

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 it 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 die 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.

Lockerbie 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 AP.

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 Moammar Gaddafi or people presumably acting in concert with him, McCurry noted.

India celebrates 50yrs 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 beginning 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 the 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 virtually culminated with Hong Kong's return to 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

midnight. 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.



US President Bill Clinton (L) and his wife Hillary (R) listen to a speaker during a health care event at the Old Executive Office Building in Washington, DC, Wednesday, as one and a half year old Samuel Hanoussa sits between them. During the event Clinton announced a pediatric drug dosage regulation on medications used to treat children. — AFP/UNB photo

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 Bihar 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 Bihar 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.



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 Hossainian and Gamini Fard.

BRIEFLY

10 Bollywood producers facing threat: At least 10 top film producers are facing threat from the underworld dons, the film star and BJP leader, Shatrughan Sinha said Wednesday. PTI reports from New Delhi.

Sinha, who was New Delhi to participate in Gulshan Kumar's last rites, told newsmen that he has concrete reports that 10 film producers are under threat perception.

Refusing to name them, Sinha said, the government is well aware of those threats and should take immediate action to protect them.

Sihanouk to return home soon: Cambodia's ailing King Norodom Sihanouk will return home before the end of August after a six month absence, the monarch said in a palace statement released yesterday. AFP says from Phnom Penh.

The announcement that the king would return from China came a day after Cambodian strongman Hun Sen turned down his offer to abdicate amid his country's political turmoil.

PUK chief arrives in Turkey: Jalal Talabani, leader of one of the two rival Iraqi Kurdish factions, arrived in Ankara Wednesday for talks with Turkish officials on the fragile ceasefire in northern Iraq. AFP reports from Ankara.

Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), was to meet yesterday with Foreign Minister Ismail Cem on the situation in northern Iraq. A Turkish diplomat said. In October last year, the PUK signed a ceasefire with the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Massoud Barzani, Turkey's main ally in the region.

11 tourists feared dead in US: Eleven tourists were feared dead Wednesday after the northern Arizona canyon they were trekking through suddenly filled with high water, officials said. AFP reports from Los Angeles.

The sheriff's office in Coconino county, Arizona, said a thunderstorm caused antelope canyon to abruptly fill with water three metres (10 feet) high. Reliable sources said at least three French citizens were among the hikers, which also included British and Swedish tourists. The hikers were divided into two groups.

228 kg drugs seized in Iran, 4 held: Iranian police seized 228 kilograms (503 pounds) of heroin and opium and arrested four drug traffickers in the past two days in southeastern Iran, near Pakistan, the official IRNA news agency said Wednesday. AFP reports from Tehran.

Police found 136 kilograms (300 pounds) of opium while inspecting a car in the southeastern region of Iranshahr, IRNA said. In a second operation, the police arrested four traffickers and confiscated 40 kilograms (88 pounds) of heroin and 52 kilograms (115 pounds) of opium in the Mirjaveh area on the border with Pakistan, IRNA said.

11 fishermen rescued in Indonesia: Rescuers have found 11 fishermen alive after an overloaded boat capsized, but another 10 are still missing, the official Antara news agency reported Thursday, AP says from Jakarta.

Three men were rescued by another fishing boat. The others swam to shore. The 12-metre (40-foot) Rahayu IV capsized in rough waters in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra on Monday. Officials in Labuan, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) southwest of Jakarta, claimed the boat was overloaded.

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.

Pakistan awards Nishan-i-Imtiaz to Dilip Kumar

ISLAMABAD, Aug 14: Pakistan Wednesday announced its highest civil award Nishan-i-Imtiaz to India's veteran Muslim filmstar Dilip Kumar on the eve of its 50th Independence



Day, reports AP.

Kumar, alias Yusuf Khan, was born in Peshawar, capital of Pakistan's northwest frontier province, before the subcontinent was divided in August 1947 on independence from Britain.

Nine locals, including singer Noor Jahan, known as the Melody Queen of Pakistan, have also been given the civil award on the golden jubilee of independence.

