

International

India relaxes visa rules for Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD, June 27: India has taken steps to liberalise visa procedure for Pakistanis to encourage contacts between the peoples of the two countries, according to the Indian Embassy here, reports AFP.

The relaxation comes amid dialogue between Pakistan and India to improve their long-strained relations.

The measures, listed in a statement here by the Indian High Commission late Thursday, include a one-year triple entry visa for bona fide businessmen.

The maximum number of cities that Pakistani nationals can go to during a visit to India

has been increased from eight to 12 and more for senior citizens.

The International Airport at Chennai in Madras will be opened for arrival and departure of Pakistani nationals in addition to the existing check points of New Delhi and Mumbai airports the embassy said.

Non-police reporting visas will be granted as far as possible to artists, journalists, students, poets, writers and businessmen, it added.

Represented artists from Pakistan will be permitted to give commercial performances in India.

In talks here earlier this

Take action against Laloo or quit, BJP asks Gujral

NEW DELHI, June 27: India's main opposition party today said Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral should quit if he could not force a colleague charged with corruption to resign, reports AFP.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused Gujral of failing to act and said he was "squarely" responsible for solving the crisis over Laloo Prasad Yadav, a chief minister accused of embezzling millions of dollars.

Yadav, head of the state government of Bihar in the east of the country, is also president of Gujral's Janata Dal (People's Party) which fronts the United Front minority coalition ruling India.

Yadav has adamantly refused to quit despite being charged by federal detectives in a 271-million dollar corruption scandal involving over 50 politicians and bureaucrats which dates back to the 1970s.

BJP spokesman Yashwant Sinha said: "While democratic

norms are being threatened, Gujral and his government were unable to do anything and were only watching.

The responsibility rests squarely on Gujral's shoulders, and the BJP feels that if he cannot act he has no right to continue as prime minister of this country".

It was the first demand by the Indian opposition for Gujral's head.

Yadav is accused of siphoning large amounts of cash from a state-run cattle fodder fund. He has denied the charges.

The scandal, which was first seen as a regional issue, is now threatening to split the prime minister's Janata Dal party and thus undermine Gujral at the head of the national coalition.

Yadav has threatened to set up his own political faction if he is sacked as Chief Minister. Janata Dal sources say the party is desperately trying to persuade Yadav, who once enjoyed mass grass-roots support in Bihar, to bow out of office.

Pol Pot should face int'l court, says Sihanouk

PHNOM PENH, June 27: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk said Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot should face an international court, but if that could not be arranged a Cambodian court was likely to sentence him to life in prison, reports Reuters.

"Personally, I reckon that Pol Pot should be tried by an international court for crimes against humanity, the king said in an interview released by the palace on Thursday.

"But in the absence of an international court a Cambodian court could try him in Cambodia itself, the king said in the interview with his regular bulletin.

Cambodia's two prime ministers announced on Saturday that Pol Pot had been captured by a breakaway Khmer Rouge faction.

In a rare display of public unity the two premiers sent a letter to the United Nations seeking the world body's help in bringing to justice those responsible for crimes committed during Pol Pot's 1975-79 killing fields' rule.

India's population of over 60 may rise to 71m by 2001

NEW DELHI, June 27: Ageing India may have 71 million people over the age of 60 by the start of the next century, many of them without adequate family support, an aid official said yesterday, reports AFP.

S S Sandhu the director general of Helpage India, a non-governmental organisation, called on the government to act, adding that India could "end up with a crisis of great magnitude," the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

Official statistics, Sandhu said, showed that India's population of over 60s was expected to rise from 65 million in 1991 to 71 million by the end of 2001.

Sandhu added that more and more young people, meanwhile, were moving away from home in search of work, leaving the older generation to increasingly fend for themselves.

UN chief says Israel not yet abandoned settlement on occupied land

UNITED NATIONS, June 27: Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Thursday Israel had not abandoned its construction of a new settlement on occupied territory south of Jerusalem and that this was "viewed as particularly serious," reports Reuters.

His comments were contained in a written report expected to be made public shortly.

It was requested by an emergency special session of the General Assembly in April which demanded the immediate cessation of construction at the site, called Har Homa in Hebrew and Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arabic.

The Assembly resolution, adopted by a vote of 134 to three with 11 abstentions, also demanded a half to all other Israeli settlement activities and called for an end to all support for "illegal Israeli activities" in the occupied territories.

According to the information available to the United Nations, the government of Israel, as of June 20, 1997, has not abandoned its construction of a new Israeli settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim," Annan said.

Hall takes over US forces in Japan

Air Force Lt. Gen. John B Hall assumed command of all United States forces in Japan on Friday, the US military announced, AP reports from Tokyo.

