

### Mosharraf to announce devolution of power plan Aug 14

ISLAMABAD, July 6: Pakistan's Military Ruler General Pervez Musharraf will announce devolution of power plan on August 14. Local Bodies and Environment Minister Umer Asghar Khan yesterday, reports PTL.

By remaining within the provincial autonomy, we will make this system work. And by August 14, 2001, we will have this new system in place, the minister told newsmen here.

He said the process towards devolution of power would start from December this year with elections to local bodies in 18 districts. Khan expressed confidence that the new system of local bodies would have positive effect on the economy.

Khan said new electoral roll is being prepared as 35 per cent of the registered voters are fake. National database registration authority teams will go door to door for preparation of new electoral rolls.

The minister said new demarcations would be carried for the provincial and national assemblies polls, adding that the public would have complete right to have say in the process.

### French MPs to discuss nuclear issues in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, July 6: Two French parliamentarians arrived in Pakistan today on a "fact finding mission" related to nuclear and ballistic missile issues, a French official said, reports AFP.

He said the details of their meetings were "still being worked out" but would include discussions on Pakistan's nuclear capabilities.

The MPs, Pierre Lellouche and Guy-Michel Chauveau, are members of the defence commission of the National Assembly.

Pakistan officially entered the world's nuclear club in 1998 when it conducted tests days after similar detonations in India, sparking fears of a South Asian arms race.

### Y'slav parliament discusses constitutional changes

BELGRADE, July 6: The Yugoslav parliament started a special session today to discuss constitutional changes that would allow President Slobodan Milosevic to seek a new term in 2001, reports AFP.

Both chambers of parliament -- the lower House of Citizens and upper House of the Republic -- started meeting shortly after 11:15 a.m. (15:15 BST) to discuss the proposal.

The changes allowing a direct election of the president was submitted by deputies of Milosevic's Socialist party, the Yugoslav Left party of his wife Mira Markovic, the Serbian Radical party of hardline nationalist Vojislav Seselj and by pro-Belgrade Montenegrin parties.

Parliament sources said the deputies, most of them Milosevic's allies, were expected to adopt the proposal.

Currently there is an election in parliament for a non-renewable four-year term. Milosevic, who was elected president in 1997 after a long term as Serbian president, is due to leave office in July 2001.

The amendment has drawn strong protests from the Serbian opposition as well as reformist politicians in Montenegro.

Two other changes propose the selection of upper house deputies by a national vote rather than by the Serbian and Montenegrin parliaments, and parliamentary discussion of the appointment of ministers.

The main pro-government newspaper Politika took the adoption of the reforms for granted Thursday. Its front-page headline read: "Citizens elect the president and deputies directly."

## UN imposes embargo on diamonds from S Leone

UNITED NATIONS, July 6: The UN Security Council imposed an embargo Wednesday on trade in diamonds mined from rebel-held areas of Sierra Leone, in a bid to cut off the rebels' main source of revenue, reports AFP.

Resolution 1306, passed with 14 votes and one abstention by Mali, places an 18-month ban on trade in diamonds from regions controlled by the Revolutionary United Front of Foday Sankoh.

But many diplomats here doubted whether the United Nations could effectively ban the diamond trade that has fuelled Sierra Leone's bloody civil war since 1991.

The 15 council members also called on Liberia, a transit point for many of the RUF diamonds, and the diamond industry to comply with the resolution.

The resolution, proposed by Britain, said the council decided "that all states should take the necessary measures to prohibit the direct or indirect

import of all rough diamonds from Sierra Leone to their territory."

Exempted from the ban are diamonds mined from government-controlled areas of Sierra Leone, but only after Freetown develops a system to provide certificates of origin for the diamonds.

An amendment added at France's request puts an 18-month limit on the ban, but allows for its renewal at the end of that period.

Sierra Leone's main diamond-producing areas are in regions under the control of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), along the border with Liberia.

The embargo passed with 14 votes and abstention from Mali, which objected to language referring to Liberia as a transit point for diamonds mined by Sierra Leonean rebels.

The RUF has gained worldwide notoriety during the course of Sierra Leone's eight-

year civil war for the murder, rape and mutilation of civilians, including children.

"This is a robust and imaginative response by the Security Council to that tragedy," said British Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeremy Greenstock.

