

International

Sharif calls for peace with India as two nations turn 50

ISLAMABAD, Aug 14: Pakistan's prime minister suggested Thursday his country and neighbouring India celebrate their joint 50th anniversary by finding peace, reports AP.

"Over the past 50 years we have spent billions of dollars on defense and fought wars which have harmed both the countries," Nawaz Sharif said in a morning ceremony outside the National Assembly.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars since the two countries gained independence from Britain 50 years ago. The border between them remains one of the world's most tense.

Both countries spend more than one third of their national budgets on defence, while millions of people on both sides of the border live in gripping poverty.

Sharif said it was time for Pakistan and India to put their differences behind them, but stressed Pakistan would not re-

lent on the thorny issue of disputed Kashmir.

Both countries claim the former Himalayan kingdom, the only predominantly Muslim state in largely Hindu India and the flash point of two of the three wars between Pakistan and India.

India accuses Pakistan of funding an armed insurgency in Kashmir that has left 15,000 dead. Pakistan wants India to give the Kashmiri people the right to vote on whether to stay with New Delhi or come under Islamabad's rule.

The conflict has been both bitter and petty ever since both countries gained freedom from Britain. Pakistan insisted on becoming independent first, marking its independence day at midnight August 13; India celebrates it at midnight August 14. And while the two countries logically should be in the same time zone, Pakistan moved its clocks back half an hour from Indian time.

Islamabad and New Delhi began talking in March after four years of silence. Previous talks broke down over Kashmir.

Sharif said he hoped both countries redirect their energies and funds into strengthening the South Asian economy.

"We feel that if our neighbors are at peace and stable it will help the entire region," Sharif told thousands of people who gathered outside the parliament, many waving Pakistan's green and white flag.

Sharif called on the Pakistani people to help build their country into another "Asian tiger," a reference to the boom economies in Malaysia and Singapore he hopes to emulate.

In a midnight address to the legislature Sharif called on political leaders to work together to solve the country's many problems.

Speaking to the National Assembly in an address broadcast nationally, Sharif noted that some believe Pakistan's

140 million people have little to celebrate.

It is wracked by religious and political violence that has killed almost 400 people this year. Public and private corruption is rampant.

More than a quarter of Pakistan's 140 million people live in extreme poverty, and almost a half million Pakistani children are annually of malnutrition.

Sharif asked political leaders from his Pakistan Muslim League and other parties to "join hands for the nation's progress."

He called on the Pakistani people to make the country into a "tolerant and democratic" Islamic state, like the one envisioned by the country's founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Pakistan's creation as an Islamic homeland was the "culmination of the dreams of Muslims of the subcontinent," he said.

Lockie jet blast US asks Libya to extradite 2 suspects

WASHINGTON, Aug 14: The White House on Wednesday called upon the Libyan government to extradite two Libyans accused of masterminding the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, reports AFP.

A bid by Tripoli to have UN sanctions against it dropped in exchange for any other step, "is a fool's errand," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said.

Libya has been under an air embargo since 1992 over its refusal to hand over to Britain or the United States the two men implicated in the bombing, which killed 270.

There have been almost religiously and periodically over the last several years periodic accounts of overtures being made, either by the Libyan government or by Moamer Gaddafi or people presumably acting in concert with him, McCurry noted.

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August 14, 1947. They will hear

a recording of the "tryst with

destiny" speech delivered moments before midnight by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Prime Minister Gujral will address the nation on Friday morning from the ramparts of 17th century Red Fort in the old walled city. The traditional speech from the old monument is an annual reminder that though India's history as a modern state is relatively brief, its culture is ancient.

In a departure from the official ceremonies, a private development group plans to bring 150 poor children to offer prayers at the mausoleum of Gandhi on Friday. They will carry placards demanding answers from the nation on why illiteracy, poverty and child labour persist.

Independence day divided India into an Islamic Pakistan and largely Hindu India. Partition was accompanied by bloody religious riots in 1947, and continuing bitterness has three times erupted into war between the two nations.

Efforts to bring the people from the two sides together at their international border to jointly celebrate independence day failed.

India celebrates 50 yrs of independence

NEW DELHI, Aug 14: Cultural fiestas, marches by people who fought for India's independence, singing and dancing were to herald India's golden jubilee celebrations of freedom from the British rule, reports AP.

But the celebrations began Thursday evening and continuing on independence day Friday were likely to be muted. Pride at the accomplishments of the last five decades is mixed with despair that India continues to face so many problems, from poverty to political corruption to ethnic, class and religious tensions.