Hall, who takes charge of some 47,000 American troops stationed in Japan's main islands and on the southern island of Okinawa, also took over command of the Fifth Air Force based at Yokota Air Base, west of Tokyo. Hall replaces Lt. Gen. Ralph E. Ed Eberhart in both posts.

Moderate quake shakes Japan

A moderate earthquake struck part of southwestern Japan on Friday, but there were no immediate reports of damages or injuries, AP reports from Tokyo.

The quake, which had a preliminary magnitude of 4.1, was centered 10 kilometres (6 miles) underground in the western part of Kagoshima prefecture, the Meteorological Agency said.

Saburo Shigenaga, a spokesman for the Kagoshima prefectural police, said by telephone that no reports of damage or injuries had been filed immediately after the earthquake.

14 criminals executed in China

Chinese authorities have executed 14 people for drug trafficking and violent crimes in far western Xinjiang, the official Legal Daily reported Friday, AP says from Beijing.

The 14 were executed by gunshot Tuesday immediately following a mass sentencing rally in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, the newspaper said. Five of those put to death had been convicted of drug crimes. The newspaper provided no further details on the crimes, nor did it name any of the executed.

Peruvian rebel wanted to go to Cuba

The leader of leftist rebels who held hostages for four months in the Japanese ambassador's mansion wanted to exchange the hostages for passage to Cuba, but was overruled by his younger lieutenants, AP reports from Lima.

In police recordings of the rebels' conversations during the crisis, Tupac Amaru leader Nestor Cerpa, 43, argued with his subordinates over whether to accept the government's offer of safe passage to Cuba if they released the 72 hostages.

The recordings also showed that Cerpa was tired by the length of the stand-off and that his hold over his young rebels was shaky.

2 more killed in Karachi

KARACHI, June 27: Two people have been killed and three more injured in the latest violence to erupt in Pakistan's strife-torn city of Karachi, police said today, reports AFP.

Unidentified gunmen killed two men late Thursday in Gulshan-e-Hadeed on the eastern outskirts of the city and in the western area of Mongho Pir, a police spokesman said.

The victims were not identified.

Also on Thursday, a lawyer, Sarif Islam, his son and a guest were wounded by armed men who forced their way into his home and fired guns, a police spokesman said, adding that the injured were taken to hospital.

Islam is representing a jailed senior police official, Wajid Durrani, who faces trial on charges of involvement in the murder of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, brother of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

The former premier's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, is also in jail along with several other accused in the murder case. Murtaza was killed, along with seven of his political allies, in a police shootout in Karachi last year.

Painting a gloomy picture of rising oceans and deadly heat, the president told the United Nations Earth Summit, "The science is clear and compelling: We humans are changing the global climate."

America's record "is not sufficient," Clinton admitted. But he promised evidence of "a strong American commitment" in time for negotiations in December toward a global greenhouse gas treaty.

"No nation can escape this danger. No nation can evade its responsibility to confront it," the president said in remarks prepared for delivery. "We must do all our part."

Europe doesn't think he's doing enough.

The European Union proposes cutting greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide — by 15 per cent below 1990 levels, with a deadline of 2010. Under pressure from corporate lobbyists and lawmakers who fear strict limits would cost thousands of jobs, Clinton has refused to commit to targets before the treaty talks in Kyoto, Japan.

His top environmental aide, Kathleen McGinty, said the EU's 15 per cent goal "is impossible to reach," but she offered no alternative target. The president will talk to American leaders in science and business before proposing his target, she said.

Authorities on Friday said all of the hostages have been rescued, had escaped or were

Lankan troops pound LTTE-held town

COLOMBO, June 27: Government forces pounded a key Tamil-held town in northern Sri Lanka after the guerrillas had staged a major attack against advancing troops, the rebels said today, reports AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said security forces fired artillery shells and kept up air attacks against the town of Puliyanakulam after Wednesday's rebel onslaught on troops mounted their latest drive on May 13.

Munasinghe said 64 soldiers were killed when Tiger guerrillas overran a series of army bunkers in the northern area of Puliyanakulam on Wednesday, he placed Tiger casualties at 150 killed and 300 wounded.

According to the defence ministry another 30 rebels and seven soldiers were killed in a separate confrontation in the same area on Tuesday night, raising to 251 the death toll in a 24-hour period.

However the LTTE discounted military figures and said they lost only 85 of their cadres and claimed capturing a 120 millimetre artillery gun together with 300 rounds of ammunition.

The rebels accused the government of halting the supply of food to civilians in Tiger-held areas of the country's north, a charge denied by the authorities.

