

## International

Assam govt forms high-powered committee on autonomy

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: Assam government has constituted a high-power committee on autonomy by a notification in order to pursue vigorously the state's demand for more autonomy, reports PTI.

The first meeting of the 14-member committee, headed by state Education Minister was held here yesterday in which Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta also took part, officials said.

The committee will broadly base itself upon the report of the Sarkaria Commission on centre-state relations but it may also go beyond these parameters in the wake of the major socio-political changes that have subsequently taken place in the country as a whole, the source said.

The committee would examine the provisions of Government of India Act, 1935 in respect of the powers of the state's and their relevance in the present context and would also give adequate consideration to the Assam Accord of 1985.

The committee will examine the degree and kind of autonomy and the additional power required to promote all-round economic development of Assam.

Laxman new chief of BJP

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist party has appointed a Dalit, a member of the lowest level of India's influential caste hierarchy, as its next president, reports AP.

Bangaru Laxman, 61, will succeed Kushabhai Thakre as the Bharatiya Janata Party President on August 26 for a three-year term, the party said.

Laxman at present is the junior railroad minister in Vajpayee's coalition government, a position he will resign to take up the top party post. He had earlier served as the BJP's vice president.

A law graduate, Laxman was a prominent trade union leader in 1970s.

Dalits historically have been left out of India's power structure. But political parties are now wooing the lower castes to win their votes in an era of coalition politics.

India's President K.R. Narayanan is a Dalit. So is Gaiti Mohan Chandra Balayogi, the speaker of the lower house of Parliament.

Brahmins are at the top of a Hindu hierarchy that divides society into four castes and a fifth, lowest group outside caste known as untouchable but now commonly called Dalits, or the oppressed.

# Security forces move into south Lebanon

KFAR TIBNIT, Aug 9: Lebanese security forces moved into the former Israeli-occupied zone in southern Lebanon early Wednesday morning, restoring a semblance of state authority for the first time in 24 years to a region torn by conflict, reports AP.

A force of soldiers and police officers before dawn headed down the coastal highway from the capital Beirut in central Lebanon to the south and the border areas Israel vacated in May. The troops moved in trucks, jeeps and at least former armoured vehicles.

The first units led by a Military Police vehicle followed by four armoured vehicles carried on two trailer trucks crossed the former front line outside this village between what was the occupied zone and government-controlled territory at 6:10 am (0310 GMT).

The units moved through narrow mountain roads from Kfar Tibni, 10 kilometers (six

miles) north of the Israeli border, toward the main town of Marjayoun in the east. Other units were headed toward Bint Jbeil, a major town in the west.

Interior Minister Michel Murr had said the force comprises 500 soldiers from the Military Police and Anti-terrorist units of the Lebanese army as well as 500 policemen.

The deployment, albeit token in a region that makes up 10 per cent of Lebanon's territory where tension has continued after the end of occupation, will help fill a vacuum in state authority in the zone that has been controlled by guerrillas since Israel withdrew its troops on May 24.

UN peacekeepers moved into the former occupied zone Saturday -- a step that Lebanon insisted on before its own deployment. But tension in the area continues to simmer.

Four people were wounded in the zone Sunday and Monday when Israeli soldiers fired at

stone-throwers and youths preparing to hurl a firebomb over the border fence near Fatima Gate.

It was unclear whether Lebanon would deploy its security forces near Fatima Gate -- the main flash point on the border.

Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss said Tuesday night that the deployment of UN peacekeepers and Lebanese forces at the sealed gate was "an operational matter and is up to army officers to decide."

Murr, the Interior Minister, has said, "Lebanese security forces will not deploy along the border itself as that is the job of the UN peacekeepers. Lebanon has refused to patrol its southern frontier, saying it does not want to serve as Israel's border guard in the absence of a peace treaty between the two countries and between Israel and Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon."



Relatives of victims of the Pinochet regime and members of human rights groups celebrate in Santiago on Tuesday. The demonstrators celebrated the Supreme Court's decision to uphold a ruling to strip former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet of his immunity from prosecution. The sign reads, "truth and justice."

— AFP photo

# Philippine Muslim rebels want \$25m for hostages

JOLO, Philippines, Aug 9: Suspected Muslim extremists holding more than a dozen hostages in the southern Philippines are demanding 25 million dollars ransom for their release, according to government intelligence sources today, reports AFP.

The five leaders of the Muslim extremist Abu Sayyaf agreed to the ransom although it is not clear whether they expect the whole amount to be paid at once or in stages.

The group is now discussing how the money will be delivered to them, the sources said.

The proposed 25 million dollar ransom will cover two Germans, two French, two South Africans, two Finns, two Filipinos, three Malaysians and a Franco-Lebanese woman seized from a Malaysian resort and taken across the sea border to Jolo Island on April 23.

