

# 'MQM operating torture cells'

KARACHI, June 26: For nearly 15 days Nadin Ahmed covered in the corner of a filthy box-shaped room. Occasionally he was dragged to his feet, hung upside down and beaten, reports AP.

Gesturing toward a gash on his hip, Ahmed said he was slashed and beaten for opposing Altaf Hussein, the charismatic leader of the Mohajir Qami Movement (MQM).

The militant group, which represents Indian immigrants to Pakistan after 1947, has been accused by former members and army officials of operating torture cells in the southern province of Sindh.

"Hundreds of people who dared oppose the party leaders were tortured," says Mansoor Chahcha, a member of a break-away MQM faction. "More than 40 people were murdered on the orders of Altaf Hussein during one month."

Chahcha split from the MQM nearly eight months ago, when the once highly disciplined organisation splintered over Hussein's leadership, which opponents call dictatorial.

MQM officials deny the existence of these cells — chairman Tariq Aziz labelled the accusations "malicious propaganda" — and accuse the army of trying to whittle away their political power.

The movement is a key partner in the coalition government ruling the province, while the army was deployed here about a month ago to quell the ethnic and political violence that has killed and wounded thousands.

The army this week took reporters to dingy, windowless rooms at the end of anonymous alleys, which they said were torture cells operated by the MQM. Neighbors told reporters they had heard screams.

"These cells were also used as MQM's arms dumps," said Maj. Abdul khalik Chishti, adding that army has unearthed 17 torture cells.

# Israeli ballot count announced Post-poll violence rocks Israel

JERUSALEM, June 26: A final ballot count announced Friday paled the Labour bloc's majority in the 120-member Parliament to a bare 61 seats, leaving the right-wing and religious parties with 59 seats, reports AP.

With the votes of soldiers and Israelis abroad counted, Labour, headed by Yitzhak Rabin, won in 44 seats. Labour initially was predicted to win 45.

The results were likely to further complicate Rabin's efforts to put together a ruling coalition by forcing him to try to ally parties whose views on the Arab-Israelis conflict differ widely.

A big winner in the final count was the right-wing Tzomet party headed by Tzomet Chief of Staff Rafai Eytan won eight seats, up from the seven earlier predicted, Central Elections Board director Tamar Edri said on Israeli radio. Tzomet holds only two seats in the outgoing legislature.

Another right-wing party, Moledet, whose platform calls for expelling Arabs from the occupied territories, won three seats, instead of two as in the current Parliament.

One ultra-orthodox party, Shas or Torah Guardians, also lost a seat from initial forecasts, leaving it with six mandates and the other orthodox party, United Torah Front remained with four. A third religious faction, the National Religious Party, won six seats.

On the left, the Meretz party won 12 seats and Arab parties won a combined five seats, in keeping with predictions. In all the left-wing bloc including Labour and these smaller parties won 61 seats, Edri said. The earlier count gave the leftists 62 seats.

The radio said each seat cost about 20,000 votes in Israel's electorate of some 3.4 million voters.

Reuter says from Jerusalem

The worst violence in months has rocked Israel, as Labour's Yitzhak Rabin tries to forge a government with leftists who want a Palestinian state.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's Likud Party, defeated by Labour in Tuesday's election, appeared headed for a battle of succession after Defence Minister Moshe Arens said he was quitting politics and Shamir hinted he would follow suit.

Three Israelis, one of them a soldier, and three Palestinians were killed on Thursday as bloodshed cast a shadow over Rabin's efforts to form a coalition. It was the largest single-day death toll in the occupied territories in months.

AFP adds from Paris: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said here Thursday that the Labour party victory in Israeli elections "will create a new political climate" and help peace talks.

But he said in a television interview the process "will be slow and difficult."

The United Nations chief was in Paris on his way to Dakar for a summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). He gave French officials a UN report on preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping.

Boutros-Ghali said in the interview that "preventive diplomacy is possible, like preventive medicine."

"You can send the blue helmets (UN soldiers) before a conflict breaks out," he said, adding that this would have been possible in the civil wars in what used to be Yugoslavia.

He said the United Nations had won heightened credibility since the end of the Gulf War last year, but that this was sometimes "too much credibility."

"We are overwhelmed by demands for intervention," Boutros-Ghali said, noting that the world body had limited finances.