A string of bomb attacks in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and remote northeast earlier this week were reminders that several groups believe independence from Britain isn't enough — they want to be free of Indian rule. Police say the violence this week was timed to undermine independence celebrations.

Just before midnight Thursday, Indian lawmakers and other dignitaries will gather for a re-enactment of the historic sitting of the country's con-

stituent assembly the night of August 14, 1947. They will hear a recording of the "tryst with destiny" speech delivered moments before midnight by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Indian independence was beginning of the end of British empire — colonies throughout Asia and Africa got their freedom following India, and though Britain continues to hold a few tiny overseas possessions, the process culminated with Hong Kong's return China this year.

Before Parliament meets on Friday, Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and freedom fighters will lead thousands of people from various Indian states in a "march of the nation" to India Gate, a memorial to World War II victims.

Floats will depict the lives of Mohandas Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose, leaders of India's freedom struggle. The marchers will walk to the tune of army, air force and navy bands playing patriotic songs.

A laser beam display and fireworks will light up the sky in New Delhi at the stroke of



Bangladesh Ambassador to Iran, Syed Muazzem Ali, hosted a dinner recently in honour of visiting Energy & Mineral Resources Minister Lt. General (Retd) Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan. The host is seen here with the chief guest, Iranian Oil Minister Gholamreza Aghazadeh, and Deputy Oil Ministers M/S Nezhad Hossain and Ganimi Fard.

Yadav remanded to judicial custody till Aug 27

PATNA, Aug 14: The former Bihar chief minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, was yesterday remanded to judicial custody till August 27 by a special court here in connection with three conspiracy angle cases of the fodder scam, reports PTI.

Two former Bihar ministers, Bhola Ram Toofani and Vidya Sagar Nishad, were also remanded to judicial custody till August 27 by the special judge, SK Lal in the same cases.

Yadav, Toofani and Nishad were not produced before the designated CBI Court yesterday on account of illness.

The Beur Jail authorities informed the court that the three accused were suffering from some ailments and therefore, could not be produced in the court.

Meanwhile, the superintendent of the Beur Jail yesterday submitted to the court a report prepared by the medical board

supervising the treatment of the former chief minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav.

According to the report, Yadav is suffering from "Coronary artery disease with unstable angina along with essential hypertension" and he has been advised three weeks' bed rest.

The report also said that a three-member team of the Escorts Heart Hospital and Research Centre, New Delhi, had already examined the former chief minister.

The cases in which their remand was extended till August 27 relate to fraudulent withdrawal of several crores of rupees by the officials from Deoghar, Dumka and Patna treasuries.

The CBI is yet to file charge sheet in these three cases, RC 31(A)/96, RC 42(A)/96 and RC 64(A)/96, of the multi-crore fodder scam.

Relocation of Chandrika's residence demanded

COLOMBO, Aug 14: Experts from France, India and the United States have advised the relocation of the Sri Lankan President's official residence because it was vulnerable to attacks by Tamil Tiger rebels, officials said today, reports AFP.

The army said the closure remained in force around the town of Bethlehem, a Christian pilgrimage site, and in the Jerusalem area.

Netanyahu spokesman David Bar-Ilan said the withheld tax revenues would be released in accordance with measures taken by the Palestinian Authority to combat terrorism.

A series of protests against the closure were scheduled throughout the West Bank on Wednesday.

The statement, defending moves to build a new office and residential complex outside the city centre said the present security measures at Temple Trees was an inconvenience to the public.

Bosnian Serbs under pressure to hand over Karadzic

SARAJEVO, Aug 14: Pressure grew Wednesday on the Bosnian Serbs to hand over war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic as NATO's supreme commander, US General Wesley Clark, paid an unannounced visit to his mountain home, reports AFP.

Clark flew to Bosnia and headed for Pale, home to Karadzic.

Though officially out of office, Karadzic is considered one of the major obstacles to peace in Bosnia, but to date, NATO forces have been reluctant to move against the former Serb leader, fearing casualties.

Release of E Timorese rebel commander

Jakarta yet to comply with Mandela's request

JAKARTA, Aug 14: Indonesia is still considering a request from South African President Nelson Mandela to release imprisoned East Timorese guerrilla commander Xanana Gusmao, senior officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

Not yet, not yet. It will be responded to," Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said when asked by reporters if a decision has been made.

Indonesia celebrates its 52nd anniversary from Dutch colonial rule on Sunday.