Mamata announces steering body

CALCUTTA, Aug 14: In her continuing defiance of the Congress high command, the rebel MP, Mamata Banerjee yesterday announced the names of the 116-member Steering Committee of the newly-formed Trinamul Congress Committee, saying that she would not bow down, reports PTI.

The chiefs of two of its frontal organisations were also announced by the president of the new outfit, Pankaj Banerjee at a press conference here.

Israel partially lifts travel ban on Palestinians

JERUSALEM, Aug 14: Israel partially lifted a travel ban on Palestinians on Thursday, allowing them to travel out of two major cities in the West Bank, reports AP.

The move, announced by the army, followed a four-day mission by US Mideast envoy Dennis Ross, who had urged Israel to lift sanctions against the Palestinians that were not needed for security.

The easing of travel restrictions on the cities of Ramallah and Hebron did not affect the overall closure, which prevents tens of thousands of Palestinians from entering Israel. Israel is also withholding 40 million dirrs in tax revenues from the Palestinians.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu imposed the sanctions following the July 30

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 on 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 AP.

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

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 AP.

The "Temple Trees" home of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, situated in a residential and commercial area of the capital, was seen as a target of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), officials said.

"Experts on security arrangements from the USA, India and France have repeatedly advised the government of the high security risk by locating the President at Temple Trees," an official statement said.

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 AP.

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.

Cosmonauts prepare to return from Mir

MOSCOW, Aug 14: Two star-crossed Russian cosmonauts on the Space Station Mir prepared Wednesday to return to earth, ending a six-month mission marked by a record number of accidents and other mishaps, reports AP.

Commander Vasily Tsibilyev and Alexander Lazutkin will leave the Mir in a Soyuz vehicle at 0853 GMT today, a spokeswoman for ground control told AP.

Their capsule will then re-enter the earth's atmosphere and parachute down at 1216 GMT at a spot 170 kilometres (105 miles) southeast of Dzhezkazgan in the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan, where they will be met by medical and rescue teams.

Staying behind on Mir will be the relief crew of Anatoly

Solovyov and Pavel Vinogradov, who arrived August 7, as well as British-born NASA astronaut Michael Foale.

On August 20, the two Russians will begin repairs to the damaged Mir module called Spektr, which was involved in a collision with an unmanned cargo vessel on June 25.

They will reattach solar panel cables, restoring full electric power to the station, then seal Spektr back off, since it was punctured and depressurised in the accident.

On September 3, the cosmonauts will go into open space to examine the skin of Spektr and determine how bad the puncture is, allowing the Russian space agency to prepare for further repairs and the eventual re-opening of the module.

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

free Gusmao and other East Timorese prisoners as the first step toward negotiating a peaceful solution for the troubled territory.

East Timor, about 2,000 kilometres (1,300 miles) east of Jakarta, was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 after Portugal ended for centuries of colonial rule and civil war broke out.

Despite concerted economic development efforts by Jakarta, unrest and human rights abuses have beset the territory since Indonesia annexed East Timor as its 27th province in 1976.

The United Nations does not recognise Indonesia's sovereignty there and is currently playing host to mediation talks in New York between officials from Indonesia and Portugal.

Chinese politics far removed from public despite hints of change

BEIDAIHE, 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.

In their secluded villas, President Jiang Zemin and fellow leaders are deciding China's future leadership lineup and policies ahead of a Communist Party congress this autumn.

Like the emperors who once reigned from within the Forbidden City, China's leaders are secretive — even the date of the congress has yet to be announced. But signs are emerging that they plan to pick up the pace of both economic and political reforms.

For the Zhaoes, the only sign

of the momentous happenings nearby comes in the form of motorcades that which pass occasionally, forcing swimmers to stand back with their towels and beachballs.

"The 15th party congress? Hasn't it already finished?" Zhao asks, peering out from between seashell necklaces and swimsuits in the closet-sized 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 in Beidaihe, 120 kms (175 miles) east of Beijing.

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

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

Hinting at the possibility of political reform, a lone Beijing University professor has publicly proposed a gradual transition toward a Chinese-style democracy — reopening a debate largely stifled since the 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement.

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.



Jordan's King Hussein (R) hold 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. — AFP/UNB photo