# Washington plans to help Sarajevo

LONDON, June 26: The United States plans a big humanitarian operation to fly emergency supplies to Bosnia's besieged capital Sarajevo, western diplomats said today, reports Reuter.

But the Bush administration wants UN agreement and European involvement in the plan to help 300,000 people trapped by a Serb blockade of the city, they said.

US Secretary of State James Baker has said Washington seeks a more active role in humanitarian efforts and he has spoken of a possible military airlift.

"Our understanding is that the Americans are very keen to get involved in the humanitarian side in Sarajevo," one western diplomat in London said, adding that the United States has been consulting its European allies about the mission.

"They do envisage it as a multilateral operation," the diplomat said.

It may be 95 per cent American because they've got the resources and expertise. But they want it to be multilateral with other countries contributing, and with UN cover."

The western diplomats said contingency planning had now reached a key stage and it was possible the UN Security Council could meet later on Friday or over the weekend to discuss the plan.

A report from Sarajevo adds: Bosnia's Serb leaders ordered paramilitary forces today to stop artillery attacks immediately on the capital Sarajevo, Tanjug news agency said.

Tanjug quoted a statement by Serb leader Radovan Karadzic ordering irregular units besieging Sarajevo to halt their artillery fire from surrounding hills and to withdraw anti-aircraft guns from around the city airport.

But fighting was continuing this morning despite a pledge by Karadzic on Wednesday that attacks on civilian targets would be halted.

## BRIEFLY

**12m Nepalese below poverty line:** Some 12 million Nepalese — two-thirds of the population — are now classified as living below the poverty line four million of them in ultra-poverty the National Planning Commission (NPC) said Thursday, reports AFP.

With the current pace of the development works and targeting the number of the poor will further increase in the future the NPC task force on poverty alleviation said in a press release.

The NPC stressed the need for a quantum-leap in the level of targeted activities designed to alleviate poverty effectively.

"With serious commitment on the part of the government the goal of poverty eradication has to be achieved in the next fifteen years," the press release said.

**Typhoon hits Philippines:** Storm warnings were raised Friday in the northern and eastern Philippines as Typhoon Bobbie, packing winds of 150 kph (93 mph), headed toward the northern tip of the main island of Luzon, reports AP from Manila.

The Manila weather bureau said the typhoon was centred early Friday about 400 kilometers (250 miles) east of Casiguran, about 170 kilometers (140 miles) northwesterly direction at about 19 kph (12 mph), the weather service said.

Storm warnings were raised over five provinces of north-eastern Luzon. Forecasters warned of gusty winds and rough seas.

About 20 typhoons and tropical storms strike the Philippines each year.

**New drug approved in Shanghai:** Natural leucocyte mediator-2, a new genetically engineered drug, has been officially approved by medical experts in Shanghai, reports Xinhua from Shanghai.

The medicine was developed by scientists at the Shanghai Biochemical Institute under the auspices of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The new medicine can be used to treat patients with chronic Hepatitis-B and some tumors as well as leprosy and tuberculosis.

**Accident claims 16 in Indonesia:** A bus overturned on a tollway near Jakarta killing 16 passengers and injuring 42 others, the Kompas Daily said Friday, reports AFP from Jakarta.

The bus, carrying a group of teachers of a Muslim Education Foundation who were returning from a visit to Yogyakarta in central Java, hit the central dividing barrier on the Kakaarta-Cikampek tollway Thursday, Kompas said.

The vehicle overturned and crashed into the concrete base of a flyover, the daily added.

A total of 16 people were killed instantly while 42 other passengers, some of them gravely injured, were rushed to a nearby hospital in Bekasi, Kompas said.

**Army kills 5 in Kashmir:** Army and paramilitary troops opened fire Thursday on anti-Indian demonstrators, killing at least five people and wounding 22 others in a town of Kashmir, police said, reports AP from Srinagar.

However, residents said seven people, including five women, were killed in the firing in Baramullah, but this could not be independently confirmed.

Amar Kapoor, a senior state police official, said the troops opened fire to retaliate for a burst of automatic gunfire by Muslim militants who had mingled with the demonstrators.

The people, shouting slogans against India, were protesting the overnight arrests of about 25 suspected militants in the town, said Kapoor, an additional director general.