Traditionally, President Suharto marks the national day by granting freedom to some prisoners. However, it appears almost certain that Gusmao won't be among inmates freed this time.

Mandela wrote to Suharto recently asking that Suharto



Jordan's King Hussein (R) held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) at the Royal Palace in Red Sea resort of Aqaba, 350 km (210 miles) South of Amman on Wednesday.

Ross wraps up 4-day ME peace mission with limited success

JERUSALEM, Aug 14: US envoy Dennis Ross wrapped up a four-day mediation mission Wednesday that averted a breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian relations but left the parties as far apart as ever on core disputes threatening the peace process, reports AFP.

Underscoring the difficulties, Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu again rejected demands he lift a harsh economic blockade imposed on Palestinian areas following a double suicide bombing in Jerusalem on July 30.

The right-wing prime minister said in Jordan the measures would only be eased if Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat cracks down on violent radicals.

But Palestinian officials have ruled out making the kind

of mass arrests of Islamic and other militants demanded by Netanyahu.

Ross, who has criticised the sanctions as "counter-productive," raised the issue again with Netanyahu in a final round of talks Wednesday and then saw Arafat to inform him of the Israeli leader's position.

The US envoy presented his four-day mission as a limited success before heading back to Washington late Wednesday and said he believed Israel would soon ease the sanctions on the Palestinians despite Netanyahu's tough words.

"I have had discussions on the measures imposed. I do believe number of these measures will be eased," Ross said after his final meeting with Arafat.

Peng, who must step down in March after serving two five-year terms.

Hints at the possibility of political reform, a lone Beijing University professor has publicly proposed a gradual transition in the media backing faster action on market-oriented economic reforms. They include such unprecedented options as issuing shares to employees, selling off public assets to clear the debts of state-owned firms, and listing more Chinese enterprises on overseas stock markets.

Economics professor Shang Dewen, a Communist Party member, has distributed a political blueprint that entails drafting a new constitution, establishing a directly elected parliament with a four-year term, a free press, independent judiciary and other hallmarks of democratic political systems.

Chinese politics far removed from public despite hints of change

BEIJING, China, Aug 14: The Zhao family's souvenir kiosk stands just down the road from the elegant seaside compounds where communist leaders retreat each summer to relax and plot their nation's future, reports AP.

The 15th party congress? Hasn't it already finished?" Zhao asks, peering out from between seashell necklaces and swimsuits in the closeted kiosk he, his wife and 9-year-old daughter make their summertime home.

Most Chinese know it doesn't pay to be too nosy about the doings of their leaders. Police continue to jail, interrogate and otherwise harass the few dissidents who do try to get involved in politics.

The state-run media, however, have offered a few clues

about the progress of the meetings nearby comes in the form of motorcades that which occasionally, forcing swimmers to stand back with their towels and beachballs.

Moving to pre-empt an offensive by hard-line leftists within the Communist Party, Jiang has mounted a campaign in the media backing faster action on market-oriented economic reforms. They include such unprecedented options as issuing shares to employees, selling off public assets to clear the debts of state-owned firms, and listing more Chinese enterprises on overseas stock markets.

To help push ahead the painful restructuring of state-owned industries, he appears to have designated economic czar Zhu Rongji to be the country's next premier — replacing Li

15 demonstrators held in Panama: Police on Wednesday arrests 15 people following a clash with 30 protesters outside the US embassy. Panamanian authorities said, AFP reports from Panama City.

The demonstrators, which included students from the State University of Panama and members of a construction union, opposed the US military presence in Panama. Starting at 3 pm (2100 GMT), some 300 police officers armed with pellet guns, tear gas, riot shields and helmets were dispatched to the embassy, the incident ended two and a half hours later, authorities said.

OANA leaders to meet in Tehran: The leaders of the Organisation of Asia Pacific News Agencies (OANA) are meeting in Tehran to discuss ways to develop direct exchanges of information, the official Iranian News Agency IRNA said Wednesday, AFP reports from Tehran.

Participants at the three-day conference, which opened Tuesday, are also set to discuss ways to increase the level of training in news agencies in the countries involved, IRNA said.

3 to face charges on chopper crash: Three army officers will be charged with negligence for their role in the Black Hawk helicopter crash that killed 18 soldiers in a training accident last year, AP reports from Canberra.

A defence Department spokesman, Col Andrew Reynolds, said Thursday that the officers will soon receive details of the charges and supporting evidence.