

UML renews demand for Indo-Nepal peace treaty

KATHMANDU, June 18: Nepal's communists, who dominate the ruling coalition, yesterday renewed a demand that the government sign a peace treaty with India to replace one signed in 1950, reports Reuter.

We want to have a new peace and friendship treaty with India, Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the communist Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) Party, told a news conference.

The UML, which headed a minority government in the Himalayan kingdom for nine months in 1994 and 1995, had then proposed to New Delhi that the peace and friendship treaty be updated.

It is now the dominant party in the coalition led by Chand's Rastriya Prajatantra Party.

The treaty requires Nepal and neighbouring India to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with neighbours.

They are also committed in the treaty to treat each other's citizens as their own in matters of residence, property ownership, trade and commerce.

But analysts say some provisions in the treaty are violated

more often than they are honoured by either side.

UML's Nepal did not say which provisions the communists wanted revised.

Turkish FM warns against probable military coup

ANKARA, June 18: Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller warned Tuesday against a possible military coup, saying the loss of democracy would disrupt Turkey's ties with the western world, reports AFP.

"There is one thing Turkey should never give up, and it is democracy, if Turkey gives up democracy, it will also give up its ties with the western world, the European Union and the contemporary world," Ciller told reporters here.

Her remarks came on the eve of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's planned resignation and amid a bitter row between the government and the pro-secular army over creeping Islamisation.

BRIEFLY

Clinton-Hashimoto meet today:

President Clinton will meet privately with Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on Thursday, White House officials said, AP reports from Washington.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity on Tuesday, confirmed the meeting but declined to describe the agenda Clinton and Hashimoto would discuss. Clinton also will meet with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, but a date for that meeting was not set Tuesday, the officials said. Both meetings are to take place during the Summit of Eight meeting in Denver, which begins Friday and lasts through Sunday.

Arafat meets King Fahd: Visiting Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met with Saudi King Fahd on Tuesday for talks expected to cover the three-month freeze in the peace process with Israel, officials said, AFP reports from Jeddah.

The official Saudi agency SPA did not reveal the contents of the discussion, revealing only that Arafat decorated King Fahd with the 'Star of Palestine', the highest Palestinian decoration. Palestinian International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath had said earlier that Arafat would discuss with Saudi leaders the 'latest developments in the peace process and efforts to ease the deadlock.'

1st woman 3-star US general: The US Army on Tuesday made Lt-Gen Claudia Kennedy, an intelligence expert, the service's first woman three-star general, Reuter reports from Washington.

"Well done — well deserved — and it's about time," army secretary Togo West said at Lt-Gen Kennedy's promotion ceremony at the Pentagon. The promotion makes Kennedy the senior intelligence official in the department of the army.

Israeli finance minister quits: Israeli Finance Minister Dan Meridor resigned early yesterday after losing a battle with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over Netanyahu's plans to liberalise the economy. Israeli radio said, AP reports from Jerusalem.

Meridor quit after a seven-hour cabinet meeting to try to find a compromise between the two leaders' proposals on lifting foreign currency controls. The Finance Minister failed to gather enough support for his proposals from other ministers when it came to a vote, the radio said.

Blast claims 8 in Colombia: A bomb destroyed a police post in the town of Fontibon outside the capital Bogota Tuesday and killed eight people, said General Rosso Jose Serrano, director of Colombia's police, AFP reports from Bogota.

Another 15 were seriously injured, said Serrano. The bomb went off as a seized car packed with the bomb was being inspected inside the station's parking lot. But police could not immediately say if the car had been meant as a trap for police or if it was being used to transport an explosive.

German jailed in Lanka: A German national has been sentenced to two years imprisonment for having sex with two young boys, police said Wednesday, AP reports from Colombo.

Gunther Plattdasch, 66, of Stuttgart, was the third foreigner to be sentenced for pedophilic activity in Sri Lanka this year, said Mohamed Nizam, the deputy police chief who is heading an operation against child sex. Plattdasch was arrested in January 1995 in Balpitiya, a coastal resort town in southern Sri Lanka.

UK to invite heads of 185 UN states: The British government is considering inviting all 185 United Nations heads of state to London for the millennium to sign a declaration for the 21st century setting out ways to improve the world in the next century, a press report said in London yesterday, AFP reports from London.

The Daily Telegraph quoting unnamed sources said the document would contain "specific achievable aims" such as bringing fresh water to everybody in the world, raising literacy standards, reducing pollution or eliminating poverty by 2020.

KSA man extradited to US: A Saudi national arrested in connection with the June 1996 bombing of a US military complex in Saudi Arabia was extradited Tuesday to the United States, the Immigration Ministry said, AFP reports from Montreal.

Al Sayegh, 28, chose to go to the United States, rather than be sent to Saudi Arabia. The officials said he left Ottawa by air at 2000 GMT, but refused to give further details, citing "security reasons."

