

Tamils threaten to blow up sacred Jain statue

MADRAS (India), Sept 1: Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger militants are suspected of threatening to blow up a huge, historic statue of a Jain saint to avenge recent killings of their comrades by Indian security forces, Jain sources said Saturday.

They said a senior Jain religious man, Charukkertti Pattaraka, received in his mail Friday a threat thought to have been sent by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). His home is in the remote village of Sravanabelagola, where the statue is located, in the southern state of Karnataka about 150 kilometres (93 miles) from the state capital of Bangalore.

Dawn workers on hunger strike

KARACHI, Sept 1: Four workers at Pakistan's oldest English language daily The Dawn began a 24-hour hunger strike outside the newspaper's offices here Saturday to press employees' wage demands, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The Worker's Union said its members would continue the protest in batches until pay arrears due under benefits mandated by a government-appointed Wage Board for newspaper industry workers were paid.

The independent newspaper, started by the founder of Pakistan, the late Mohammad Ali Jinnah, before the 1947 partition of the Sub-Continent, is published by Pakistan Herald Publications owned by the Haroon's family.

Karnataka authorities barred visitors from travelling to the village and deployed paramilitary troops. The sources in Bangalore told AFP here by telephone.

They said LTTE guerrillas, a number of whom have fled to India with Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were angered by the killings of colleagues during the intensified drive against them after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

Police have said the Tigers are the prime suspects in the May 21 slaying of the former Indian premier, although the group has denied responsibility.

The 18-metre (59-foot) statue, depicting a nude Lord Gorateswara, is believed by devotees to have "materialised" on a hilltop at the Karnataka village 1,010 years ago.

A number of LTTE militants are thought to be hiding in Karnataka, having fled under police pressure from their hideouts in nearby Tamil Nadu state, where Gandhi was killed.

Sivaraman, the one-eyed LTTE intelligence chief of the LTTE accused by investigators of having masterminded the attack on Gandhi, was finally tracked to a hideout in Bangalore.

Sivaraman and six of his colleagues could not be taken alive despite a long gunbattle with security forces, and killed themselves in a private home on August 20.

Gorbachev purges top Armed Forces commanders

MOSCOW, Sept 1: Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev purged his top Armed Forces commanders on Saturday in the aftermath of last week's failed right-wing coup, reports Reuter.

He issued a decree formally sacking Land Forces Commander General Valentin Varennikov, who played a key role in detaining Gorbachev and is now under arrest, and General Ivan Tretyak, Commander of Air Defences. Both were Deputy Defence Ministers.

Gorbachev has already replaced Defence Minister Marshal Dmitry Yazov, one of the main conspirators, with Air Force Commander Yevgeny

Shaposhnikov, since promoted to the rank of Marshal.

He has also sacked Chief of Staff General Mikhail Moiseyev, who passed on Yazov's order to send tanks into Moscow during the coup.

Shaposhnikov has promised an 80 per cent clean-out of the Armed Forces high command and reforms to make the forces more professional.

Most of the army emerged from the coup with its honour broadly intact although three young men died during an attempt by light tanks to smash barricade near the Russian parliament.

The new commanders were named as Colonel-General Vladimir Semyonov for the

Land Forces, Colonel-General Victor Prudnikov for Air Defences and Colonel-General Pyotr Deynekin for the Air Force. All were also made Deputy Defence Ministers.

Gorbachev also named Lieutenant-General Yevgeny Podkolzin as Commander of Airborne Forces to replace Colonel-General Pavel Grachev, already named as Deputy Defence Minister and Chairman of the Russian Republic's Defence and Security Committee.

Another reports says: The Soviet parliament's future is in doubt after a debate on the failed coup highlighted its inability to shape the country's political future.

The conservative-dominated Supreme Soviet, the standing parliament, has been shaken by criticism of its inaction during the hardline coup attempt. Its Speaker Anatoly Lukyanov, accused of being the mastermind behind the plot, was arrested on Friday.

The cavernous debating chamber inside the Kremlin walls echoed to a week long litany of alibis, accusations and proclamations of innocence by deputies.

When the stormy session ended on Saturday, parliamentary leaders sounded like captains resigned to going down with their sinking ship rather than defending the assembly to the end.

"We are not going to dig trenches in the chamber and grip our mandates with our teeth," Acting Speaker Ivan Laptev said.

Deputies traditionally call the parliament "Our Supreme Soviet" and wear its distinguishing red badges with pride. But their days could be numbered after next week's decisive Congress of People's Deputies, the highest body of state authority.

The Congress is all-powerful as far as union questions are concerned, but that area of jurisdiction has shrunk dramatically since the coup triggered a wave of republican independence declarations.

