

162 people arrested in Nepal

Police arrested 162 members of a Maoist splinter group across Nepal yesterday for vandalising vehicles and injuring two in a petrol bomb attack while trying to enforce a nationwide strike.

The protesters called on factories, schools and public transport to shut down across the Himalayan nation as they demanded the release of fellow cadres from the hard-line faction, the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist.

The party workers were arrested earlier for allegedly vandalising property in different parts of the country. "We have 162 people in custody for trying to block roads, vandalise vehicles and carrying petrol bombs," police spokesman Madhav Joshi told AFP.

Joshi said two men, including a truck driver, suffered injuries when demonstrators threw a petrol bomb at the vehicle in the southern district of Rautahat.

The truck was one of around a dozen vehicles attacked across the country. No other injuries have been reported, Joshi said.

The Maoists staged a ten-year insurgency against the state that ended in 2006, leaving 16,000 dead.

They are now a minority partner in government but have lost ground since winning a landslide victory in the Himalayan nation's first post-war elections in 2008.



Mexico backs Indian bid to join NSG

Beijing leads resistance to Delhi joining the elite nuke club

Mexico supports India's efforts to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), President Enrique Peña Nieto said on Wednesday, in a boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's diplomatic push to end his country's isolation over its nuclear arms programme.

India's bid to join the NSG is due to be discussed at a plenary session of the 48-member group in Vienna today.

"Mexico recognizes India's interest in joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group," Peña Nieto said, with Modi at his side at the Mexican president's Los Pinos residence. "As a country we have a positive and constructive backing for this."

India is also poised to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) after talks this week between Modi and US President Barack Obama in Washington.

Both groups would give India greater access to research and technology, but China has so far blocked India's accession to the NSG.

New Delhi's bid for full membership, if granted, would tip the balance of power in South Asia against its arch-rival Pakistan, whose own application has been backed

by China, despite questions over its proliferation record.

India made its formal bid for membership last month after winning a waiver in 2008 allowing it to trade in commercial nuclear technology. Earlier Modi also won support of Switzerland on the issue.

China is leading opposition to a push by the United States and other major powers for India to join the NSG, diplomats said yesterday as the group discussed India's membership bid.

Other countries opposing Indian membership of the group include New Zealand, Ireland, Turkey, South Africa and Austria.

A decision on Indian membership is not expected before an NSG plenary meeting in Seoul on June 20, but diplomats said Washington had been pressuring hold-outs, and Thursday's closed-door meeting was a chance to see how strong opposition is.

China, however, showed no sign of backing down from its opposition to India joining unless Pakistan becomes a member. That would be unacceptable to many, given Pakistan's track record -- the father of its nuclear weapons programme sold nuclear secrets to countries including North Korea and Iran.

'65,000 missing from war, insurrection'

Sri Lanka admits for the first time

Sri Lanka acknowledged on Wednesday for the first time that some 65,000 people were missing from its 26-year-long war with Tamil Tiger rebels and a separate Marxist insurrection.

President Maithripala Sirisena's coalition government has agreed to address past human rights violations through independent probes and to implement a resolution by the United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

"Since 1994 various commissions have documented that there are about 65,000 people missing or not found to be dead," Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, a former president and head of the new government's reconciliation office, told reporters.

Sri Lanka also said on Wednesday a certificate of absence would be given to relatives allowing them to temporarily manage the property and assets of missing people, to obtain provisional guardianship of their children and apply for government welfare schemes.

The Tamil Tigers began fighting in 1983 for an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the island of Sri Lanka. Their insurgency ended in 2009. Separately a radical Marxist group waged an armed revolt against the government in 1987-89.

Defying China, India set to export BrahMos to Vietnam

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has stepped up efforts to sell an advanced cruise missile system to Vietnam and has at least 15 more markets in its sights, a push experts say reflects concerns in New Delhi about China's growing military assertiveness.

Selling the supersonic BrahMos missile, made by an Indo-Russian joint venture, would mark a shift for the world's biggest arms importer, as India seeks to send weapons the other way in order to shore up partners' defences and boost revenues.

The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ordered BrahMos Aerospace, which produces the missiles, to accelerate sales to a list of five countries topped by Vietnam, according to a government note viewed by Reuters and previously unreported.

The others are Indonesia, South Africa, Chile and Brazil.

The Philippines is at the top of a second list of 11 nations including Malaysia, Thailand and United Arab Emirates, countries which had "expressed interest but need further discussions and analysis", the undated note added.

A source familiar with the matter would only say the note was issued earlier this year.

