telephone and four per cent on their personal computers on the Internet.



US First Lady Hillary Clinton (R) signs an autograph with the help of her special assistant Kely Craighead (L) who is loaded with gifts for the First Lady, Saturday during a campaign stop at the Idaho Falls Airport. — AFP/UNB photo

## Riot against bread price-hike

## Jordanian army imposes curfew on Karak

KARAK, Jordan, Aug 18: The Jordanian army imposed a curfew on Karak today and banned citizens from holding gatherings to extend its grip on the city, scene of running riots against bread price rises since Friday, reports Reuters.

"Brethren citizens, you are allowed to buy necessary goods until 10 (0800 GMT) this morning and after that we remained you there will be a curfew until further notice," army officers told citizens through loud-speakers.

Earlier AP adds: Stone-throwing demonstrators clashed with police and set buildings alight for a second day Saturday in southern Jordan to protest the doubling of bread prices.

There were violent confrontations in the southern towns of Karak and Maan when police attempted to break up demonstrations. Both cities had similar protests Friday.

in Karak, some 1,000 protesters gathered, and many threw stones at police, who responded with tear gas to disperse the crowds.

Allan said protesters set fire to two government buildings and a private bank shortly before army units in armored vehicles deployed in the city, 150 kilometres (90 miles) south of Amman.

A witness, speaking on condition of anonymity, said protesters had retreated from the streets and were on balconies and roofs throwing stones at soldiers.

In Maan, 100 kilometres (60 miles) further south, a witness said police patrols fired tear gas at 300 protesters chanting anti-government slogans. Calm later prevailed in the town, the witness added.

Meanwhile, King Hussein, accompanied by senior state officials, flew to southern Jordan to appeal for restraint, officials said.

## Junta reiterates legal action against Suu Kyi

YANGON, Aug 18: Legal action should be taken against democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to ensure peace and stability for the Burmese people, official newspapers said today, reports Reuters.

The call for legal action against the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner came in a commentary entitled "The rule of law and the danger of traitors" carried in two of the government's Burmese-language newspapers.

"The entire... people desire peace, stability and development. Such desire of the people can only be fulfilled by means of the rule of law," the commentary said.

"There cannot be rule of law with Aung San Suu Kyi and her group breaking the law... remove those who are breaking the law in order to pave the way for the rule of law quickly," the commentary urged.

The Sunday attack was the latest salvo in a war of words between the military government and the democracy leader

which intensified in May with a government crackdown on Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy.

One of her main criticisms of the government is that there is no rule of law in Myanmar with the military rulers wield-

ing arbitrary power. The newspapers did not specify what laws Suu Kyi was alleged to be breaking.



## Off the Record

### Mummies' revenge

CAIRO: For 31 years, Nasy Iskander has been master of the mummies, presiding from his dusty office over Egypt's most tightly wrapped people. Now, it's the mummies' revenge. They're elbowing Iskander out of his office at the Egyptian Museum, taking over his space for an even bigger exhibit of the embalmed remains of Egypt's ancient pharaohs, queens and priestesses, reports AP.

The reason is that the mummy room, opened two years ago, quickly became one of the most popular in the vast museum, which has 160,000 ancient artifacts.

Up to 1,000 people a day pay the extra fee for the mummy room — 8 dollars for tourists and 1.50 dollars for Egyptians — providing a third of the museum's revenue.

"People are deeply curious about mummies, and that is one of the reasons they come," said Iskander, the director of preservation work.

Iskander's second-floor office is across from the first mummy room with dim lights that softly glow on nine pharaohs and two queens.

Iskander sits at a dusty desk amid glass cases containing 16 brownish mummies thousands of years old. Only 12 will go on display this year; the others are too deteriorated.

He is glad to explain what's special about the "new" mummies. One is the Pharaoh Merneptah-Siptah, whose left foot is bent as if in agony. Siptah, who ruled from 1210 BC to 1204 BC was born with his left leg shorter than his right.

Then there's Maatkare, a royal priestess wholly wrapped in delicate linen. Next to her is a small bundle that scientists first thought was her child. X-rays showed it was a baboon, probably her pet.

Experts on mummification praise the subdued atmosphere of the mummy room — no cameras, please. But the low key look hasn't stopped visitors from emerging with eyes wide at seeing this odd bit of history survive.

"I could not imagine that after all this time, their hair would still be there," Bahraini tourist Zeineb Abu Hesseien said.

### After 2,300 yrs

KIEV: The skeletons of a Scythian tribal chief, his servant, and his decapitated horse were brought to Kiev on Friday 2,300 years after their deaths, reports Reuters.

Archaeologists uncovered the remains last month from an ancient burial cave 150 km (90 miles) south of Kiev. Gold and silver artifacts and ancient Greek pottery were also found.