Some republican leaders, including Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, have questioned the need for a Soviet parliament when each republic has its own sovereign legislature effectively controlling most resources and decision-making.

Speaking to reporters under the chandeliers of the Supreme Soviet lobby, Laptev said some important decisions had been taken at this week's session. But other deputies were less enthusiastic about the outcome.

Attack on Shi'ite procession in Pakistan: 4 killed

PESHAWAR (Pakistan), Sept 1: Four people were killed and more than 20 were injured in an attack on a religious procession of Shia Muslims in a remote town in Northwest Pakistan, Shia sources said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

They said attackers hurled three hand grenades and fired Kalashnikov assault rifles at the procession at Parachinar near the Afghan border late on Friday night.

A Shia religious leader blamed the attack on a government militia forces deployed to keep the peace during the procession held to mourn the martyrdom 14 centuries ago of Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Mohammad (SM).

16 criminals executed in China

BEIJING, Sept 1: China executed 16 people for selling women, rape, murder, robbery and hooliganism after a mass sentencing in Shandong Province in the East, a local newspaper said, reports Reuter.

The executions were carried out immediately after sentencing on August 20, according to Friday's Datong Daily, received in Beijing Sunday.

Criminals sentenced to death in China are shot in the back of the head.

both parties. They can go anywhere, talk with everyone. They are going to investigate in Bubiyan and in Iraq," the spokesman said.

"Their mission will last as long as necessary. Not less than a couple of days, I think."

Kuwait has accused Iraqi troops of landing on Bubiyan island overnight Wednesday and said they opened fire on Kuwait soldiers from bunkers used in the Gulf war.

The authorities here say the captured 50 Iraqis and that Kuwaiti planes sank several small Iraqi craft.

Iraq has denied the report and said the captured Iraqis were pirates trafficking in arms left behind during the war.

Western diplomatic sources in the Gulf believe clashes took place on Bubiyan but say Kuwait appears to have exaggerated the facts to discredit Iraq.

The infiltrators were probably elements not directly under the control of Baghdad or even Shi'ite rebels searching for arms to fight the Iraqi army, the sources said.

Iraq occupied Bubiyan during its invasion of Kuwait and has long sought to annex the island because of its strategic location at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, its only outlet to the sea.

Off the Record

Major appalling fashion example

LONDON: British Prime Minister John Major received a vote of no confidence on Sunday from fashion experts who said he dressed like an old man, reports Reuter.

"There's certainly nothing prime about his clothes," menswear retailers in the British Shops and Stores Association said in a statement.

"His clothes are a complete bore and it's a wonder he didn't keep his suit on to go fishing with President Bush this week."

The 1,500 retailers said Major, 48, who favours sober grey suits, set an appalling fashion example. They voted world middleweight boxing champion Chris Eubank Britain's best-dressed man.

Rock against terror concert

MOSCOW: Tens of thousands of people gathered Saturday in central Moscow, with more 10,000 according to police at a "rock against terror" concert by the Kremlin, to celebrate the failure of last week's hardline coup, reports AFP.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, accompanied by Moscow Mayor Gavril Popov, addressed crowds that gathered outside city hall on Tverskaya Street (formerly Gorky Street) before making his way on foot to the Kremlin, located less than a kilometre away.

The annual city festivities had been organised well in advance by Popov, but this year were transformed into a popular celebration after the August 19-21 coup.

Roads leading up to the Kremlin were sealed off for the first rock concert on Manezh Square, outside the Kremlin walls, usually the scene of mass anti-government demonstrations.

Thousands of people meanwhile gathered outside the Russian parliament, where stalls were selling food, for a rival concert broadcast by Russian television. Thousands of others were at central Pushkin Square.

Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoy, dressed in a dinner jacket, told the crowds outside the parliament that Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Gorbachev were "very friendly," Radio Moscow said.

Rutskoy also dampened speculation that Yeltsin, who led resistance to the coup, wanted to take over Gorbachev's job as Soviet President. Yeltsin "is quite content with his present position," the radio said.

KGB prisoner's sweet revenge

VILNIUS (Lithuania): Lithuanian Parliamentary Deputy Balys Gajauskas, a political prisoner for 37 years, had sweet revenge as he returned to KGB headquarters in Vilnius on Saturday to close it down, reports Reuter.

Gajauskas, 65, who said he had served two prison terms for taking part in the Lithuanian nationalist struggle, now heads a commission overseeing the winding up of the security service in the Baltic republic.

"If, as a KGB prisoner in 1977, I had told them I would be coming back and they would be listening to my orders, they would have thought I was mad" he told reporters.

The KGB is on the retreat across the Soviet Union after taking part in the August plot to oust President Mikhail Gorbachev, who has assigned a liberal chairman to reduce the vast organisation to the size of a Western intelligence service.