New Delhi had been sitting on a 2011 request from Hanoi for the BrahMos for fear of angering China, which sees the weapon, reputed to be the world's fastest cruise missile with a top speed of up to three times the speed of sound, as destabilising.

Indonesia and the Philippines had also asked for the BrahMos, which has a range of 290 km and can be fired from land, sea and submarine. An air-launched version is under testing.

Unlike Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia, India is not a party to territorial

disputes in the South China Sea, a vital global trade route which China claims most of. But India has an unsettled land border with China and in recent years has grown concerned over its powerful neighbour's expanding maritime presence in the Indian Ocean.

It has railed against China's military assistance to arch-rival Pakistan and privately fumed over Chinese submarines docking in Sri Lanka, just off the toe of India.

India is still a marginal player in global arms exports. The unit cost of the missile, fitted on Indian naval ships, is estimated at around \$3 million.



A source at the defence ministry said India was hoping to conclude negotiations on the supply of BrahMos to Vietnam by the end of the year.

The Indian government is also considering a proposal to offer Vietnam a battleship armed with the BrahMos missiles instead of just the missile battery, the source said.

Indian warships are armed with configurations of eight or 16 BrahMos missiles each, while sets of two or four would go on smaller vessels.

A Russian official said exports of BrahMos to third countries was part of the founding agreement of the India-Russia joint venture. Only now India had armed its own military with the BrahMos was there capacity to consider exporting, he added.



UK's unity at stake

Ex-PMs Major, Blair warn over Brexit

Sir John Major and Tony Blair yesterday warned that a vote to leave the EU would "jeopardise the unity" of the UK as they campaigned together in Northern Ireland.

They suggested a Leave vote may re-open Scotland's independence issue and put Northern Ireland's "future at risk" by threatening its current stability. But Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers said support for the peace process there was "rock solid".

She said it would be "highly irresponsible" to suggest otherwise. The DUP's deputy leader Nigel Dodds agreed, saying the ex-PMs' comments were "dangerous, destabilising and... should not be happening".

The former Conservative and Labour prime ministers, who were instrumental in the Northern Ireland peace process in the 1990s, hit the campaign trail there as Remain campaigners attempted to make the future of the UK a key question in the 23 June referendum on EU membership.

It was a message echoed by former US president Bill Clinton in an article for the New Statesman, who said he worried for Northern Ireland's "future prosperity and peace" if the UK votes to leave.

Meanwhile, Brexit campaigners accused the government of trying to rig the EU referendum and threatened legal action yesterday as former London mayor Boris Johnson squared up for the campaign's first TV debate.

British MPs yesterday approved emergency legislation to extend voter registration -- a move that has infuriated the "Leave" camp because many late requests have been from broadly pro-EU younger voters, reports AFP.

Arron Banks, co-chairman of the Leave.EU campaign, said it was "a clear attempt to rig the referendum or, at a bare minimum, to load the dice".

"It's a desperate attempt by the establishment to register as many likely Remain voters as possible. We are therefore considering all available legal options," he said. Conservative MP Bernard Jenkin said the vote to change electoral rules during the campaign was "on the cusp of legality".

FIGHTING POVERTY IN AFRICA

Bill Gates launches chicken plan

REUTERS, New York

Billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates, speaking in front of chickens pecking and clucking in a New York City skyscraper, announced plans on Wednesday to donate 100,000 chicks to poor nations in an effort to end extreme poverty.

The chicks will go to rural areas in two dozen developing countries from Burkina Faso to Bolivia, where the Heifer International charity manages breeding operations and distribution, according to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Raising and selling chickens can lift families out of poverty, and a farmer breeding 250 chickens a year could make \$1,250 US, said the Foundation, which is partnering with the Heifer International.

"There's no investment that has a return percentage anything like being able to breed chickens," said Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft Corp. He urged the public to donate through Heifer International.

"The numbers today in terms of Americans who give to Heifer or things like that is actually quite small, so we'd like to see that scaled up," Gates said.

Referring to the proverb that teaching a man to fish will feed him for a lifetime, he said: "The parable could have been stated in terms of giving somebody a chicken and showing them how to raise chickens."

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Interested candidates may send their resume to salesbd@jakson.com latest by 15th June, 2016

We Mourn

We, Crown Cement family, are deeply shocked to know about the sudden demise of Dr. M. Mosharraf Hossain, former Governor of Rotary International Bangladesh and Chairman of Rapport Bangladesh Ltd.

Death of such a great trainer and a devoted social worker is a great loss for the society.

May Allah grant him peace.

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