"It will immediately make it more expensive and more difficult for the traders to deal in conflict diamonds, some call them 'blood diamonds,' from Sierra Leone," he said.

Mali, one of the three Africa countries currently on the Security Council, opposed the mention of Liberia in the resolution. Liberian President Charles Taylor, once a rebel leader himself, is believed to have supported the RUF.

But Greenstock said: "It's well known that diamonds, by one means or another, are leaving Sierra Leone through Guinea, through Liberia, and the export of diamonds by Liberia by far exceeds the production of Liberia."

### India tests surface-to-air missile

NEW DELHI, July 6: India on Wednesday successfully tested a surface-to-air missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, defence ministry officials said, reports AFP.

"Akash" (Sky) was launched from a missile test zone in eastern Orissa state at around 11:30 a.m. (12:30 BST) the officials said, adding that data obtained from various parameters of the test were found satisfactory.

The multi-role missile, which has a range of 25 kilometres and carries a payload of 55 kilograms and can be tipped with a nuclear warhead, the officials said after the flight-test.

Akash has been flight-tested several times in the past seven years, when India first launched an experimental ballistic missile named Agni (Fire) with a range of around 1,500 kilometres.

Both Akash and Agni, which can carry a one-tonne nuclear warhead, are part of India's ambitious missile development programme launched in 1983, nine years after India conducted its maiden nuclear test in 1974.

India conducted its second round of underground nuclear explosions in May 1998, triggering global concerns of a nuclear arms race with arch-rival Pakistan.

### Blair's son arrested for being drunk

LONDON, July 6: British Prime Minister Tony Blair's 16-year-old son Euan was arrested overnight for being drunk and incapable, media reports said today, reports AFP.

The teenager was found by police in Leicester Square, central London, alone at around 11:00 pm (04:00 BST).

An ambulance was called because police were concerned about his condition.

The teenager did not need hospital treatment, however, and was taken to a nearby police station where he was found to be the prime minister's eldest son.

He was later released without charge and taken home.

A police spokesman confirmed a 16-year-old youth was arrested by officers for being drunk and incapable in Leicester Square.

### Clinton signs UN protocols on children's right

UNITED NATIONS, July 6: US President Bill Clinton signed two documents at the United Nations yesterday, protecting children from sexual exploitation and limiting their involvement in armed conflicts, reports AFP.

One of the agreements fixes the voluntary inscription of soldiers to at least 15 years old of age and forbids the draft of soldiers younger than 18.

The second reinforces bans on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The two documents are additions to the 1989 Convention on the rights of the child adopted May 25 by the General Assembly.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by 191 states except for the United States, where it has faced opposition in Congress, and Somalia, which has been without a central government since 1991.

Clinton announced that he would send the two protocols to the Senate in July. "I hope very much they can be ratified this year," he said.

Earlier, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette declared that "it is our hope that in due time, the United States will also be able to ratify these protocols and, of course, ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Children."

The US-based rights group Human Rights Watch hailed Clinton's signing of the two pacts, and urged the US Senate to ratify both pacts and the convention of children's rights as soon as possible.

"When US soldiers participate in international peacekeeping operations, they may well find themselves face to face with a 14-year-old carrying and AK-47," said Jo Becker, who heads the group's children's advocacy programme.

## Chemicals leak from Bangkok factory

200 children hospitalised

BANGKOK, July 6: At least 200 children were hospitalised after chemicals leaked from a Bangkok factory located dangerously close to a school, reports said today, reports AFP.

"More than 200 students from Wat Praeksa school in Muang district were rushed to hospital yesterday following a chemical leak at the nearby Eagle Chemical Industry factory," the Bangkok Post said.

The students were suffering from chemical poisoning, and many of them were kept overnight for observation at a hospital near the factory in Samut Prakan, a heavily industrialised suburb of Bangkok, hospital sources told AFP.

Many of the students had severe nausea, stomach pains, headaches respiratory illnesses and other problems, they said.

The Eagle Chemical factory failed to follow basic safety regulations including labelling its hazardous materials, turning on its activated carbon waste

management system and taking proper measure to contain leaks.

After the leak, Eagle Chemical did not take the proper containment measures, and the leak persisted for three days, giving off a highly acrid smell, local officials told the Post.

