

International

Three countries to conduct arctic exercises

WASHINGTON, Aug 12: Russian, Canadian and US troops will conduct a joint Arctic exercise preparing for a possible emergency landing by members of the International Space Station (ISS), the Pentagon announced, reports AFP.

The scenario involves an emergency water landing of ISS crew members, the Pentagon said in a written statement Friday.

The training will focus on "crash site management... medical procedures and patient handling," the statement read.

US units including Alaskan state National Guard units will join Canadian and Russian air force units in the exercise, the Pentagon said.

The troops will train at Russian bases from August 15 to August 19, according to the statement. "The field training exercise... is designed to improve the capability to conduct search and rescue operations in Arctic regions," the statement read. The ISS project involves 16 countries, including the United States, Canada, Japan and Russia.

Norway opens palace to public

OSLO, Aug 12: Norway's royal palace in downtown Oslo is open for public tours for the first time since 1920, reports AP.

Even before the summer tours began June 25, all 26,000 tickets had been sold for the season that runs through the middle of August.

"There has been a lot of interest in the palace," says Lars Petter Forberg, who heads the palace staff as lord chamberlain.

The newly restored, 158-room building overlooks the Norwegian capital's main street and is modest, as royal palaces go. Britain's Buckingham Palace, for example, has more than 600 rooms.

But Norway was a poor country when construction started in 1828 as an official residence for King Carl Johan, Sweden's monarch who also ruled here after Norwegians grudgingly joined a union with their larger neighbour in 1814.

The Empire-style building, designed by Danish architect Hans Ditley Franciscus Linow, took more than 20 years to complete. The building was finished in 1848.

It was supposed to be in the form of an "H", but the government ran out of money in 1836 and left off two wings. So now a U-shaped building sits in the middle of the 54-acre (22-hectare) palace park.

All the same, the sandstone-coloured building with its central pillars is a landmark in this city of 500,000 people and a national symbol to the country of 4.5 million that gained independence from Sweden just 95 years ago.

Fears of epidemic surface as flood waters recede in India

NALBARI, India, Aug 12: Indian authorities today raised fears of an escalating humanitarian crisis, warning of outbreaks of deadly diseases in the wake of flooding which has left millions homeless in the east of the country, reports AFP.

Officials in the worst-hit state of Assam, where the flooding killed 90 and left four million homeless, said although people were returning to their homes after flood waters abated, water-borne diseases were becoming a serious threat.

"We are extremely worried as cholera could lead to severe dehydration and at times prove fatal,"

Ramen Saharia, a local doctor attending to hundreds of sick children in Assam's flood-hit Nalbari region, told AFP.

He said there had been widespread reports of dysentery.

Experts say the receding waters turn flood-hit areas into marshes -- an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes. They said other diseases that could break out included encephalitis and diarrhoea.

"A serious bout of malaria is not ruled out and the post-flood management will be a challenging task for the government with

vast areas almost contaminated and polluted with filth and slush", said Nobin Mahanta, a worker with the state's anti-malaria unit.

The Assam government, however, said adequate steps were being taken to prevent epidemics with teams of doctors fanning out across the state.

"We have taken all possible steps to deal with any such crisis and have sent health teams with medicines across the state," Assam chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta told AFP.

The Assam government has put the preliminary estimate of

the damage at two billion rupees.

Suntora Nath, a middle-aged housewife, who on Saturday returned to her flood-ravaged home at a village some 90 km west of the Assam capital Guwahati, said she was facing huge problems.

"We are helpless and have no clue how to rebuild our homes and start life afresh. Everything including our small hut, clothes, two cows, and some bags of rice, have been washed away."

The International Federation of the Red Cross Friday called for international assistance of 3.5 million dollars.

Clinton urges Palestinians, Israelis to resume talks

CAIRO, Aug 12: Praising the failed Camp David summit between Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as revolutionary, US President Bill Clinton urged both sides to continue negotiations and not to lose the opportunity for a lasting peace, reports AP.

"The talks at Camp David were revolutionary in their detail, their directness and their honesty," Clinton told the London-based Al Hayat newspaper Friday.

"We have in the next few months a historic chance to resolve the Palestinian issue. It is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and we can and must resolve it on a basis that's fair, honourable and lasting," Clinton said in his first interview with an Arab paper since the collapse of the talks last month.

But he acknowledged difficulties and that "the parties cannot do it alone."

At Camp David, Barak offered the Palestinians limited control over areas of east Jerusalem, but Arafat demanded full sovereignty over that half of the city, which contains the third holiest shrine in the Islamic world.