**Explosion rocks Kuwait city:** An explosion rocked Kuwait city Thursday killing a man in the home of a member of the ruling family, the official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said, reports Reuter from Kuwait.

The blast killed a farmer working in the house of Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Nasser a member of the ruling family, KUNA said. It did not identify the victims, KUNA said, the blast occurred between the houses of Sheikh Mubarak and the dean of the Medical College Helal Al-Syer. Blew a crate on the ground wrecked cars and broke the windows of surrounding houses.

Crown Prince Seikh Saad Al-Abdulla Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Prime Minister inspected the site and told KUNA it was "a crime directed against every citizen looking for security and stability."

It cannot now identify the number of persons behind the incident and those benefiting from it," he added.



MANILA: Outgoing President Corazon Aquino (R), escorted by armed forces chief General Lisandro Abadia, bids goodbye to soldiers during a farewell honors at Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters Thursday. Aquino will handover the presidency to successor President-elect Fidel Ramos June 30. — AFP/UNB photo

## Anti-government protest in Seoul: 30 held

SEOUL, June 26: More than 30 South Korean students were arrested in the central city of Chongju today after staging an anti-government protest, Yonhap news agency said, reports Reuter.

The protesters gathered outside an office of the ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) to demand that president Roh Tae-Woo revoke a decision to postpone local elections, Yonhap said.

It said two students were injured after a scuffle with riot police who tried to break up the protest.

On Monday about 100 students raided the DLP headquarters in Seoul to demand that the government hold the elections.

## Kurdish rebels storm mosque: 10 killed

ANKARA, Turkey, June 26: Kurdish guerrillas stormed a mosque in Southeastern Turkey, forced the worshippers out and then fired on them, killing 10 people, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported Friday, reports AP.

About 30 rebels armed with automatic rifles took over the mosque in Yolac village in Diyarbakir province during evening prayers Thursday, the agency said.

The report said the rebels ordered the villagers out of the mosque, tied their hands and forced them to lay on the ground, then opened fire.

## First Palestinian film festival in Israel

JERUSALEM, June 26: Mohammed Barghuthi usually goes home exhausted from his dishwasher's job. But this week, he went to the movies every day, indulging his dreams of becoming a director while attending Jerusalem's first Palestinian film festival, reports AP.

The festival was Barghuthi's first chance to watch Palestinian films because movie houses in the occupied lands, Jerusalem and Arab cities in Israel have all closed in recent years.

"These films rarely had contact with their public. We wanted to make possible a meeting between the people and their cinema," said festival producer George Khleifi.

The weeklong festival which ends Saturday screened 25 films at east Jerusalem's Hakawati and Kasbah theaters, accompanied by seminars and roundtable discussions.

More than a dozen Palestinian directors came, including some from abroad who saw their old homes for the first time since childhood.

Director Marwan Salamch, whose parents left Safed in 1948, was born in Algeria and has worked in Germany for the last 16 years. Last year he obtained German citizenship, making it possible to visit Israel.

"This is an incredible opportunity for me. This is my first time in Jerusalem, in Palestine. At the end of the week I will visit Safed, my parents' home," Salamch said.

Most films are documentaries and several deal with the nearly five-year Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation.

"Palestinian Diaries," in which three young West Bank Palestinians filmed their lives, portrays the Palestinian experience under military occupation.

The movie drew rave reviews, but also prompted questions about whether Palestinian film makers are too preoccupied with one issue.

"We have lived under occupation for 25 years. There are other things happening here besides the nationalist struggle," Sajadeh Abu Yusef a young Palestinian woman, told directors at a roundtable discussion last Monday.

While many agreed that films need to deal with broader issues, other stressed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the fire that fuels the art.

Some directors complained about obstacles they face as Palestinian artists.

Ziad Darwish, who is from the Israeli coastal town of Akko and lives in Jerusalem, said his films were refused entry into an Egyptian film festival because he holds Israeli citizenship.

Darwish also said his name does not appear on films dealing with the uprising because he fears harassment by the Israeli army.

## Ramos names six-members of cabinet

MANILA, June 26: President-elect Fidel Ramos on Friday named six members of his new Cabinet but deferred announcement on portfolios involving the economy which he has identified as his first priority, reports AP.

Ramos, who takes office Tuesday, also said he would review all aspects of relations with the United States during his first 100 days but refused to discuss details.