The chief was found lying on a raised platform with a golden sword still in his hand and his servant next to him. The horse and its head lay nearby — though to be a traditional burial custom. Tapestries were nailed to the cave's walls with wooden pegs.

This treasure will remain in Ukraine and we hope that we will be able to exhibit it all over the world, archaeologist Serhiy Skoryy told Reuters.

A nomadic and warlike people Scythians settled on the Steppes of Ukraine north of the Black Sea in the seventh century BC, living there until their kingdom was destroyed by the Sarmatians 400 years later.

## BRIEFLY

### Polls begin in Lebanon

Polls opened yesterday in the Christian heartland of Mount Lebanon in the first of five rounds of parliamentary elections in Lebanon. Polling stations opened at 7:00 am (04:00 GMT). The Mount Lebanon elections will return 35 deputies to the 128-seat parliament. Voting in the other four regions will take place in the next four Sundays. The Mount Lebanon polls promise a hot battle between pro-government candidates and opponents hoping to restore what they say is Lebanon's lost sovereignty.

### 44.1 kg heroin seized in Myanmar

Myanmar authorities have seized about 44.1 kilograms (97 pounds) of heroin in eastern Shan state, state-run radio Yangon said in a broadcast monitored here Saturday. AFP reports from Bangkok.

Two men were arrested and charged for drug trafficking after a group of military intelligence agents found more than one hundred blocks of heroin hidden inside the Toyota Sedan they were driving, the radio said. The agents acted on a tip-off and the seizure took place on August 6 at a road checkpoint near the town of Ho-Pong, about 500 kms (310 miles) northeast of Yangon, it said.

### Russian Dy PM off to UAE

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Ignatenko left Moscow yesterday for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to fetch seven Russian airmen who fled there after escaping from their captors in Afghanistan. ITAR-Tass news agency reported. AFP, says from Moscow.

Ignatenko said he would have talks with the authorities in the UAE before returning home to Moscow yesterday evening with the airmen, who had been held hostage for just over a year.

### New Liberian govt to be sworn in

Foreign ministers of the Economic Community of West African States announced late Saturday a new interim Liberian government to be sworn in by the end of the month. AP reports from Abuja, Nigeria.

Foreign ministers of the 16 nations that provide peacekeeping soldiers for Liberia said after a two-day summit in the Nigerian political capital that the Liberian Council of State will now be headed by a former senator, Ruth Perry. The interim government will oversee preparations for elections now scheduled for May 30. It would hand over power to an elected administration by June 15.

### Road mishap claims 7 in Mexico

A speeding car crossed the centre line and crashed into an oncoming truck outside the Mexican capital Saturday, killing seven people and injuring one, Federal Highway police said, AFP reports from Mexico City.

The single survivor was in intensive care in a nearby hospital, police said.

### Secret grave found in Nicaragua

Human rights officials have found a clandestine grave with the bodies of 150 people killed during the civil war of the 1980s, a newspaper reported on Saturday. Reuters reports from Managua.

The head of Nicaragua's permanent Human Rights Commission, Lino Hernandez told La Prensa that the grave contained 150 of the more than 990 people who disappeared in Nicaragua during the 1980s. Most vanished during the eight-year civil war between the Sandinistas and US backed right wing guerrillas known as Contras or in the months following the July 1979 Sandinista Revolution.

### Bobby Brown hospitalised

Singer Bobby Brown got hospital treatment for minor leg and neck injuries after he crashed his wife's black Porsche into a street sign and some shrubs, AP reports from Hollywood.

No charges were filed against Brown and the cause of Saturday's accident was being investigated, police spokeswoman Stephanie Norris said. She said Brown lost control of the car on a residential street in this city just south of Fort Lauderdale.

### Rebels kill 2 Christians in Egypt

Islamic militants shot dead two Coptic Christians and injured three other people in a series of simultaneous raids on jewellers' shops in the southern Egyptian town of Tahta on Saturday, police said, AFP reports from Cairo.

### 10 killed in China bus mishap

A bus trying to overtake another vehicle at a bend on highway in south China hit another bus on the opposite lane, killing 10 passengers and injuring another 26, newspapers reported Sunday. AP reports from Hong Kong.

The collision occurred Friday when the bus, travelling from Haikou to Sanya in Hainan province, collided head on with another bus and ran over the protective rail along the side of the highway, the Beijing backed Ta Kung Pao said.

It also forced another mini van off the road, it said. The paper said all casualties were local residents of Hainan and Chinese tourists.

### 8 more executed in China

Authorities in western China have executed eight people and jailed 14 from the same family for rampaging through a village in an attack that killed eight and injured 13, a police official said yesterday. Reuters reports from Beijing.

Sixty-year-old farmer Ma Haibubu, his wife, three sons and three grandsons were executed in Hezheng county in Gansu province on August 11 for murder, robbery, arson, drug trafficking and theft, the official said by telephone. Executions in China are usually carried out by a single bullet in the back of the head.

