

Pak crackdown on Islamic militants continues

Hundreds of Arabs arrested

ISLAMABAD, Apr 8: Pakistan has arrested hundreds of Arab nationals in a crackdown on suspected Islamic militants who are in the country illegally, reports AP.

Police in the frontier city of Peshawar, at the foot of the famed Khyber pass, began the crackdown Tuesday. They have been raiding offices of Arab humanitarian groups and homes in Peshawar's posh university district.

The detainees were crowded into Pakistan's mud-walled prisons Wednesday.

According to Interior Minister Shujaat Hussain, police are trying to flush out militant Arab nationals hiding in Pakistan.

"We cannot allow any terrorist activity on the soil of Pakistan," Hussain said.

In the early 1980s, thousands of Arabs came to Pakistan to join what they called a holy war against the then-Communist regime in neighbouring Afghanistan. A year ago, when US-backed rebels overran Kabul and ousted the old Communist regime, many of the Arabs stayed behind.

According to several Afghan and Arab sources, some had links to radical Islamic groups, including the Al-Gammat-e-Islamiya, or Islamic Group, led by Egyptian cleric Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman.

Several of the suspects in the World Trade Center bombing in New York had links to the blind cleric.

Two top leaders of Al-Gammat are reportedly living in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, said Arab and Afghan sources.

The Interior Minister said any Arab nationals arrested and found to be wanted in their home countries would be deported.

The Arabs arrested in Peshawar are from Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Israel's occupied West Bank.

The governments of Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Tunisia have sent Pakistan a list of fugitives, many of whom are believed to be in either Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Many of the Arabs in Afghanistan are aligned to either radical fundamentalist leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar or orthodox rebel leader Abdur Rasool Sayyaf.

Last week at a meeting in Bonn, Germany, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

promised Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak a crackdown on militant Arab fundamentalists seeking refuge in his country.

But many people question Pakistan's ability to follow through on that promise.

The porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is difficult to patrol, said interior Minister Hussain, who has issued an order outlawing foreigners from the semi-autonomous tribal area.

Pakistan fears the presence of Arab militants could land it on Washington's list of states sponsoring terrorism.

But Hussain said even Washington embraced fundamentalist Arabs during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

"Now the West will have to be patient while we try to get rid of them," he said.



Detained Arabs cover their faces behind bars Wednesday after Pakistani police arrested them for identity verification. —AFP/UNB photo

Anand surrenders to criminal court

BANGKOK, Apr 8: Former Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachon surrendered to the criminal court to face charges which could see him jailed if convicted, a court official said here today, reports AFP.

Anand and three former top Justice Ministry officials were released on bail of 50,000 baht (2,000 dollars) each shortly after appearing at Bangkok's criminal court late Wednesday, the official said.

Charges against Anand and the three were filed last month by a former judge who claims that Anand, while serving as Prime Minister, blocked his appointment to a senior judicial post.

The former judge, Pravit Khamparat, claims the alleged blocking of his appointment

caused him considerable damage.

Anand, 60, a diplomat-turned-businessman who served two terms as Prime Minister between 1991 and 1992, is one of Thailand's most respected public figures.

A friends of Anand Group was formed in February to offer him support. Thousands of people, including businessmen, academics and other prominent members of Thai society, have joined the group.

Leading business groups, the Bankers Association, the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Industry Confederation of Thailand have also joined the Anand support group.

The former Prime Minister is due to make his first appearance in court on April 21.

Kim sacks 2 generals

SEOUL, Apr 8: South Korean President Kim Young-Sam further tightened his grip over the military today by retiring two four-star generals, one of them as known member of a secret army fraternity linked to past coups, a spokesman said, reports AFP.

General Koo Chang-Hoe, commander of the third army and a member of the Secret Hand Society, and General Kim Yeun-Gak, Commander of the Second Army, were both ordered into retirement, the Defence Ministry spokesman said.

The move follows last week's sacking of two three-star generals in charge of units linked to a 1979 coup. Kim on March 8 replaced the army chief of staff and the head of military intelligence, which in the past conducted political surveillance.

Kim, a former opposition leader who joined the ruling

party in 1990, in February took office as South Korea's first civilian president in three decades with a pledge to root out the country's military culture.

Koo was replaced by Lieutenant General Yun Yong-Nam, while Kim was replaced by Lieutenant General Kim Jin-Sun, both men received promotions to full general in what analysts viewed as a bid by the president to ensure their loyalty.

