

International

Afghan govt reiterates claims

Pakistan backs Taliban

DURBAN, South Africa, Aug 31: Afghanistan's government reiterated on Sunday its claims that the Taliban movement which controls much of the country is being backed by Pakistan and demanded the immediate withdrawal of that support, reports Reuters.

Interview with Reuters. "Our message to Pakistan would be that if they believe they can occupy Afghanistan, they should look at recent history," he said in reference to previous Russian and British occupations of the country.

khstan) recently and just a few days after that the Pakistani support for Taliban increased dramatically," he said, citing United Nations reports of arms and ammunition shipments across Pakistan's northern border into Afghanistan.

17 die in bus accident in Pak-held Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, Aug 31: At least 17 people were killed and 44 injured Sunday when a crowded bus plunged into a ravine in Pakistani controlled Kashmir police said, reports AFP.

They said the driver of the vehicle lost control near Tera, four kilometres from the state capital Muzaffarabad.

Polls in Cambodia Opposition pleads for recount rejected

PHNOM PENH, Aug 31: Cambodia's highest appeals body today rejected opposition pleas for recounts in last month's elections as an unprecedented sit-in protest against the polls fuelled rising tensions, reports AFP.

Communists will vote against Chernomyrdin

MOSCOW, Aug 31: The communists, the largest political force in the Russian Parliament will vote against confirming Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister, their leader Gennady Zyuganov said Sunday on television, reports AFP.

Adulterated mustard oil claims 27 in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, Aug 31: There is no respite yet from the drowsy epidemic, which has claimed at least two more lives in the Indian capital since Saturday, reports IANS.

Malaysia observes National Day

GELUGOR, Malaysia, Aug 31: As F-18 fighter jets shrieked above the dark rain clouds, thousands of Malaysians who came to see their leader and watch the National Day parade on Monday arched their necks, looking for the distant thunder, reports AP.

Death toll in Ecuadoran plane crash rises to 82

QUITO, Aug 31: Rescue workers found more bodies in the smoking wreckage of a Cuban passenger jet Sunday bringing the death toll in the crash to 82, reports AFP.

Three more bodies were pulled from the wreckage of the Tupolev 154, while another passenger died in hospital.

The body of another victim a 55-year-old man, was found underneath a collapsed wall of a house at the crash site by searchers aided by a sniffer dog.

Junta won't sit idly if NLD ignites unrest

YANGON, Aug 31: Myanmar's military government warned today that the armed forces would not stand idly by if the country's pro-democracy opposition tries to stir up unrest, reports Reuters.

Commentaries in state-controlled newspapers said it was impossible at this unsuitable time, to call a parliament.

NLD starts aggressive campaigns or repulse attacks? it said. The article referred back to mob violence during Myanmar's 1988 uprising for democracy, which the military crushed, killing thousands of people, according to opposition estimates.

Searchers continued to look for the aircraft's flight recorders that would reveal the cause of the disaster. Cuban experts arrived Sunday to assist in the investigation.

BRIEFLY



President Clinton, his wife Hillary and daughter Chelsea make their way from Marine One to the White House Sunday after returning from their vacation at Martha's Vineyard.

Floods claim 16 in Nepal: At least 16 people were killed and 13 are reported missing after flash floods and landslides struck the hilly eastern district of Syangja, police and newspapers said yesterday, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

3rd quake in Tibet in 5 days: The third earthquake in five days has shaken Tibet's remote Xainza area, some 250 kilometers northwest of Lhasa, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

Gunmen kill 3 more in Karachi: Gunmen shot dead three people Sunday in Karachi bringing to 11 the death toll from two days of violence, police said, AFP reports from Karachi.

Lanka orders inquiry into accident: Suspecting sabotage Sri Lanka's railroad authority ordered an inquiry yesterday into a collision between two passenger trains that killed seven people and left 20 injured, AP says from Colombo.

Chlorine leakage at HK factory: Twenty-five people were hospitalised and 350 people were evacuated following a chemical leak in a factory yesterday radio reports said, AP says from Hong Kong.

1.5 m marooned in North India floods: Rescue workers overwhelmed by massive destruction. NEW DELHI, Aug 31: Rescue workers, overwhelmed by the havoc wreaked by the floods swamping northern India, could do little more Monday than pull bloated bodies from the turbulent waters believed to have killed more than 1,000 people in three weeks, reports AP.

DPRK rejects ROK offer to exchange special envoys. SEOUL, Aug 31: North Korea officially rejected Monday a South Korean proposal to exchange special envoys to discuss peace on the divided Korean peninsula, reports AP.