Lithuania has suspended the KGB on its territory and the staff left their building last Saturday.

A banner over the road outside reads: "Here was the KGB — den of Lithuanians' murderers." Painted on the road is an arrow pointing east to Moscow labelled "Kremlin 800 kilometres."

Chinese army put on alert

HONG KONG, Sept 1: China placed its military on alert following the collapse of the Soviet Communist Party, reports quoting a high-ranking Chinese military officer said Sunday, reports AP.

Li Gen Fu Kuising said security was particularly high among units stationed along China's border with the Soviet Union and at airports. Air, naval and ground forces of the People's Liberation Army were all involved, he said.

His remarks were reported in two Hong Kong papers, the conservative English-language South China Morning Post and the independent Chinese-language Ming Pao. Both papers identified Fu as the political commissar of the Nanjing Military Region.

However, the official Chinese press as well as Beijing-leaning periodicals in Hong Kong have said Fu was removed from his post after the June 4, 1989 crackdown on a pro-democracy movement. It was not immediately known whether Fu has been restored to his position.

Fu said the 1 million Chinese troops deployed to fight the effects of China's

worst flooding in a century have also returned to their barracks, another sign of the seriousness with which China's Red Army views the developments to its north.

A Western diplomat in Beijing, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also said Chinese military leaders held daily consultations during the Soviet turmoil and troops in key areas were confined to barracks.

China's armed forces number roughly 3 million. The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union has left China as the sole totalitarian giant in the world. Reports from Beijing and Hong Kong say China's hardline leadership reacted with shock to the failure of the coup and dismay at news that the Soviet Communist Party was suspended Thursday and its accounts frozen.

"The incidents in the Soviet Union show us the importance of following the leadership of the Communist Party," Fu was quoted as saying. "The Soviet incidents could not happen in China because we (the army) strongly believe in the leadership of the party."

"I was the issue. I was contesting in every seat," Goh said. "The voters have not given me the endorsement I had hoped for. I hoped for a better improvement over the last election results, in other words I was hoping for a percentage point higher than the 63.2 per cent."

"This style has cost me four seats this time. Will it cost me another four seats in future so I've got to review my style," he added. Goh said during campaigning that no opposition was necessary if his style of government was successful. He said after the election. "The ground rules have changed."



ISLAMABAD: Ex-premier and opposition leader Benazir Bhutto counts off Muslim countries involved in major armed conflicts Aug 31. Bhutto proposed the creation of an Islamic army under the UN's supervision. — AFP/UNB photo

Pakistan has sufficient nuclear know-how: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Sept 1: Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Saturday Islamabad had sufficient know-how to make a nuclear weapon, reports Reuter.

She told reporters that President Ghulam Ishaq tried to fool her about Pakistan's nuclear programme, which he controls, when she was Prime Minister for 20 months until August last year.

She also accused Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government of "political stupidity" over a cut-off of US aid last October on the issue of Pakistan's nuclear capability.

"Pakistan has sufficient nuclear information so that in the event of a threat it can rapidly produce a deterrent," said Bhutto, now opposition leader.

But she said there was no need to have a "quicker capacity" that would lead to what she called more international isolation.

The United States cut-off all military and economic aid to Lebanon, Syria sign security pact

BEIRUT (Lebanon), Sept 1: Lebanon and Syria on Sunday signed a security pact to coordinate police functions and prevent anti-government activity, reports AP.

Lebanon's defence minister, Michel Murr, said the security agreement was an offshoot of the broader Treaty of Brotherhood between the neighbouring countries signed in Damascus Aug 22.

He said details of the pact would be announced after a council of the presidents, prime ministers and parliament speakers of both nations ratifies it.

"I want to assure cynics in Lebanon that there is nothing to fear from this pact on Lebanon's sovereignty," Murr said, apparently referring to right-wing Christians who fear hegemony by mainly Muslim Syria.

Israel also opposed the Treaty of Brotherhood, charging it gave too much influence over Lebanon to one of its main Mideast enemies, Syria.

Hardly two hours after the pact was signed in the eastern Lebanese town of Chitaura, a pair of Israeli jet fighters crashed the sound barrier over Beirut, sending sonic booms reverberating through the Lebanese capital.

UN observer visits Bubiyan Island

KUWAIT, Sept 1: Kuwait, fearful of renewed aggression from its giant neighbour Iraq, is about to sign an agreement guaranteeing US protection, the Emirate's Defence Minister was quoted on Saturday as saying, reports Reuter.

Sheikh Ali Sabah al-Sabah said he would visit Washington soon to sign a pact under which the United States would store weapons and carry out joint exercises in Kuwait.

Fears of a repeat of the August 2, 1990, invasion were heightened on Wednesday when Kuwaiti said it thwarted an incursion by armed Iraqis on to the strategic island of Bubiyan.