In the front page interview, Clinton said the Jerusalem problem can be resolved "in a way in

which both sides' national aspirations can be realised." He did not give details.

Clinton reiterated that he will still consider moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem before the end of his term in January, a possibility that has raised an angry verbal backlash in the Arab world.

"With regard to the embassy, I stated that I would review the issue by the end of the year and I will do so. It is my great hope that by then Israelis and Palestinians with our help will have reached an agreement on Jerusalem that meets their needs," he said.



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (L) gestures beside Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (R) during a press conference at Merdeka state palace, Jakarta, on Friday. Chavez, who is on a series of trip to members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), expressed his sympathy for the plight of the Iraqi people whom he said had borne the brunt of the UN embargo. -- AFP photo

Wahid, Chavez call for lifting of sanctions against Iraq

JAKARTA, Aug 12: Indonesia called today for the lifting of international sanctions against Iraq as Venezuela's visiting president, fresh from a trip to Baghdad, gave an impassioned plea for the world to take notice of extreme suffering there, reports AP.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said UN sanctions against Iraq that have been in place since the Gulf War, were an injustice and were causing intense misery to the country's children.

"Who has the right to really have an innocent child die there," he said in an emotional plea. "Let God have pity on the soul of those who act that way."

"I think the time has come for it to be over," he said speaking through an interpreter.

Chavez said his son, who is travelling with him on a whirlwind tour of OPEC countries, visited a mosque in Baghdad and saw a naked child dying from cancer.

"They don't have the medical drugs they need to treat him," he said.

Indonesia's President Abdurrahman Wahid told reporters after meeting Chavez at the presidential palace in Jakarta that he would visit Baghdad in the coming months and wanted sanctions against Iraq terminated.

"I share President Chavez's sentiments about the Iraqi people," he said. "Because of that Indonesia would like to see the

blockade on Iraq to be lifted soon."

On Thursday, Chavez met with President Saddam Hussein during a brief visit to Baghdad. The trip raised the ire of the United States and Britain who said they were concerned about giving the Iraqi president credibility.

US officials said Chavez's visit to Iraq, the first by a head of state since the 1991 Gulf War, gave the Iraqi media a propaganda field day.

Iraq laid out the red carpet for Chavez, trumpeting his visit as a breach of its isolation and a slap in the face for Washington. Venezuelan officials insist the visit was not about international politics, but oil, the country's main export.

Thousands flee fighting in Sierra Leone

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 12: About 2,500 refugees fled intense fighting in the diamond-mining areas of eastern Sierra Leone and crossed into Guinea in the past week, the United Nations said on Friday, reports AFP.

Quoting figures from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a spokesman said the refugees included 15 child soldiers and women and girls who had been held by the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

"Many of the women and girls said that they were held against their will, sometimes for years, by RUF forces who only recently decided to let them go," spokesman Manoel D Almeida e Silva said.

Veerappan issues new set of demands

MADRAS, India, Aug 12: Indian authorities were today considering a new set of political demands made by the country's most-wanted outlaw to free a kidnapped matinee idol, reports AFP.

The chief ministers of the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka said they were examining the four new demands made by Veerappan, which were communicated to them through a mediator in a video cassette on Friday.

The bandit set a deadline of eight days for a response to pave the way for the release of film actor Rajkumar.

Another video cassette was sent through the mediator for Rajkumar's family.

Veerappan -- who is wanted for more than 100 murders, elephant poaching and smuggling in

a forest region bordering the states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka -- kidnapped Rajkumar and three of his relatives 12 days ago.

Rajkumar's abduction triggered violence by the actor's fans and fanned ethnic tensions in Bangalore.

The 74-year-old actor belongs to Karnataka's dominant Kannadiga community, while Veerappan, 53, is a Tamil.

Veerappan's new demands include referring a dispute over the Cauvery River between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to the International Court of Justice, making Tamil the only language taught in Tamil Nadu schools, compensating women allegedly raped by policemen and releasing five prisoners jailed under an anti-terrorist law.

But Tamil Nadu chief minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi said the demand of referring the river dispute to the Hague was "definitely not possible" since it was currently before India's Supreme Court.

However he did not reject outright the other demands and said compensation for women allegedly assaulted by policemen trying to track down Veerappan had already been ordered by a local court.

Karunanidhi added his government had already proposed Tamil be the only language taught in schools but the move was being challenged legally by English-language schools.

In response to the fourth demand, Karunanidhi said his government would release the five prisoners, which would be "done simultaneously when the matter is settled."