Shankar Pandey, a local reporter who lives in Gorakhpur at the centre of the disaster zone. Jeetendra Singh, a government administrator in Gorakhpur, said an estimated 1.5 million villagers were surrounded by flood waters and marooned. Authorities were trying to fly in at least 300 sturdy, motorised boats from Calcutta and Bombay on air force planes. Currently, only 11 motorised boats are available for rescue operations, said Singh, reached by telephone.

Thousands of acres of standing crops were submerged under water, along with tens of thousands of homes. Officials had not begun estimating the amount of damage to property and livestock.

Based on the number of corpses recovered, officials put the number of dead at 119. But residents and local newspaper reported as many as 1,020 dead.

At least one hastily built shelter was itself submerged, said Pandey. Refugees from the shelter swam to higher areas and were forced to spend the night in the rain, he said. Air force helicopters dropped food and tarpaulins to people marooned on their rooftops, Singh said.

Rivers in eastern Uttar Pradesh state continued to rise. The Rapti River, which flows through Gorakhpur, broke its embankment in 20 places. A power station south of Gorakhpur was shut down because of the rising water and a railway station was submerged.

Two thousand trucks loaded with food and supplies were stranded on a national highway which links Gorakhpur to the state capital of Lucknow.

Political crisis in Pakistan Another regional party quits ruling alliance

QUETTA, Pakistan, Aug 31: Another Pakistani regional political party withdrew its support for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government on Sunday but political sources said the move would not threaten the stability of the ruling coalition, reports Reuters.

Moreover, the spring of goodwill is now running dry, and hence we will be last of his allies to leave him because of his attitude," he said. Sharif has the required two-thirds majority in the 216-seat National Assembly (lower house) for the passage of the constitutional amendment, which has been widely criticised by his political opponents. But the situation is unclear in the 87-seat Senate (upper house) after the desertion of three parties from the alliance.

Former arms inspector says US fears confrontation with Iraq

WASHINGTON, Aug 31: The United States fears confrontation with Iraq and has ceded to Saddam Hussein the capacity to rebuild his arsenal, a former arms inspector who quit over US policy said Sunday, reports AP.

He also predicted that as a result of the pullback in inspections, "six months is a very reasonable time scale for Iraq to resume weapons capabilities." Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the United Nations, appearing on NBC television and CNN, defended the US policy, which he described as successful in isolating Iraq and maintaining tough economic sanctions. And he denied that the United States or Albright, the secretary of state, had ordered inspectors not to inspect.

Thousands pay tribute to Diana

CRATHIE, Scotland, Aug 31: A year after Princess Diana's death, thousands of people commemorated one of the most public lives of modern times Monday, while those who knew her best marked the anniversary of a very private grief in the seclusion of their Scottish castle, reports AP.

A mother and her daughter gather their thoughts at a makeshift monument for Diana, Princess of Wales, in Paris Sunday. Lady Sarah McCorquodale and Lady Jane Fellowes, planned a service near her burial site on an island in an ornamental lake. The estate and the museum in Diana's memory closed for the season Sunday after receiving 152,000 visitors.

Malaysia observes National Day

At St. James's Palace, where Harry and William live in London with Prince Charles, Diana's former employees and other members of the royal household were expected to attend a service of remembrance in the chapel where the princess's coffin rested before her funeral. Diana's face appeared on front pages of most of the national newspapers on Sunday, and half a dozen special programmes were offered on television.

Jewish militants threaten Netanyahu

JERUSALEM, Aug 31: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and members of his Cabinet have been threatened by Jewish militants who aim to derail peace talks with the Palestinians, Netanyahu's aide said Sunday, reports AP.

And Israel radio reported that the Shin Bet internal security agency believes that the same militants have hatched plans to strike at the Temple Mount, home to Islam's third holiest shrine.

There are reports of plans by extremists, specifically Jewish extremists, to hurt the prime minister, the defence minister, and other officials as long as the peace process continues and through its completion, Netanyahu's spokesman Aviv Bushinsky told Channel Two.

The threats are especially chilling in a country which was traumatised by the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by an ultra-nationalist Jew opposed to handing over land in exchange for peace with the Palestinians.

Hebron, West Bank, was charged with incitement for calling Israel's moderate president a traitor who should be removed from power.

Israel radio said police were beefing up security at the site, which has been the target of such groups in the past. The Temple Mount — home to the Al-Aqsa mosque and above Judaism's holiest site, the Western Wall — is at the centre of the Mideast conflict. An assault on the site would likely trigger violence and upset chances for continuing peace talks.

According to Zeev Schiff, an Israeli intelligence expert who writes for the daily Haaretz newspaper, recent Shin Bet security assessments point to a civil war in Israel's future.

"They (Shin Bet officials) said extreme right-wing groups could fight one another or the Israeli army, in other words, a civil war," Schiff told Israel Television. "In the past year, there are groups that are more extreme right, their ideology is more extreme and they simply want to end the peace process," Schiff said.