The factory is located too close to the school -- 200 metres away rather than the legal 500 metres -- and it was easy for the students to be affected by the leak, they said.

Local authorities are investigating the factory, owned by Taiwanese investors, and have ordered it closed.

Provincial police are considering whether to bring charges against the factory's owners, and civil suits may be filed, the Post said.

Eagle Chemical reportedly has offered to pay the medical expenses of all the affected children.

More than 1,400 children attend the Wat Praeksa school.

## Corruption case against Zardari

ISLAMABAD, July 6: The government on Wednesday filed a corruption case against former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto's jailed husband for setting up a polo ground at the prime minister's official residence, officials said, reports AFP.

They said the case against Asif Ali Zardari would be heard by an anti-graft court in Attock Fort, 80 km west of Islamabad.

Zardari, a polo player, was accused of using state money to construct a polo ground at the prime minister house.

The court is yet to fix a date for hearing the case.

Zardari was arrested after the dismissal of Bhutto's government by then president Ghulam Ishaq Khan in November 1996 on charges of misuse and financial wrong doings.

He is facing several other criminal and corruption cases.

Benazir, who was convicted in April last year for receiving kickbacks, lives in self-exile in London while Zardari remains in a jail in the port city of Karachi.

## Clinton convenes summit between Israel, PA

WASHINGTON, July 6: US President Bill Clinton announced Wednesday he will host an Israeli-Palestinian summit outside Washington early next week in an effort to break an impasse in the peace process, reports AFP.

Clinton said the three-way summit at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, would include Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, deeply at odds over key issues in the Middle East peace process.

US officials said the summit was scheduled to start next Tuesday.

Clinton said there was "clearly no guarantee of success" although he would be on hand to offer "all I can to help them in this endeavour."

Clinton said that lower-level negotiations had registered some progress but reached an impasse. Prospects for peace now required "historic decisions" from Barak and Arafat.

"The truth is they (negotiators) can take the talks no further at their level," Clinton said at a White House announcement.

"Significant differences remain and they invoke the most complex and most sensitive questions."

The negotiators have reached an impasse. Movement now depends on historic decisions that only the two leaders can make.

The president said that after talking extensively to Barak and Arafat and listening to a report from US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on

her recent visit to the region, he decided that a summit was "the best way, indeed the only way to move forward."

"If the parties do not seize this moment, if they cannot make progress now, there will be more hostility and more bitterness, perhaps even more violence," he added.

"To delay this gathering, to remain stalled is simply no longer an option," he said. "It can move forward towards peace or it can slide back into turmoil. It will not stand still."

Without the summit, Clinton predicted "more bloodshed and tears" in the Middle East, after which the leaders would come back to the negotiating table facing "the exact same choices that confront them here and now."

## German lower house passes law on Nazi slave fund

BERLIN, July 6: The lower house of the German parliament today overwhelmingly passed a long-awaited law on setting up a five-billion-dollar foundation to compensate former Nazi slaves and forced labourers, reports AFP.

The 556-42 vote in the Bundestag chamber cleared the way for a final passage by the Bundesrat upper house on July 14.

Germany, the United States and representatives of the former victims have been discussing the creation of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future foundation, that will make the payments, for more than a year.

Germany could begin payments to former Nazi slaves and forced labourers by the end of the year if legal issues are resolved in US courts, the German negotiator Otto Lambsdorff said last Saturday.

He told the Bundestag there would be a meeting in Berlin on July 17 at which the German and US governments would sign a final agreement on the payments.

Lambsdorff said last Saturday that German firms were waiting for the United States to make good on "a withdrawal as rapidly as possible of lawsuits (against German firms) in US courts."

He said that if the suits were withdrawn "reasonably

quickly, we will be able to pay this year money to the organisations" in the German foundation being set up to compensate the some 870,000 victims.

US and German negotiators reached agreement last month on a deal that would protect German companies against legal claims in the United States in return for their contributions to a compensation fund for the victims.

This "legal closure" is the key German demand in return for the payments.

The 10 billion mark (4.8 billion dollars/5.1 billion euro) fund will come from equal contributions from Germany's business community and the German government.

## Bid to hijack Jordanian plane: One killed

AMMAN, July 6: A Syrian hijacker who tried to commandeer a Royal Jordanian plane to Europe was killed by Jordanian security guards during a mid-flight confrontation and 15 people were wounded, officials said today, reports AFP.