The 64-year-old West Point graduate and former defence secretary said he had invited US Defense Secretary Richard Cheney to be his personal guest at his inauguration.

US officials said Peace Corps director Elaine Chao will represent the United States at the ceremony.

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## Fresh battle in Kabul claims 20

KABUL, June 26: At least 20 people have been killed in fierce fighting for control of the Interior Ministry in Kabul, an Uzbek Militia spokesman said Friday, reports AP.

"Twenty people belonging to both sides were killed and six vehicles destroyed in the fighting at the Interior Ministry," the spokesman said.

"There has been a lot of damage," he said as the sound of heavy gunfire and loud explosions could be heard in the early hours of Friday morning.

The official, a ranking general, said the fighting in the city central was between a Shiite faction of the Hezb-e-Islami and Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood's Jamiat-e-Islami forces.

## Sikh militants kill nine in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, June 26: Sikh militants opened fire indiscriminately in a crowded market in the northwestern state of Punjab, killing nine people, police said Friday, reports AP.

The five militants arrived on foot and opened fire with AK-47 Chinese assault rifles Thursday night at shoppers in Kila Raipur, 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of the capital, Chandigarh, said a spokesman at the police headquarters.

They fled before police arrived, said the spokesman, who cannot be identified under briefing rules.

## Off the Record

**Perot offered Bush a job**

NEW YORK: The wife of President George Bush in a television interview to be aired Friday says undeclared presidential candidate Ross Perot once offered her husband a job and his refusal may have triggered bad feeling between the two men, reports Reuter.

In an interview with Barbara Walters on the ABC television programme "20/20" Barbara Bush said she was outraged at reports Perot might have investigated her husband and her sons, adding: "I am not sure if I feel outraged or violated."

"I feel slightly violated. I don't feel like that should sort of happen in America."

It was then in the interview that she disclosed that Perot once offered her husband a job saying she found the probe reports strange because Perot had spent a day with the Bush family and "at one time not too long ago offered George a big job."

Mrs Bush said her husband did not consider taking the job and when pressed as to what it was, she said: "I think it was to head his (Perot's) oil company or something."

"Maybe people don't say 'no' to Ross Perot and maybe that's why he feels this way."

## Secret wedding

WASHINGTON: The White House insists the first daughter's wedding this weekend is a quiet family affair. And the Bushes are going to great lengths to keep it that way, reports AP.

But tidbits of detail about Saturday's ceremony are leaking out all over town as the Bushes prepare for the second wedding of their only daughter, Dorothy LeBlond, to Bobby Koch, former top aide to Democratic House Majority leader Richard Gephardt.

The Guest List: It's short on Bush political aides and associates. But it's long on Democrats. Vice President Dan Quayle and his wife aren't invited and neither are Secretary of State James A Baker III and his wife, Susan, longtime Bush friends from Texas.

"It's a little family wedding, private and personal. That's all, that's all, that's all," Mrs Bush said.

Those who made the cut include White House Chief of Staff Samuel Skinner, whose wife, Honey, is a good friend of LeBlond's, and former Rep Tony Coelho, for whom Koch once worked.

## Royal family enjoys taxpayers' money

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II and the British royal family are to face the first investigation by members of parliament since 1688 into their value for money, the Guardian newspaper reported Friday, reports AP.

MPs on a parliamentary committee have asked auditor-general Sir John Bourn to prepare a paper on how an inquiry can be launched into the royal finances and he is due to report back next week, the newspaper said.

Alan Williams, Labour MP and Liberal Democrat MP Robert MacLennan have questioned whether the 1.6 million pounds (2.9 million dollars) a year voted by parliament for the civil list — the royal family's income — is good value for taxpayers.

Williams said it was "absolutely incongruous" that parliament had never used its right obtained during the reign of King Charles into investigate whether the country received value for money from the monarchy.

"I think the public are becoming aware that some members of the royal family are receiving taxpayers' money for little or no public work," he said.

## Boozy bees

BRISBANE: European bees transplanted to the tropics could find themselves locked out of the hive when they weave home drunk on fermented nectar — if they don't crash into a tree or drown in a dam first, reports AP.

A research team has found temperate-area strains of honey bees that normally consume enough protein-rich nectar to last them through a European winter are given an added buzz in the tropics, where the nectar can ferment into a type of alcohol.