6,000 US students expelled in 1995-96: More than 6,000 US high school students were expelled in the 1995-96 school year for carrying weapons, according to a report of education report, AFP reports from Washington.

The report said 6,276 students from 29 states were punished for bringing weapons into their schools, including firearms.

9 Lankan soldiers charged for killings: Nine soldiers have been charged in the slayings of four civilians in a case seen as a test of the government's commitment to protect minorities in Sri Lanka, AP reports from Colombo.

A prosecutor asked Monday for a special tribunal for the politically sensitive trial. The four civilians were members of the Tamil minority. In the past, the Tamils have cited abuse and arrogance by Sinhalese soldiers as one of the causes of Tamil discontent leading to Sri Lanka's 14-year-old ethnic war.

Two hurt severely Rioting continues in Hebron

HEBRON, West Bank, June 18: A Palestinian boy and elderly man were critically wounded by Israeli bullets Tuesday in the fourth straight day of rioting in Hebron over the deadlock in the peace process.

Murad Jamjoum, 14, and his brother Munir Karaj, 72, remained in critical condition after undergoing surgery to remove rubber-coated metal bullets embedded in their brains, Tawfiq Rahal, the surgeon who operated on the two, told AFP.

Two other Palestinians each had a leg broken by rubber bullets.

At least 18 other Palestinians were less seriously wounded

by rubber bullets as protesters pelted soldiers on the edge of the Israeli-controlled sector of the divided city with stones, bottles and firebombs for a fourth day running.

The injured included a 25-year-old man who lost an eye and a girl shot while burning an Israeli flag, witnesses said.

In addition, two members of the Israeli forces were slightly injured from stones, a military spokesman said.

Near the village of Beit Omar north of Hebron, Palestinians stoned Israeli cars and blocked the vehicle of the head of the Israeli Settler Council, Aharon Domb who was on his way to his Hebron home.

International

Allow creation of Palestinian state, EU leaders urge Israel

AMSTERDAM, June 18: The European Union urged Israel for the first time today to consider allowing the creation of a Palestinian state, reports Reuter.

In a statement adopted at their Amsterdam Summit, EU leaders said: "Europe calls on the people of Israel to recognise the right of the Palestinians to exercise self-determination, without excluding the option of a state."

"The creation of a viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian entity is the best guarantee of Israel's security," the 15-nation bloc said.

At the same time, the EU called on the Palestinian people to reaffirm their commitment to the legitimate right of Israel to live within safe, recognised borders.

The "European call for peace in the Middle East" warned that stagnation on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese negotiating tracks "is a permanent threat to the security of all" and urged the peoples and governments of the Middle East to re-open talks.

It recalled the internationally agreed foundations for peace including the exchange of land for peace, the non-acceptability of the annexation of territory by force, rejection of terrorism, Palestinian self-determination and the right of all states and peoples to live in a safe, recognised borders.

The EU reaffirmed its opposition to settlements and support for Arab-Israeli Security Cooperation, it backed mediation efforts by Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and pledged to support his initiative.

The new departure of the European statement appeared to reflect deep frustration at the approach of hardline Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem led to a breakdown of talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Paradoxically, it was issued in the midst of a marathon EU Summit in which the bloc's leaders failed to agree on re-

forming their own institutions and postponed key decisions to the future.

"It is vital to abstain from unilateral actions prejudicing the permanent status, issues and to resume and maintain full security cooperation with the aim of fighting terrorism," the EU said.

"It is time to take concrete steps towards a lasting peace," the statement said.

Previous EU resolutions, beginning with the landmark Venice declaration in 1980s, Europe's first unsuccessful venture into Middle East peacemaking, had upheld the Palestinians' right to self-determination without specifically calling for a state.

The last major EU policy statement in Florence last June referred to "self-determination for the Palestinians, with all that it implies," but stopped short of mentioning a state.

Israeli leaders have long told the EU that by calling publicly for a Palestinian state, they were prejudging the outcome of negotiations and taking sides