20 killed as Philippine troops clash with cult members

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Aug 12: Twenty people were killed in the southern Philippines when members of a Christian cult clashed with a group of soldiers and policemen, the regional military spokesman said here today, reports AFP.

The police and military personnel were trying to serve a warrant on the leader of the cult in Pangantukan town, Bukidnon province, when machete-wielding group members attacked them, forcing the troops to open fire, Captain Charlemagne Batayola said.

Sixteen cult members, three government troops and their civilian guide were killed in the clash, the captain said.

Two rifles were lost by the government forces during the clash, Batayola said, adding that army troops were continuing to pursue the cult members. Television reports identified

the cult as the Catholic God's Spirit group.

Batayola said they were one of the "Tad-tad" or "chop-chop" religious groups, referring to fanatical Christian cults in the southern Philippines who hack their enemies to death with machetes.

Batayola said the leader of the cult, Alfredo Opsiona, was facing criminal charges but would not give details. Local radio reports the charges were attempted homicide.

Tad-tad cults, known for their ferocity, first rose to prominence in the 1970s in reaction to the armed Muslim separatist campaign that raged in the southern Philippines at the time.

Human rights advocates charge that the government used these cults as fighters, first against Muslim guerrillas and then against communist insurgents.



BCIC International Tender Notice

বিসিআইসি'র পণ্য শিপিংয়ে জাতীয় অগ্রগতির প্রতীক

Sealed tender is hereby invited from interested and bonafide suppliers to supply (1) BAMBOO CHIPS-6,000 ADMT (2) PULPWOOD CHIPS-4,000 ADMT (3) BAMBOO IN LENGTH 20 FT/4 FT PCS-7,000 ADMT (4) PULPWOOD IN LENGTH 4 FT PCS-7,000 ADMT at KPM Mill site delivery basis in two-envelope system. Tender schedule will be available in KPM Ltd., Chandraghona, Rangamati Hill District, Office of the Controller of Accounts, BCIC, 30-31, Dilkusha C/Area, Dhaka and 92, Sadarghat Road, Chittagong up to 26-10-2000 at price of Tk. 500/- (non-refundable) and tender will be received on 27-10-2000 up to 11.00 AM and will be opened in the aforementioned offices simultaneously on the same day at 11.15 AM in presence of the tenderer, if any. The authority reserves all rights to accept any tender or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

For details, interested parties may contact either Addl. Chief Manager, FRM (P) KPM Ltd., Chandraghona or General Manager (Commercial), 92, Sadarghat, Chittagong.

BCIC-666-1/8/2000 Addl. Chief Manager (Forest) DFP-19168-7/8 for the Managing Director G-1441

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, R&H Road Division, Chandpur

R&H Lease Quotation Invitation Notice (4th Call)

- Quotation Notice No : 03/EE/CRD/1999-2000 (4th call).
- Name of work : Quotation notice for realising toll through lease from vehicles etc crossing ferry (with the supply of lubricant and fuel by lessee) in Echli Ferry Ghat under Chandpur Road Division during 1999-2000 fiscal year (for 365 days).
- Earnest money : 2% (two per cent) of the rate quoted in the quotation in the form of BD/TC/Pay-Order from any scheduled bank in favour of the undersigned will have to be deposited.
- Name of offices in which quotation documents will be available : Divisional Commissioner, Chittagong/undersigned/ Executive Engineer, R&H, Planning Division-I (P&D), Dhaka and all offices of Sub-Divisional Engineer under this division.
- Name of offices where quotation documents will be received : Additional Chief Engineer, R&H, Comilla Zone, Comilla/Divisional Commissioner, Chittagong/ Superintending Engineer, R&H, Road Circle, Comilla/ Superintending Engineer, R&H Procurement & Monitoring Circle, Dhaka and the undersigned.
- Cost of quotation : Taka 2,000/= (Taka two thousand) only (non-refundable) per set.
- Time fixed for realising toll : 365 (three hundred sixty-five) days.
- Last date of selling quotation : 23/08/2000 till office hours.
- Date and time of receiving quotation : 24/08/2000 till 12-30 PM.
- Date of opening quotation : 27/08/2000 at 12-00 Noon.
- Date and time of lottery : 27/08/2000 at 2:00 PM.
- Eligibility of contractor : Renowned person/contractor/business establishments.

DFP-19191-7/8 Executive Engineer, R&H G-1437 Road Division, Chandpur

BRIEFLY

Arafat to visit China: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat announced in Helsinki on Friday that he would travel to China this weekend to brief leaders there on the Middle East peace process, AFP reports from Helsinki. Arafat said he would leave for Beijing from Gaza on Saturday. He gave no further details.