"If they do make it back (to the hive), their altered social behaviour may mean they are not accepted by other individuals in the hive," said Errol Hassan, senior lecturer in plant protection at the university of Queensland's Gatton College.

"However, we have observed that after drinking fermented nectar, many bees can't find their way back or crash into trees or drown in dams."

## New Israel govt urged to be flexible in ME talks

BEIJING, June 26: China called today on the new Israeli government to show flexibility in the ongoing Middle East peace talks, reports AP.

"We hope that the new government to be formed after the general election will adopt a flexible and a pragmatic attitude during the peace process of the Middle East, so as to contribute to an early realisation of peace," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin said in his weekly press conference.

Following victory in Tuesday's voting, Labour Party leader Yitzhak Rabin pledged to give new impetus to the peace process in the long-troubled region.

# A child dies every 3 seconds in Somalia

WASHINGTON, June 26: While government fret over what to do about the carnage in Bosnia, another humanitarian crisis, largely unnoticed but of far greater magnitude, is occurring in East Africa, reports AP.

Estimates of the daily death toll there fluctuate wildly. But it seems apparent that Somalia can only envy what passes for a bad day in Bosnia.

"I've never seen a worse situation than in Somalia," says Mohamed Sahnoun, a United Nations undersecretary and special representative to Somalia.

Somalia's plight stems from a vicious struggle between rival factions of the United Somali

Congress, coupled with acute shortages of food and medicines. Like Bosnia, the war is taking place for the most part in an urban setting, which contributes to the large number of casualties.

Much of the weaponry being used was supplied by the United States during the decade-long period in which the two countries were Cold War allies.

Sahnoun, who just spent a week in Somalia, says as many as 5,000 children are dying a day, or about three per minute.

Three weeks ago, Andrew Natsios of the US Agency for International Development estimated that 2,000 people a day mostly children were dy-

ing in camps around Mogadishu, Somalia's war-ravaged capital.

But some officials believe those estimates are too high.

A Red Cross official estimated between 100 and 200 die each day in Mogadishu, while a World Vision official put the figure at between 30, and 40 a day. The latter official acknowledged, however, that the toll could be higher.

The huge disparity in casualty estimates reflects the paucity of hard information about Somalia. The security situation is such that Western diplomats have long since withdrawn from Somalia and there are only a few dozen foreign relief workers — all oper-

ating under appalling conditions.

"1991 is the year Somalia died," laments Rakiya Omaar, a Somali who is executive director of the human rights group Africa Watch. It was on November 17 last year that full-scale civil war broke out in Somalia.

Writing in a recent edition of Current History, Omaar says the two factions involved in the fighting have been extraordinarily callous, "attacking hospitals and interfering with the work of doctors, nurses and aides."

"In the next few months, the already staggering number of casualties will be dwarfed by the tens of thousands of peo-

ple, especially children, who are likely to die from malnutrition and disease," he writes.

James Kunder, head of the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, agrees the international response to the plight of Somalis has been inadequate. He blames the "absolute breakdown in civil and social order in the country."

"I think this kind of situation is the most difficult possible situation for the outside world to respond to," he says.

Underscoring the difficulty, thieves on two occasions in recent weeks looted emergency supplies, including infant formula, as they arrived at Mogadishu airport. The United States and the European

Community have earmarked 100,000 tons of food for Somalia this year.

Somalis have been dying in relative anonymity because, Kunder says, the danger is such that foreign reporters, in contrast to Bosnia, have generally stayed away.

Kunder also believes Western public opinion is less receptive to large-scale relief programmes than it was a few years ago.

Sahnoun agrees.

"I think there has been an erosion of human sympathy. People are overwhelmed by the human tragedies around the world," he said. "Much more needs to be done."

## CIS Prime Ministers summit begins

MOSCOW, June 26: Commonwealth of Independent States prime ministers open a summit meeting here Friday to discuss military, economic and environmental questions, reports AP.

On the military agenda the status of frontier guards well as assistance to soldiers and their families.

Yegor Gaidar, the Russian Prime Minister, is to put forward a plan aimed at maintaining the Russian currency, the ruble, as a medium of exchange, according to the Tass news agency.

Among the environmental problems to be discussed are the Ural Caspian seas and the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Ukraine.