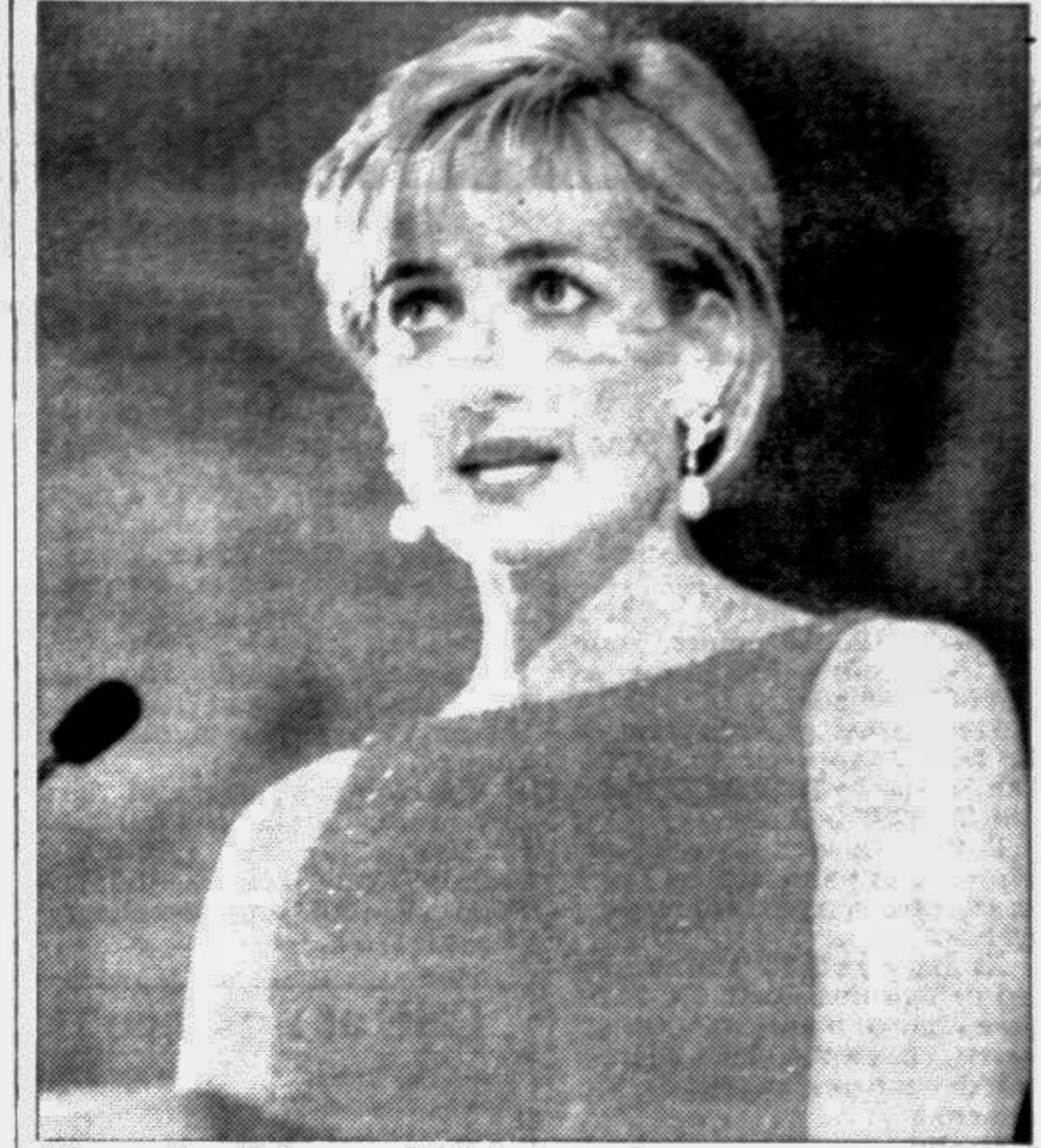
in the Arab-Israeli dispute in a way that disqualifies Europe as an honest broker.

Arab states have locked to the Europeans to balance out a perceived United States bias towards the Jewish state and to press Washington to take a more active role in breaking the deadlock in the peace process.

Another report says: "The European Union failed yesterday to agree key reforms to expand into eastern Europe and looked set to agree a new treaty that was a shadow of what many in the 15-nation bloc had hoped for."

Working late into the night, EU leaders threw in the towel on plans to alter the balance of power within the union, deferring the issue until just before the first of a raft of new members from the old communist bloc due to join.

Officials said Belgium and Spain had refused to agree a plan under which the number of votes given to countries in ministerial meetings would be changed to rebalance the power of larger countries.



Diana, the Princess of Wales, speaks to guests at a gala for Landmine Victims sponsored by the American Red Cross Tuesday at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC.

— AFP/UNB photo

Feud between co-rulers erupts into gunbattle in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, June 18: Already tense fears in Cambodia's capital have been heightened as the feud between the country's co-rulers erupted into a bloody gunbattle between bodyguards loyal to each side, reports AP.

With Khmer Rouge guerrilla leader Pol Pot on the run somewhere in the northern jungle, the violence in Phnom Penh could threaten a coalition government that has been unstable since the United Nations pieced it together in 1993 after years of genocide and civil war.

Assault rifle shots and explosions from grenades and rocket launchers rang out in central Phnom Penh on Tuesday as the bodyguards of First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh traded fire with police loyal to Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The fighting comes just 10 days before US Secretary of

State Madeleine Albright is to visit Cambodia to support democracy and urge the prime ministers to resolve their differences peacefully.