Mahmoud Rizk Deeb was shot dead late Wednesday when he tried to force his way into the cockpit of a Royal Jordanian plane carrying 84 passengers to Damascus, as he brandished a handgun.

Initial reports spoke of three hijackers and even a fourth but a senior Jordanian official told AFP that Deeb, a convicted prisoner who served time in Syrian jails for a misdemeanour, acted alone for personal reasons.

"An investigation carried out among three suspects, the passengers and the security guards aboard the plane showed the shock was absorbed by the cargo that lay beneath the aisle," the official told AFP.

"He had a revolver and an old hand grenade with which he tried to force his way into the cockpit but was prevented by two security guards on board the plane who shot him dead," said the official who declined to be identified.

Deeb had boarded the Royal Jordanian Airbus A-320 at Amman's Queen Alia Airport.

Ten minutes into the flight Deeb got up from his seat and marched towards the cockpit but before he could enter a security guard seized him while another shot him dead.

As he fell onto the floor of the plane the grenade rolled from his hand across the aisle, between first and economy class, and exploded injuring 15 passengers.

Royal Jordanian president Nader Zehabi told AFP that the explosion "opened a hole in the floor of the plane but luckily the shock was absorbed by the cargo that lay beneath the aisle."

## Typhoon Kirogi moving toward Japan

TOKYO, July 6: Typhoon Kirogi was moving north-northeast toward Japan on Thursday morning after leaving at least seven people dead in the Philippines, weathermen said, reports AP.

With sustained winds of 144 kilometers (89 miles) an hour near its near center, Kirogi was located about 700 kilometers (434 miles) east-southeast of Okinawa as of 9:00 am (00:00 GMT), the Meteorological Agency said.

Okinawa, the main island in Japan's southernmost prefecture (state), is about 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) southwest of Tokyo. It will host a summit meeting of the Group of Eight countries from July 21-23.

The typhoon was moving at a speed of 20 kilometers per hour (12 mph) to the north-northeast and was expected to hit coastal areas near Tokyo by Saturday morning, weather forecasters said.



A resident of the area near the parliamentary complex in the Fijian capital of Suva evacuates the area carrying his belongings yesterday. The military has enforced an exclusion zone around the complex, giving residents and rebels until midnight of July 7 to leave the area. Supporters of rebel leader George Speight responded by cutting the output from Suva's main power plant, plunging the capital and much of the country into darkness. —AFP photo

## Talks fail to end Fiji crisis

SUVA, July 6: Fiji rebels holding deposed prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry and 26 other hostages remained holed-up inside parliament on Thursday despite a military order to leave the compound within 48 hours, reports Reuters.

A four-hour meeting between Fiji's military and rebels outside the parliamentary complex ended without bringing the crisis any closer to an end.

"There was nothing new that came out of the talks, they were strictly exploratory," rebel spokesman Joe Nata said.

Nata said the talks were aimed at re-establishing contact after Tuesday's shootout with the military, in which three civilians and two armed rebels were wounded.

The shootings prompted the army to declare a no-go zone around the complex from midnight Wednesday (12:00 GMT Wednesday) and give the rebels and their 200-odd supporters 48 hours to leave the parliament or face prosecution once the crisis is over.

The rebels stormed parliament on May 19 in the name of indigenous rights, seizing Chaudhry, the country's first ethnic Indian prime minister, and his multi-racial cabinet.

The military has ruled out using force to end the crisis but under the no-go zone, the military has the power to commandeer land and buildings and restrict water, communications and power to the parliamentary compound.

Most of the homes surrounding Suva's parliament had been evacuated today but cars and trucks were being waved through military checkpoints around parliament, and people were free to move in and out of the complex.

The military does not plan to fully enforce the exclusion zone until tomorrow night.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer welcomed the announcement of the exclusion zone and called on rebel leader George Speight to release the hostages.

## 'Britain lifts ban on arms sales to Pakistan'

LONDON, July 6: Britain has lifted its embargo on arms sales to Pakistan, validating a number of export licences that were frozen after last year's military coup, the Guardian reported today, citing Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, reports AFP.

Cook told parliament in writing that Britain had "considered the situation in Pakistan and the wider region before deciding on a number of licence applications," the Guardian reported.

