

Earth Summit Protests mark launch of civil society forum

AFP, Johannesburg

Hundreds of angry African farmers and fishermen demonstrated for more access to natural resources in Johannesburg on Monday as the UN Earth Summit and the Civil Society Global People's Forum opened here.

"We are from fishing villages on the (South African) west and south coast and we want access for subsistence fishermen," organiser Manfred van Rooyen told AFP as fishermen waved posters saying "There are more sharks on the land than in the sea".

Also at the gates to the Nasrec centre south of the city -- where the Global Forum is being held parallel to the summit -- Ugandan farmers were demonstrating against the damage globalisation had done to their communities.

By mid-morning the protestors had moved inside Nasrec, where more than 5,000 non-governmental delegates had gathered for the forum's launch.

Organisers announced that former South African president Nelson Mandela would attend the launch and delegates were dancing and chanting songs in his honour, but Zeldi ma Grange, his spokeswoman, told AFP it was not on his agenda.

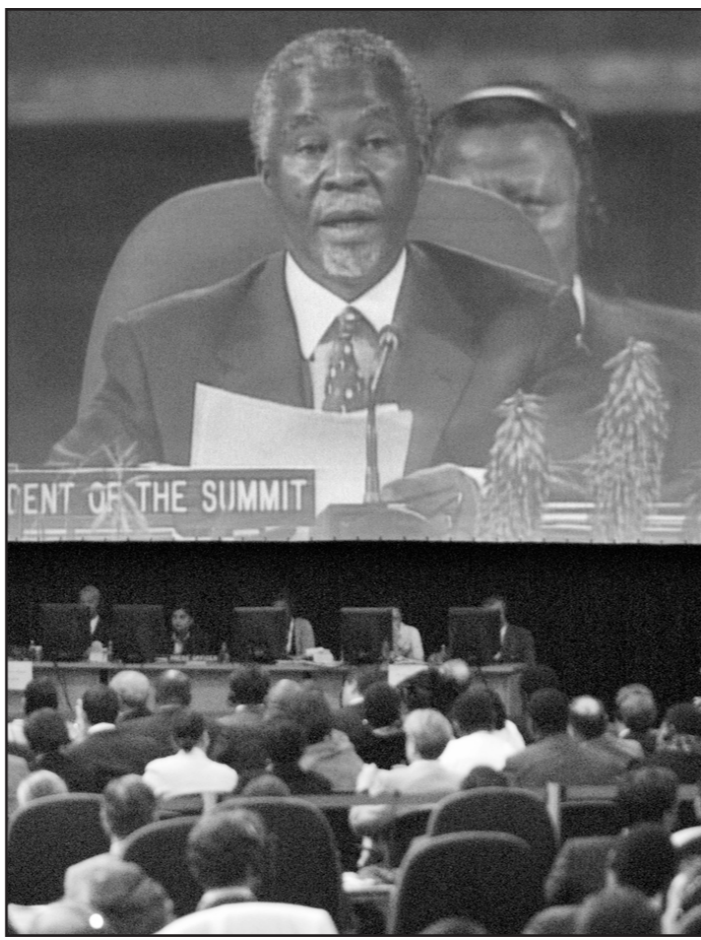
The forum kicked off on a sober note at 11:00 am (0900 GMT), when delegates found out he would not be present.

But, urging them to concentrate on the work ahead, African civil society summit organiser Gordon Bispham declared: "We will not allow this summit to be a failure."

Meanwhile several organisations had started work before the opening, holding a number of commissions and panel discussions.

Acclaimed singer Miriam Makeba launched a discussion by the European Greens and European Free Alliance on promoting linguistic, cultural and other diversity.

"Our languages and cultures are fast disappearing," Makeba warned.



South African President Thabo Mbeki gives a speech on Monday during the opening session of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The world's second Earth Summit opened yesterday with politicians from around the world aiming to reduce poverty while protecting the environment.

PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan accuses India of incursion attempt

11 Indian troops killed in fighting; Delhi claims stopping intrusion bid in July

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan said Monday 11 Indian troops were killed when Pakistani troops fought off an Indian attack on a Pakistani military post in Kashmir last month.

Military spokesman Major General Rashid Qureshi said Indian troops tried to take a Pakistani post at Kel sector in the Himalayan heights on the Line of Control dividing the Indian- and Pakistani-held zones of Kashmir on July 29.

"We have since learned the Indians lost 11 dead and another 20 wounded, and that the commanding officer of the Indian battalion involved has since been relieved of his command," Qureshi told AFP.