It will also cover three French television reporters who were seized by the Abu Sayyaf when they went to their hideout on July 9 to interview the hostages.

In addition, the ransom will also cover 12 Filipino evangelists of the Jesus Miracle Crusade who have been in the Abu Sayyaf jungle hideout for more than a month, the sources said.

Thirteen evangelists went to



An undated file picture shows Osama Bin Laden attending a meeting with a Kalashnikov on his lap in an undisclosed place inside Afghanistan. Bin Laden is reported to have been funding the Abu Sayyaf, who are currently holding over a dozen hostages in the southern Philippine island of Jolo. — AFP photo

the Abu Sayyaf camp on July 1 supposedly to pray over the other hostages. The Abu Sayyaf later said the 13 were hostages

but on July 27, one of the evangelists emerged from the Abu Sayyaf camp to say his fellows were there on their own free will.

Top government negotiator Roberto Aventajado also said the evangelists would not be considered hostages as the Abu Sayyaf had told him they were in their hideout to pray for hostages.

However three Christian Filipino labourers, seized by an Abu Sayyaf faction last week are not covered by the 25 million dollar ransom demand, the sources said.

On Monday, Philippine military chief General Angelo Reyes confirmed reports that 245 million pesos (5.5 million dollars) had been paid to the Abu Sayyaf in exchange for six Malaysians, five Filipinos and a German woman earlier freed from Manila's policy against ransom payments.

The agreement on a total ransom for almost all hostages came as an aide of Libyan mediator Rajab Azzarouq arrived in Jolo Island secretly on Tuesday.

The aide, Mohammad Ismail, was fetched from a ferry by unknown armed men and escorted out of town, an AFP correspondent witnessed.

## LTTE kills 7 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Aug 9: Suspected Tamil Tiger rebels attacked an army patrol and a bus carrying sailors heading home on leave, killing seven people and wounding 40 on Wednesday, the navy and army said, reports AP.

An explosion that may have been caused by a Claymore mine hit the bus in Trincomalee, about 230 kilometers (140 miles) northeast of Colombo, the capital, said naval commander, on the condition of anonymity. Most military officials are barred from talking to the media.

A child of one of the sailors in the bus was killed, while 27 naval personnel and five civilians were wounded, he said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. The nature of damage suggested that a Claymore mine was used.

Claymore and anti-personnel mines are frequently used by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels against military vehicles. The rebels are fighting to establish a Tamil homeland in the north and east.

At Periyathampanal, in northern Vavuniya, six soldiers were killed and eight were wounded when rebels attacked a road patrol with grenades and mortars, said a senior army official.

The rebels are banned in Sri Lanka. There was no immediate comment on their web site.

## India to pursue Kashmir peace talks: Advani

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: India said today it was still willing to hold peace talks with militant groups in Kashmir, while hammering home charges that Pakistan sabotaged a fragile ceasefire in the region, reports AFP.

"India will not deviate from its chosen course of talks with all those in Kashmir who eschew the path of terror and violence and our simultaneous battle against all those who continue to stick to that path," Home Minister L.K. Advani said in parliament.

Advani's statement came a day after the dominant Kashmiri militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen, called off a 15-day ceasefire.

The home minister said the fact that Hizbul supreme commander Syed Salahuddin made the announcement in Islamabad could "leave no doubt in anybody's mind that it is Pakistan which has sabotaged the prospects of peace."

Advani said it was obvious the ceasefire talks did not fit in with Pakistan's plans in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The words that made the announcement were spoken by Salahuddin, but they came from the ruling establishment in Islamabad," he said.

He accused the Kashmiri umbrella political outfit, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference,

of also playing a negative role and criticised it for calling the ceasefire dialogue a hasty move.

"Perhaps they forgot that Jammu and Kashmir have been in a bloody turmoil for more than a decade. It seems that the Hurriyat group was acting under pressure from Pakistan," said Advani.

Pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen guerrillas called off a truce with Indian troops in the bloody conflict in the disputed territory, accusing India of scuttling the process by refusing to accept three-way peace talks with Pakistan.

Islamabad denies the charge and says it extends only moral and diplomatic support to the insurgency which has claimed more than 25,000 lives since 1989.

A resumption of hostilities following the ceasefire withdrawal would be a serious setback after one of the most significant moves towards peace in Kashmir since the armed rebellion erupted in the Muslim-majority state.

Washington would like to bring Vajpayee and Pakistan's military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf together when both attend a Millennium Summit at the United Nations in New York next month.

## New bomb found in Moscow train station

MOSCOW, Aug 9: Police today found a bag containing four kilograms (8.8 pounds) of TNT explosive in a major Moscow train station, one day after a blast here killed seven people, ITAR-TASS reported, says AFP.

The bag also contained 12 detonators, railway spokesman Konstantin Pashkov told the news agency.