About 100 police armed with AK-47s surrounded the prince's heavily guarded compound. At least one of Ranariddh's men was killed. Two blocks away, a rocket or grenade exploded inside the walled residence of US Ambassador Kenneth Quinn. The blast blew apart a cement bench two feet from the servants' quarters, Quinn said. No one was injured.

"The explosion shook the house," said Quinn, who was celebrating his birthday at the time. "The family had just gathered around opening presents and all of a sudden — BOOM! We were very lucky. It blew in the glass and the doors."

Wounded in the fighting was a soldier with the prince's

Thousands of soldiers, police and militia units of the rival factions are posted around the city, and fears have run high in recent weeks of a civil war. However, none of the larger units got involved in Tuesday's two-hour clash. Leaders from FUNCINPEC and the rival Cambodian People's Party, or CPP, met to defuse tensions.

Battlefield enemies in the 1980s, the two sides have never overcome their enmity. Threats and violence have increased recently in the run-up to elections scheduled for late next year.

Despite some progress towards the restoration of normalcy in the Kashmir Valley, the Hindus who fled their homes at the height of the secessionist violence seven years ago, are too scared to return.

Not satisfied with the Jammu and Kashmir government's assurances, they want a "guarantee" from the majority Muslims in the Valley, a panel of senior state government officials has found after visiting Jammu and Delhi where most of the 50,000 Kashmiri Hindu migrant families are living.

The officials team, led by M.L. Kaul, Financial Commissioner (Planning) was assigned the task of exploring the possibilities of the return of Kashmiri Hindu migrants.

Members of the Kaul panel spoke to members of the community to know their "percep-

tions" on the possibility of return and asked them to "voice their apprehensions." "We even asked them to come out with their suggestions and expectations from the government," Kaul told IANS.

The migrants were "unanimous" that they could not trust merely the state government's efforts for their return. "They wanted the Muslim majority community, with which they had lived all along till 1990 when the forces of violence started targeting them, to offer them a guarantee of safety, dignity and honour on their return," he said.

More than the government machinery, they "tended to believe their Muslim neighbours."

Since these neighbours were saying that it would take some more time for their return to

the Valley" the migrants were "hesitant, rather scared to return." Shishban Lal Rina, an orchardist from Beerwah area of Budgam district, now living in a Jammu camp told the officials.

There were many like him among the migrants who wanted the majority community to "open its arms for the Kashmiri Hindus," Kaul said.

"We are working on this aspect," he added.

Thousands of Kashmiri Hindus fled the Valley between late 1989 and early 1990 after the secessionists began targeting them with select killings of community members, especially political leaders, intellectuals, academics and young people.

— India Abroad News Service



Colombian police and rescue workers search through the debris left by a bomb that exploded Tuesday in the parking lot of a police station in Fontibon west of Bogota. Police officials said eight police were killed and 15 injured. Members of the intelligence squad were inspecting a truck (C) which had been confiscated earlier Tuesday when the explosion occurred, police officials said.

— AFP/UNB photo

Di appeals for ban on land mines

WASHINGTON, June 18: Princess Diana and Elizabeth Dole joined forces Tuesday to heighten international awareness of the devastating effects of land mines and to appeal for a worldwide ban, reports AP.

The two women also urged developed countries to increase assistance for mine victims and not to overlook the crisis just because it is not taking place in their own back yard.

"If on the backroads of England or America a false step could cost a leg, a life, a child, what we're about today would not be an admirable cause; it would be an urgent crisis," said Dole, who heads the American Red Cross.

The detachment that comes from mileage and time zones is understandable, but it is not justified because the value of life does not diminish with distance and the cry of a child is no less wrenching because it is faint," added Dole, speaking in front of a memorial honouring Red Cross workers.

— India Abroad News Service

The detachment that comes from mileage and time zones is understandable, but it is not justified because the value of life does not diminish with distance and the cry of a child is no less wrenching because it is faint," added Dole, speaking in front of a memorial honouring Red Cross workers.

— India Abroad News Service

The detachment that comes from mileage and time zones is understandable, but it is not justified because the value of life does not diminish with distance and the cry of a child is no less wrenching because it is faint," added Dole, speaking in front of a memorial honouring Red Cross workers.

— India Abroad News Service

The detachment that comes from mileage and time zones is understandable, but it is not justified because the value of life does not diminish with distance and the cry of a child is no less wrenching because it is faint," added Dole, speaking in front of a memorial honouring Red Cross workers.

— India Abroad News Service

The detachment that comes from mileage and time zones is understandable, but it is not justified because the value of life does not diminish with distance and the cry of a child is no less wrenching because it is faint," added Dole, speaking in front of a memorial honouring Red Cross workers.

</