### HR group speaks of discrimination against women in Mexico

MEXICO CITY, Aug 18: A major human rights group charged Saturday that discrimination against women is routine in Mexican border assembly plants, many of which are owned by US corporations, reports AP.

The women's Rights Project of New York-based Human Rights Watch said that companies often screen out pregnant women and sometimes fire or discriminate against those who become pregnant.

"It is all women who apply to the sector who are discriminated against because they are subjected to a different hiring practice than men," LaShawn R. Jefferson, a researcher on the project, said in a telephone interview.

The report said the Mexican government has failed to protect women from labour law violations and urged such steps.

Women predominate among the more than 500,000 employees of the plants, known as maquiladoras, that operate under tax concessions. They assemble raw materials from the United States for shipment back north as finished goods.

The government sees the industry, which generates some 29 billion dollars a year in earnings, as a way to create jobs and promote development. The report said that makes the government unwilling to closely regulate the plants.

Investigators for the human rights organisation interviewed workers from more than 40 plants in five cities along the border.

They cited reports of women refused work or fired due to pregnancy, queried by bosses about their sex lives, shifted to harder tasks to encourage them to quit and even, in one 1989 incident, suffering a miscarriage when refused permission to leave a work shift.

"Once hired, if a woman worker in a maquiladora becomes pregnant, our interviews indicate that her ability to retain her job may depend very much on the attitude of the supervisor," the report said.

"We documented cases where pregnant women were forced to resign and where they were harassed and mistreated for becoming pregnant."

The Mexican Labour Department said in a brief written response that employers are

forbidden to fire or mistreat pregnant women, and it said discrimination against women in hiring is illegal.

But it did not embrace Human Rights Watch's claim that screening out pregnant job-seekers is illegal, and said it had no recorded cases of women being denied a job because of pregnancy.

Human Rights Watch argued that some international organisations have found pregnancy screening to be sex discrimination banned by international agreements, since it targets only women.

But some companies admitted such pregnancy-screening was routine.

"It is a common practice among Mexican and maquiladora employers in Matamoros and Reynosa (Texas) to inquire about pregnancy status as a pre-existing medical condition," said the Zenith Electronics Corp. in a letter of response published with the Human Rights Watch report.

"As a matter of practice, these employers commonly do not hire women who are pregnant and ineligible for maternity benefits funded by Mexican social security," it added.

It argued that some women sought jobs after learning they were pregnant in order to take advantage of company funded maternity benefits.

Carlisle Plastics Inc. said it would modify its screening practices to avoid asking about pregnancies, but it said such questions are standard in Mexico.

Pakistani opposition leaders in a display of unity wave hands at a public meeting on late military ruler General Muhammad Zia Ul Haq's eighth death anniversary Saturday. Zia's eldest son Ejaz Ul Haq (R) told the crowd that Pakistan had acquired nuclear capability 10 years ago which averted a fourth war between India and Pakistan in 1986. — AFP/UNB photo

President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, and his new wife Grace Marufu hold their two children, Bona, and Robert, at their wedding reception on Saturday at Kutama village. Grace, formerly Mugabe's private secretary, is the mother of his two children. Several African leaders, including South African President Nelson Mandela, attended the wedding. — AFP/UNB photo

Fresh violence erupts in Libya

Gaddafi's security guard, 13 soldiers killed

CAIRO, Egypt, Aug 18: Assaults have killed 13 soldiers and a bodyguard of Col. Muammar Gaddafi in the latest eruption of violence between the Libyan government and Muslim militants, a leading Arabic-language newspaper reported Saturday, reports AP.

The clashes occurred near the Libyan capital of Tripoli and the Mediterranean city of Benghazi and were claimed by the shadowy Islamic Martyrs' Movement, Al-Hayat newspaper said.

In an attack east of Benghazi, militants with hand grenades and rifles, some of whom were militants with hand grenades and rifles, some of whom were disguised as shepherds, attacked a small base. Twelve soldiers were killed and seven wounded in the clash, the newspaper said, citing a spokesman for the opposition group.

It did not say whether it suffered any casualties in the Aug. 2 attack, and there was no way to immediately confirm the report.

Outside Tripoli, the militants broke into the apartment of Fathi al-Zawariyah, a member of Gaddafi's female bodyguards. They killed Lt. Col. Mohammed Boushishah al-Gaddafi as well as al-Zawariyah, the newspaper said. There was apparently no relation between the officer and the Libyan leader.

The group did not say when that attack occurred.

Gaddafi has allowed little opposition to his government, but policies like allowing women to become his personal bodyguards have angered conservative Muslims.

The Islamic Martyrs' Movement emerged earlier this year when it claimed responsibility for several attacks near Benghazi, including an assault on the Egyptian consulate which left two guards dead.

The group said it burned mobile homes on the base and seized rifles, ammunition and four rocket-propelled grenades.

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