"We did publicise this incident... but the Indians denied that it happened." A press release issued by Pakistan's military on August 2 stated that Indian troops were foiled while attempting "an incursion" across the LoC at Kel sector.

The statement said there had been an Indian troop build-up and that "the Indian army had also resorted to unprovoked shelling using artillery, heavy mortars, and other automatic weapons causing damage to civilian population and property."

Pakistani troops "engaged the enemy" in response and caused "considerable damage to their (India's) men and material," the August 2 statement said.

Qureshi said "not a single casualty" was suffered on the Pakistani side. "They were in the process of attacking one of our posts when this clash started. The Indians initially said that there was no clash," he said.

India had since sacked a Sikh commander of a light infantry battalion who led the attack, and was court-martialing him for leading the operation at "grievous cost", he added, citing press reports from New Delhi carried in Pakistani newspapers in mid-August.

India meanwhile accused Pakistan of attempting an "incursion" over the LoC in late July and said three Indian troops were killed in an ensuing battle.

"There was an incursion. They (Pakistani troops) did try to enter Indian territory but they were repulsed," a defence spokesman said.

Meanwhile, India on Monday said three soldiers were killed as the army fought off an "incursion" into Indian Kashmir by Pakistan last month.

"There was an incursion. They (Pakistani troops) did try to enter Indian territory but they were repulsed," a defence spokesman said.

The spokesman did not give a precise date as to when the incursion took place, only saying it happened at the end of July.

The attack was launched in the Machchal sector in north Kashmir along the Line of Control (LoC) -- the de facto border which divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan, he said.

Pakistani troops were evicted within 24-48 hours by Indian ground troops. No airpower was used, he said.

India lost three soldiers in the operation, he added.

According to a report in the Hindustan Times on Monday, the incursion was so serious that Mirage-2000 fighters had to be mobilised to evict the intruders.

Iraq decision is Bush's

Saddam plans to tie up US forces in urban warfare

AP, Crawford

White House lawyers have told President Bush he would not need congressional approval to attack Saddam Hussein's Iraq, although advisers say political considerations could prompt the president to seek a nod from lawmakers anyway.

Two senior administration officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said White House counsel Al Gonzales advised Bush earlier this month that the Constitution gives the president authority to wage war without explicit authority from Congress.

"Any decision the president may make on a hypothetical congressional vote will be guided by more than one factor," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer, who declined to confirm that Bush had received an opinion from Gonzales on

the matter.

"The president will consider a variety of legal, policy and historical issues if a vote were to become a relevant matter. He intends to consult with Congress because Congress has an important role to play."

Despite the go-ahead from his legal advisers, administration officials said the president has not ruled out seeking lawmakers' approval if he decides to attack Iraq.

The officials noted that Bush's father was told in advance of the 1991 war that he did not need congressional authority to act, but nonetheless sought Congress' blessing for his action.

One of the officials said Gonzales also concluded the current president has authority to act against Saddam under the congressional resolution that authorized his father's actions in the

1991 Gulf War. Saddam has not complied with the terms that ended that war, the official said.

Furthermore, the official said Bush was told he also could act against Iraq on the strength of the Sept. 14 congressional resolution approving military action against terrorism.

AFP adds: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein will try to tie up US forces in urban warfare, if the administration of President George W. Bush moves to invade Iraq in order to topple his government, The New York Times reported Monday.

The report, which cites unnamed Pentagon officials and former US government experts said that in anticipation of an eventual US attack, Iraq has already started military preparations.

Iraqi forces have been digging defensive positions for military equipment around Baghdad, The Times said.

'Nuclear arms are weapons of peace'

PTI, Dubai

Brushing aside dangers of a nuclear war, Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear programme, has described nuclear arms as weapons of peace for his country.

"Anyone will have to think hundred times before they try to indulge in any mis-adventure against Pakistan. I don't care if somebody disagrees but I consider nuclear weapons as weapons of peace," he told The Times of Oman, an English daily from Muscat.

"In spite of various conflicts ... there hasn't been any war. Why? Because, for the first time, the consequences will be catastrophic for both sides. So this indeed, is a weapon of peace for us" he was quoted as saying.

In an apparent reference to India, Khan said "our neighbour has deployed more than half a million troops on our border. Now you go to Lahore, 10-km from the Indian border, where troops are deployed ... but you wouldn't find a single person having sleepless nights."