The bag was discovered in a luggage storage office in the Kazanskiy train station, which is the main departure point in Moscow for trains heading for the North Caucasus.

On Tuesday, a rush-hour blast in a central Moscow underpass killed at least seven people and injured nearly 100.

Police said they had arrested two suspects in connection with the blast, both from the North Caucasus region where Russia is waging a 10-month campaign in Chechnya.

## US efforts to continue for Indo-pak talks

WASHINGTON, Aug 9: The United States, which has worked hard to revive talks between India and Pakistan in recent months, expressed regret at the end of a brief ceasefire in the Kashmir conflict yesterday, reports Reuters.

US officials said President Bill Clinton would continue to press the nuclear-armed neighbours to end the bloody conflict in the disputed territory, including during a US visit by Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee next month.

Pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen guerrillas called off a truce with Indian troops in the bloody conflict in the disputed territory, accusing India of scuttling the process by refusing to accept three-way peace talks with Pakistan.

We have seen the report today and would regret if such a promising opportunity were to be lost. We are encouraging all sides to keep the dialogue going," White House National Security Council spokesman PJ Crowley said.

Washington would like to bring Vajpayee and Pakistan's military ruler Gen. Pervez Musharraf together when both attend a Millennium Summit at the United Nations in New York next month.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Supply and Inspection 48, Motijheel Commercial Area Dhaka-1000

## Notice for Registration

Applications are invited from business establishments for new registration/renewal of registration for supply of products to government organisations in the Department of Supply and Inspection during 2000-2001 fiscal year. If the establishments registered for 1999-2000 fiscal year fail to submit applications for renewal of registration by 30-9-2000, then their registration will be treated as cancelled. Detailed information regarding registration can be known from the registration section of this office.

Application form and rules and regulations for new registration and renewal of registration will be available on payment of Tk 200/- (two hundred) (non-refundable) from the head office of the department at 48, Motijheel Commercial Area in Dhaka, Deputy Director (Shipping), BGO Building No 1, Agrabad, Chittagong and Assistant Director (Shipping), Department of Supply and Inspection, 59/A, Farazipara Road, Khulna, during office hours. Application will have to be submitted in the head office at 48, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka.

on behalf of Director Md. Liaquat Hossain Assistant Director (Registration):

## Lankan govt presses on for constitutional reforms

COLOMBO, Aug 9: The government said today it will again present the draft of a new constitution to the Parliament for approval, a day after it was forced to postpone a vote indefinitely, reports AP.

"What options are there before a government but to go for the reforms," Media Minister Mangala Samaweeraya told The Associated Press.

The government postponed the vote after coming under pressure from Sinhalese nationalists and Buddhist monks.

The new constitution was seen as a first definite step since the Tamil separatist war broke out in 1983. It aimed at ending the insurrection, which has left more than 62,000 people killed on both sides.

The alliance headed by President Chandrika Kumaratunga was 12 votes short of the two-thirds majority needed to pass the constitution on Tuesday.

The government and the main opposition traded charges about who was at fault for the sudden departure from the country of 10 opposition Parliament members, causing the vote to be postponed.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who have fought to have the Tamil-dominated north and east become independent, have already opposed the draft document.

But Kumaratunga, blinded in one eye last December in what is believed to have been a Tamil Tiger suicide bombing, had hoped to win over moderates among the 3.2 million Tamils,

some of it with sympathy for the injury.

Samaweeraya did not say when the reform bill will be submitted, or how it hopes to get the required two-thirds majority.

"We will make one more appeal to those members who feel that this war should end and that we should grant more powers to our region."

Someday historians will look back and say that this government did try.

The main opposition United National Party, with the second largest number of lawmakers in the 225-member Parliament, has rejected the constitution, saying it would give Kumaratunga too much power and that the bill had not been offered to public debate.

The government hopes the rebels will respond by Aug. 15.

The two sides have been holding talks in Switzerland about extending the June 2 truce that was due to expire in September.

On Monday, they said they were "strongly inclined" to extend the cease-fire.

The truce has been marred by sporadic violence, and some 44 people have lost their lives in clashes. But it has at least ended the widespread bloodshed earlier in the year which left more than 300 people dead.

The Free Aceh Movement has been waging a 25-year battle to separate the oil and natural gas-rich region from the rest of Indonesia. The province, located on the northern tip of Sumatra island, is roughly the size of the Netherlands and has 4.1 million inhabitants.

The fighting has claimed at least 5,000 lives in the past 10 years.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian military denied Wednesday it was responsible for the disappearance of Acehnese human rights activist Jafar Siddiq Hamzah.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Environment Paribesh Bhaban, E/16 Agargaon Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

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## Poster Design

Ozone Cell, Department of Environment has invited design of poster on competitive basis on the occasion of International Ozone Day,