It said that of 46 applications for export licences frozen after the October 12 coup, 20 would now be approved, paving the way for the resumption of supplies of naval and other equipment.

It added that although the embargo had been lifted approval would only be given to exports regarded as the least contentious, such as spare parts for ships, naval helicopters and naval planes.

## India fomenting 'war hysteria': Tarar

ISLAMABAD, July 6: Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said today India is fomenting "war hysteria" and described the disputed region of Kashmir as a "nuclear flash point", reports AFP.

He said India was turning its back on peace by refusing Pakistan's repeated offer of negotiations to resolve both countries' claims to the Himalayan region.

"Their leaders continue to make bellicose and provocative statements to build up war hysteria," he told a graduation ceremony at the National Defence College here.

Tarar called on the international community to persuade India to open a "meaningful and result-oriented dialogue" with Pakistan.

"Kashmir is a test case of the viability and credibility of the present international order," he said.

"The world has now come to realise that durable peace between Pakistan and India cannot be achieved without addressing the core issue of Kashmir on priority basis."

The 53-year-old dispute over Kashmir has triggered two of the three wars between Pakistan and India, the world's newest nuclear states.

Last year a fourth war was narrowly averted when Pakistan ordered the withdrawal of Muslim fighters who had occupied strategic heights in the Indian zone of control.

Tarar said the rivalry in the subcontinent shattered hopes that the end of Cold War would witness the birth of new era of peace, progress and development.

He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to providing moral, political and diplomatic support to what he called the just cause of Kashmiris.

## Russia, China agree to create anti-terrorist centre

DUSHANBE, July 6: A summit of Russia, China and three Central Asian states agreed Wednesday to create a joint anti-terrorist centre to fight cross-border incursions by Islamic extremists and drug traffickers, reports AFP.

The so-called "Shanghai Five" group also presented a united front against US domination in world affairs during a one-day summit in Dushanbe, criticising US plans to build a nuclear missile defence shield.

The Shanghai group was set up originally to resolve border issues but its focus has shifted as regional leaders fear a threat to their stability due to a rise in Muslim extremism.

The five-nation group, which could be renamed the Shanghai Forum because of plans to expand its membership, agreed to create an anti-terrorist centre in the Kyrgyz

capital Bishkek to combat incursions by extremists.

The centre "will allow us to successfully, effectively fight those cross-border incursions like Islamic extremism, religious extremism and drugs," said Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told journalists the forum was gaining in importance and standing, a fact underscored by the attendance of Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov as an observer.

"In our opinion, this organisation has become an essential factor of stability in the region," Putin said.

The threat to stability is perceived to come from Afghanistan, which shares a 2,000-kilometre border with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and is accused of

spreading Islamic extremism, arms and drugs across Central Asia.

The reality of the perceived threat was highlighted last summer when four Japanese hostages were kidnapped in Kyrgyzstan by armed Muslim rebels seeking to create an Islamic state in neighbouring Uzbekistan.

The Kremlin last month threatened to carry out air strikes against Islamist bases in Afghanistan, where Moscow believes fighters are being trained to fight in the Chechen war.

Moscow has blamed Islamic extremists in Chechnya for a spate of apartment bomb attacks in Russia last year and portrays its nine-month crackdown there as an anti-terrorist operation.



A man cycles past a burning car in the loyalist Sandy Row area of Belfast city centre on Wednesday, as loyalists have blocked many main routes in the city for the fourth night in a row in support of the Drumcree Orangemen. — AFP photo

## BRIEFLY

**Quake jolts Taiwan:** An earthquake registering 5.0 on the Richter scale jolted southern Taiwan yesterday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, seismologists said, AFP from Taipei reports.

**Four killed in Ambon:** Hundreds of Muslims attacked a Christian village on the eastern Indonesian island of Ambon early yesterday morning, killing at least four people, a Christian activist said, reports AFP from Jakarta.

**Waai village under attack:** A village on the northeastern coast of Ambon (Island) has been under attack by Muslims backed by security personnel since around 6:00 am (21:00 GMT Wednesday), said Sammy Welleruni, an official of the Christian coordination post at the Maranatha church in Ambon city. He said radio reports from Waai, a village some 30 kilometres (18.6 miles) northeast of Ambon city, said at least four villagers had already been killed.