Chinese poet arrested: A leading Chinese poet has been detained by police, who later raided a bar near Beijing University and confiscated 2,000 copies of the literary magazine he runs, a Hong Kong-based rights group said Saturday, AFP reports from Hong Kong. Bei Ling was taken away by police in Beijing on Friday afternoon, just after arriving from Shanghai. He had been expected to meet literary friends to discuss the next issue of the magazine, called Tendency, the Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said. When Bei, 40, failed to show up at the meeting his friends tried to contact him on his pager but Bei did not respond.

540 freed from Russian prison: Authorities freed 540 inmates from a prison in northern Russia under an amnesty law commemorating the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, the ITAR-Tass news agency said Saturday, AFP reports from Moscow. The amnestied inmates were the latest of some 14,000 convicts freed from Russia's overcrowded and disease-ridden prisons since parliament passed the amnesty bill in May. The amnesty covers holders of state and military medals, invalids and inmates sick with tuberculosis. TB has infected tens of thousands of Russian inmates in recent years, prison officials say.

Power-sharing arrangement a crucial test for Wahid, Megawati

JAKARTA, Aug 12: A power-sharing arrangement between Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid and Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri will pose a crucial test that could determine their political survival, analysts say, reports AFP.

After months of open tension between the president and legislators, Wahid on Wednesday bowed to pressure and announced the work-sharing agreement in an obvious attempt to placate his critics without inflicting too much damage on his own image.

He pledged to take a back seat, focusing on foreign affairs, national unity and humanitarian issues while leaving the day-to-day "technicality" of running the government to Megawati.

In his nine months in office Wahid gradually alienated himself from his money power base, a loose coalition of several political parties which helped him win the country's first democratic presidential elections in October.

His only loyal supporter remaining in the legislature is the People's Awakening Party, which he helped found in 1998 but which holds just 11 percent of the seats in parliament.

"There is no way that a de facto minority government with just 11 per cent can survive or be effective," political analyst Andi Mallarangeng said.

Mallarangeng said the power-sharing agreement with Megawati would expand Wahid's support base to include her Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDIP), which holds 33.7 per cent

of the seats in parliament. He said Wahid would be forced to honour the agreement unless he wanted the legislature unsheathe the battle-axe again.

The power-sharing arrangement, and the public apologies the president made to parliament, had for the moment pacified the seething legislators but they could still proceed with their rights to "query" the president over the Bulogate and Bruneigate cases and bring about his downfall.

Bulogate concerns the embezzling of funds from the National Logistic Board (Bulog), implicating one of Wahid's close entourage. Bruneigate involves funds given by the Sultan of Brunei to the president for various humanitarian projects.

"In the Bulog case he can still



US President Bill Clinton, First Lady Hillary Clinton and their daughter Chelsea arrive in Los Angeles, CA, on Friday. The Clintons are scheduled to attend several fundraisers in the Los Angeles area as well as the National Democratic Convention which begins on August 14. --AFP photo

Government of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD Road Division, B'baria

Notice Inviting Tender

- Tender Notice No : 02/EE RHD, B'baria during the year 2000-2001.
- Name of work : Supplying of diff. materials for maintenance of different roads under B'baria Road Sub-Division of B'baria Road Division during the year 2000-2001.
- Estimated cost : Tk 10,77,645/=
- Earnest money : Tk 21,553/= in BD/CDR/Pay Order from any schedule bank to be deposited in favour of the undersigned.
- Name of office in which the tender documents will be available for purchase : The Divisional Commissioner, Chittagong, the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Comilla/Chandpur/Planning & Design Comilla/Planning Division-I (P&D) Dhaka & all SDE's office under B'baria Division & office of the undersigned.
- Name of office in which the tender will be received : The Divisional Commissioner, Chittagong, the Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Comilla/Chandpur/Planning & Design Comilla/Planning Division-I (P&D) Dhaka & all SDE's office under B'baria Division & office of the undersigned.
- Time allowed : 45 (Forty-five) days.
- Last date of selling of tender : 20-8-2000 during office hours.
- Last date & time of receipt of tender : Up to 12-30 PM on 21-8-2000.
- Last date & time of opening of tender : At 11-00 AM on 29-8-2000.
- Date of lottery : At 12-00 Noon on 30-8-2000.
- Eligibility of contractor : "A" to "C" general category contractor of RHD.
- Chargeable head : 168-RBF.

DFP-18873-2/8 Md Abdus Salam G-1431 Executive Engineer, RHD Road Division, B'baria.