The United States, Britain and the United Nations condemned the incident, which Iraq denied. The official Kuwaiti news agency quoted Sheikh Ali as

saying the pact covered military cooperation to keep regional peace, protection "of the two countries," the storage of weapons and equipment, and joint land, sea and air manoeuvres in Kuwait.

The agency said he was speaking in an interview with the Kuwaiti magazine Al-Dirah, to be published tomorrow.

Sheikh Ali was quoted as saying Kuwait needed external protection but he did not support the idea of foreign bases "because Kuwait is small and the presence of bases in it makes it threatened all the time because of its proximity to the enemy."

The agency earlier quoted Al-Qabas newspaper as saying Kuwait and Washington were in the final phase of talks on the agreement to protect the Emirate and the region.

It said American forces would keep a symbolic pres-

BRIEFLY

UK students climb 5,844 metre peak: A team of nine British students has successfully climbed a 5,844-metre (19,265-foot) peak in Pakistan, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said Saturday, AFP from Islamabad reports.

The students, led by history teacher Robin Brookesmith, reached the peak called Lughar on August 17, the report said.

The climbers were James Murray, Peter Rickett, Jonathan Nichols, James Evans, Alistair Hagger, Damien Scott, Roger Pannell, Douglas Field and Danter Morris.

UN experts meet Iraqi officials: A United Nations team of chemical weapons experts met Iraqi officials in Baghdad Saturday shortly after their arrival on the latest mission aimed at eliminating Iraq's non-conventional weapons, reports AFP from Baghdad.

The head of the team, James Knapp, declined to talk to reporters at the Meridien Hotel where the meeting took place.

On August 22, the leader of the last UN mission said Iraqi researchers were trying to develop a technique to destroy their chemical weapons at the sites where they were produced.

Ukrainian Communist Party banned: Ukrainian leaders have banned the Republic's Communist Party for taking part in last week's failed coup against President Mikhail Gorbachev, giving members a week to hand in their party cards, Reuter reports from Kiev, Soviet Union.

But a Ukrainian communist leader immediately denounced the ban as unconstitutional and said the party would fight the ban when parliament reassembled next week.

Deputy Prime Minister Konstantin Masik said on Saturday that the parliament's prestidigit had voted for the ban late Friday after seeing firm evidence that communist leaders had backed the Hardline Emergency Committee which seized power.

Y'slav soldier killed in fighting: A Yugoslav army soldier was killed and another four wounded late Saturday when Croatian forces attacked an army convey near the city of Osijek in eastern Croatia, the Tanjug news agency reported, says AFP from Belgrade.

The fighting occurred after Serbia announced its acceptance of a European Community (EC) ceasefire deadline set for today and agreed to allow EC observers to monitor the truce.

According to the Yugoslav army garrison in Osijek, the soldiers were attacked by Croatian forces as they were riding in an armoured troop carrier near the village of Brijest.

5 tourists abducted in Turkey: Five western tourists were kidnapped in mountains in eastern Turkey on Friday, the Anatolian news agency reported Sunday, says Reuter from Ankara.

It quoted a Turkish official as saying unidentified "terrorists" had seized three Americans, and Austrian and a Briton near the town of Karliova, in Bingol province.

Turkish officials normally refer to Kurdish separatist guerrillas as terrorists.

Black Berets leave Riga: The Soviet Interior Ministry's special troops, known as Black Berets, left Riga on Saturday after several days of negotiations with Latvian authorities, reports AFP from Riga.

"We'll be back," read a defiant white-on-red banner displayed on one of the military lorries taking the 150-man garrison to Pakov in Russia. The force, also known by the initials OSMAN, was to fly from Pakov to Tyumen in Siberia, according to sources in Riga.

The force earned international notoriety for its repression of nationalist activities in the Baltic republics, including the attack on January 5 on the Latvian Interior Ministry that left five dead and subsequent constant assaults on border posts set up to assert Latvia's independence which left many wounded.

Burma seeks aid for flood victims: Burma is seeking foreign aid followed the country's worst floods, Rangoon radio reported today, Reuter from Bangkok reports.

The radio quoted Transport and Communications Minister Tin Tun as saying that floods triggered by heavy rains in early August had spread to nine towns along the Irrawaddy river.

The Minister said the water level had risen to about 16 feet (five metres) in some sections of roads and railway lines. Burmese television early last month estimated that at least 200,000 people were displaced by the floods.

The radio said Deputy Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw had asked foreign embassies to help arrange relief aid from abroad.

Nine killed in building collapse: An apartment building collapsed Saturday in the city of Volta Redonda, killing at least nine people and injuring 17, authorities said, AFP from Rio De Janeiro reports.