SC issues notices to EC, state govts

PTI, New Delhi

Hearing the presidential reference on the controversial order of the Election Commission on Gujarat Assembly polls, the Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to the Commission, all the state governments and the six recognised political parties.

A five-judge Constitution Bench comprising Chief Justice BN Kirpal, Justice VN Khare, Justice KG Balakrishnan, Justice Ashok Bhari and Justice Arijit Basarat fixed Thursday for working out a timetable for hearing of the reference.

8 killed in US-British air strikes in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Eight people were killed and nine others wounded Sunday in US and British airstrikes against installations in Basra in southern Iraq, an Iraqi military spokesman said, accusing the two countries of targeting civilians.

The US Central Command said the strikes at about 0630 GMT were against air defense radar systems that threatened coalition aircraft patrolling the southern "no-fly" zone.

US wraps up new Afghan campaign: 10 detained

AFP, Kabul

US-led coalition troops wrapped up their most important campaign since Operation Anaconda Monday, after coming under fire twice and arresting 10 people in southeast Afghanistan.

The week-long "Operation Mountain Sweep" in Pakia province, bordering Pakistan involved more than 2,000 coalition troops from seven infantry companies, special forces and Afghan soldiers, a US military statement said.



A Chinese boy pushes his boat from a flooded house on the Dongting Lake waterfront in China's central province of Hunan on Sunday. As the water in China's vast Dongting Lake lingered dangerously above warning levels on Sunday, the 600,000 residents of Yueyang city acted with a relaxed calm that has come from decades of living near one of nature's most unpredictable trouble spots.

PHOTO: AFP

Rains threaten millions around Chinese lake

AFP, Beijing

A heavy downpour dumped more rain onto China's Dongting Lake Monday, leaving millions of flood-threatened locals holding their breath and hoping the waters, which had started to recede, would not surge again.

During 90 minutes just before sunrise, 59 millimeters (2.3 inches) of rain fell around the lakeside city of Yueyang, which had remained dry and mainly sunny for more than five days, according to the local Qilishan monitoring station.

"If it only rains for a short period in a limited area, then the impact on the water level in the lake shouldn't be too huge," said Lin Hongwu, an official at the station, in central China's Hunan province.

"But if it goes on raining like this, the water level could start rising again."

Dongting's water levels had fallen roughly a centimeter per hour before the rain struck, although remaining more than 2.5 metres

(8.3 feet) above official danger levels, the monitoring station said.

But after the rain the waters stuck at the same level as officials waited anxiously to see if they would rise again.

Officials at the neighbouring Lianhuatang monitoring station said levels dropped marginally during the morning.

"We are still worried, as the longer the dykes remain soaked the more concern there is about water penetration and whether some could collapse," said Zhang Huaqiu, an official at the station.

The renewed danger to millions of people in one of China's most densely-populated regions came as another city downstream on the Yangtze, which flows out of Dongting, was placed on high alert.

Jiujiang, which sits on the river at the northern tip of Poyang Lake in Jiangxi province, was on "top alert" from late Sunday, the state Xinhua news agency said.

The Yangtze there was more than a metre (3.3 feet) over danger

levels and expected to rise further, especially if more rain fell, the agency quoted local officials as saying.

Over the weekend, a state of emergency was declared in the industrial city of Wuhan, Hubei province, as the 7.5 million-plus population were menaced by a flood crest heading down-river from Dongting Lake, which it passed through early Sunday.

Monday morning's rain was a particularly unpleasant surprise for the 600,000 people of Yueyang -- water levels in Dongting had steadily receded after the flood peak passed, leading many to hope they would be spared a repeat of disastrous floods four years ago.

More than 4,100 people died in 1998 in summer floods centred around the Yangtze.

This year, 1,070 people have died in floods and landslides around China from June, according to new official figures published in Monday's state-run China Daily newspaper.

Veerappan abducts former minister

HINDUSTAN TIMES, New Delhi

A TV report said that Veerappan has sent a tape with demands to the Karnataka Government for the release of former Karnataka minister Nagappa. He was kidnapped on Sunday.

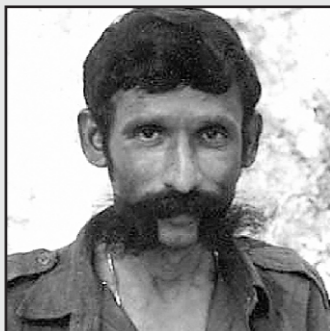
A top police official said additional police forces had been deployed to assist the STF in the combing operations against the poacher-smuggler.