Security forces were closing in on the town of Puliyanakulam when the Tigers mounted a ferocious counter attack, leaving 251 killed on both sides.

Military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told reporters here Thursday that they will push ahead despite the massive Tiger counter assault.

Tigers radio said they killed more than 100 government soldiers and wounded another 200 when they wiped out the Puliyanakulam military base and drove off in army trucks.



US President Bill Clinton (R) meets with South Korean President Kim Yung Sam Thursday after his address to the Earth Summit Plus Five at the United Nations in New York. The two leaders met at the United States Mission to the United Nations.

— AFP/UNB photo

Clinton pledges to help bridle threat of global warming

UNITED NATIONS, June 27: Trying to silence worldwide criticism, President Clinton pledged Thursday to help bridle the "real and imminent" threat of global warming but rebuffed European demands to take immediate action, reports AP.

Painting a gloomy picture of rising oceans and deadly heat, the president told the United Nations Earth Summit, "The science is clear and compelling: We humans are changing the global climate."

Outside the UN building, in a sizzling summer sun that helped drive home their point,

MILF postpones peace talks with Manila

COTABATO, Philippines, June 27: Muslim separatist rebels announced Friday they will not participate in scheduled talks on a general ceasefire after the military overran a major rebel camp in the southern Philippines, reports AP.

At least 25 people were killed Thursday as the military pounded the camp in Pikit, North Cotabato province and pursued Moro Islamic Liberation Front guerrillas who had seized 60 bus passengers as hostages.

The clash raised to at least 70 the number of people killed in sporadic skirmishes since June 17, when rebels took 43 government surveyors hostage in Sultan Sabarong in Maguindanao.

Authorities on Friday said all of the hostages have been rescued, had escaped or were

abandoned by the rebels as they fought troops in a running battle around Kabacan town in North Cotabato, about 910 kilometres south of Manila.

MILF vice-chairman and chief peace negotiator Ghadzali Jaafar said that because of the massive military offensive, the MILF Central Committee decided to postpone the scheduled meeting on June 28-29 "until the situation normalises."

Jaafar earlier said the MILF will pull out of the talks if Camp Rajamuda is taken by the government but his statement Friday indicated the rebels have not abandoned the talks altogether.

"It is our conviction that this atmosphere is not conducive to the peace talks," Jaafar said in a letter to Presidential Executive Secretary Ruben Torres.



(L to R) Cherie Blair, The Queen of Jordan, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and King Hussein of Jordan pose for the media during a photo call in 10 Downing Street on Thursday.

— AFP/UNB photo

Washington welcomes outcome of Indo-Pak talks as positive steps

Aziz Haniffa writes from Washington

he had detected a more positive outlook among the Clinton Administration.

One of the positive feelings I got while I was talking to the Administration here was that they also understood and realized that after the Cold War being over, equations in the world have changed and they must take a fresh look at them.

Dinger said, "the establishment of working groups is a very positive step in our view in this continuing dialogue, and we hope that this will contribute to resolving differences between India and Pakistan."

He said "the working groups' agenda, as included in the statement issued at the end of the talks, was quite realistic. It addressed the significant issues which divide the countries and we certainly wish both countries well in this initiative."

Shervani said on U.S.-India issues, which in recent years have been driven by the economic relationship, with the political and diplomatic exchanges remaining a roller-coaster ride.

Shervani said Talbott had noted that even President Clinton "has been saying that he has to visit" India and that both a trip by Ms Albright and Clinton

are top priorities on the Administration's agenda. "We left it at that because he gave both the visits a very positive signal," Shervani noted.

Shervani, whose visit was highlighted by the signing of an extradition treaty between India and the United States, said unlike his meetings yesterday with lawmakers on Capitol Hill when concerns had been expressed over rumors that India was preparing to deploy its Prithvi missile on the Pakistan border, this topic had not been raised by either Talbott or National Security Adviser Sandy Berger.

He said evidently both Talbott and Berger seemed to realize that the story, which was leaked to the Washington Post by the senior CIA official dealing with nonproliferation af-

fers, had clearly been exaggerated and they were completely satisfied with Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's categorical denial about Prithvi's deployment.

Asked if he complained about Washington's fixation with authoritarian China and the insufficient attention paid to democratic India, Shervani said he had been scrupulously diplomatic on this issue.

"India's position is extremely clear and we have repeated our position in many forums, which America may not agree with, but understands what India stands for," Shervani stated.

Thus, he said there "was no such talk or any kind of pressure on me to convey to my government to review that stand."

Shervani said he had provided Talbott and Berger with a comprehensive briefing on the India-Pakistan talks as well as

the changes taking place in India's economy that envisaged the making of India as a major player in the global economy in the near future.

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