He said police patrolling had been intensified in Kamagere, a village near Kollegal, in the wake of tension following protests by people against the kidnapping of Nagappa.

Meanwhile, Karnataka DGP VV Bhaskar and ADGP (Law and Order) Subhash Bharani have rushed to Chamaraajanagar.

Veerappan, accompanied by his gang, raided Nagappa's house in Kamagere village last night and took him hostage, along with two policemen, who had been posted to provide security.

Nagappa had been demanding the arrest of the fugitive for several



Veerappan

years.

The bandit had shot off a threatening letter to Nagappa about a year ago, stating that he would abduct him, following which the Janata Dal leader had been given tight security.

Another source in the police department said Veerappan might have taken advantage of the situation and struck at Nagappa's house, as the attention of the police had been diverted to the maiden visit by Kannada film star Rajkumar to Gajanur in Chamaraajanagar district yesterday.

'Israeli withdrawal accord still alive'

Israel nabs 2 Hamas leaders in Jenin

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer said Monday an accord on a phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territories was "alive" and asserted that Palestinians were working to implement it.

"This accord is alive, and I have seen the Palestinians make efforts to apply it with results that are not bad, and I am satisfied considering the goals that we have set," said Ben Eliezer in an interview with Israeli military radio.

In stark contrast with his comments on Sunday, when he announced the pullout plan was frozen until the end of the Jewish holidays a month from now, Ben Eliezer told also public radio he was "pleased with the results in Bethlehem" and "satisfied with the efforts deployed in Gaza."

"We are continuing our dialogue today (Monday) while on Tuesday and Wednesday, we will have a high-level meeting with the Palestinians to discuss implementation of this plan," said the minister

without giving details.

Under a joint Israeli-Palestinian security plan agreed upon a week ago and initially dubbed "Gaza First", Israeli troops were due to withdraw from areas in the Gaza Strip occupied since the Intifada erupted 23 months ago in exchange for a Palestinian crackdown on militants.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army arrested on Monday the radical Hamas movement's political chief in Jenin, and also his deputy, during a raid on the northern West Bank town's refugee camp, Palestinian security sources said.

Troops captured local Hamas leader Jamal Abu al-Hayja and another senior official for the Islamist group, Islam Jarrar, as clashes rocked the densely-populated camp, the sources said.

On Monday morning, five Apache gunships and several dozen armoured vehicles stormed the area in search of suspected militants, the same sources said.

Sun-powered fridge is cool news for world's poor

AFP, Johannesburg

For the world's two billion poorest people, the "Solar Freeze" -- a sun-powered refrigerator invented by a South African teenager -- is welcome news.

A prototype of the fridge, the brainchild of 18-year-old student Bradley Matthews, is on display at a Young Scientists Fair on energy efficiency and conservation on the sidelines of the UN Earth Summit which opened here Monday.

"I have created a new refrigeration system that goes back to the basics by using solar energy. It is cheap and affordable for the poor masses, does not need electricity and creates no pollution," Matthews told AFP.

His invention uses sunlight, captured by an array of solar panels, to drive coolant around a refrigerator the size of a large picnic cooler.

It took three years of research and won one of the top awards at a US Science Fair in May.

Matthews' dream is to sell Solar Freeze to rural villages in Africa and Asia at below 500 rands (50 dollars) each.

"There can be a whole lot of

applications from humanitarian causes to cut food wastage and alleviate starvation in rural villages, refrigeration of medical supplies in remote areas, to uses in yachting and cooling systems for telecommunications and air conditioning," he added.

At the nearby Ubuntu (Friendship) Village, the cultural hub of the Earth Summit, the "Positive Energy Store" opens for business, offering patrons a glimpse of how clean, renewable energy from the sun can be translated into practical solutions for everyday use.

The store, set up in a makeshift tent, uses solar panels and small wind turbines to generate energy for businesses ranging from a barber, a juice bar, a communication unit with telephone and computer services, and to leasing out charged batteries to power homes.

Visitors can opt for a solar-powered haircut at the store developed by environmental group Greenpeace, and are encouraged to log onto the Internet using a solar-powered computer to sign an online petition calling for a massive uptake of renewable energy by industrialised nations.



South African student Bradley Matthews shows his invention, the "Solar Freeze", on Sunday during a young inventors' exhibition in Johannesburg. For the world's two billion poorest people, the "Solar Freeze" -- a sun-powered refrigerator invented by a South African teenager -- is welcome news.

PHOTO: AFP