The spokesman said the reshuffle had been scheduled for June but was carried out sooner due to last week's sacking of the commanders of the capital defence command and the army special warfare command.

He added that another reshuffle affecting commanders of army corps and divisions would be announced later this month.

Pindi appeals to Kabul for release of Soviet POWs

ISLAMABAD, Apr 8: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appealed to Afghan leaders and Mujahideen groups on Wednesday to free all former Soviet Prisoners of War, reports Reuter.

He issued the appeal after a breakfast meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who arrived on Tuesday for a three-day visit. That he said he would use to seek Islamabad's help for the release of prisoners.

Sharif assured Kozyrev he "would leave no stone unturned" for the earliest possible release of prisoners captured during the 10 years of Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Since the "War of Liberation in Afghanistan has ended, it is

obligatory under the dictates of Islam, humanitarian principles and international law to release all the Prisoners of War", Sharif said.

This humanitarian issue "should not be tied to other issues", he said. Mujahideen groups have demanded war reparations as a condition for handing back the prisoners.

Pakistan and Russia set up a joint commission to coordinate action in the matter, the Pakistani spokesman said.

Kozyrev is the most senior Russian official to visit Islamabad since the collapse of the Soviet Union, whose 1979 invasion of Afghanistan had soured relations with Pakistan.

Pakistan was the main base for Afghan guerrillas in their 14-year US-backed war against the ex-Soviet-installed gov-

ernment in Kabul that fell last April, and maintains close contacts with most groups in the Islamic guerrilla government.

Afghanistan released two prisoners last month and Russian officials say guerrilla groups are still holding 80 prisoners.

Kabul says fewer than 20 former Soviet prisoners were still in Afghanistan since the Soviet army withdrew in 1989.

Kozyrev and his Pakistani counterpart Mohammad Siddique Khan Kanju initiated a treaty on bilateral relations that will be signed by Sharif and Russian President Boris Yeltsin when the Pakistani Prime Minister visits Moscow later this year.

The treaty covers all aspects of relations, he said, but gave no details.

12 more killed in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR, India, Apr 8: Twelve people were killed, four of them Indian border policemen, in a series of attacks by separatist militants in the Kashmir valley on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Four paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) men were killed and two seriously injured when their vehicle hit a landmine in Srinagar as a week of mourning for slain heart surgeon and militant sympathiser Abdul Ahad Guru drew to a close.

Police cordoned off the area where the mine exploded in the Batamallo suburb of Srinagar, summer capital of India's Northern Jammu and Kashmir state, and mounted intensive search for militants.

In a separate incident, three BSF men were seriously wounded in a bomb and gun attack by militants in the congested Fatah Kadal neighbourhood of Srinagar.

Explosives found at US airport

BOSTON, Apr 8: A bag found at Logan International Airport contained all the materials needed to make a bomb, authorities said Wednesday, reports AP.

Flares, a grenade, wire, a blasting cap, a battery and other materials were found Tuesday night by a cleaning man after they were left behind in a restroom.

State Police Maj Ronald Guilmette said such a bomb wouldn't have caused much structural damage to the airport's Terminal B, where it was found, but could have injured people.

Authorities were searching for a possible suspect described by the cleaning man. They also said airport security would be increased and the potential for terrorist attacks would be investigated, particularly in light of February's World Trade Centre bombing in New York.

Clinton's father-in-law dead

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas, Apr 8: Hugh Rodham, father of US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, died late on Wednesday at a Little Rock hospital after suffering a stroke on March 19, hospital officials said. He was 82, reports Reuter.

Rodham died at St Vincent Infirmary Medical Centre where he was taken after suffering the stroke, said hospital spokeswoman Carolyn Lindsey.

President Bill Clinton, his wife and their daughter, Chelsea, will fly to Little Rock this morning.

The White House issued a statement confirming Rodham's death.

"The Rodham family wishes to extend its heartfelt appreciation for the many prayers that have been offered and the many expressions of concern received from throughout Arkansas, the nation and the world," the statement said.



Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vitali Churkin shake hands prior to talks Wednesday. Churkin is in Belgrade to discuss the UN peace plan for Bosnia which the Bosnian Serbs have so far rejected. —AFP/UNB photo

UK firm to move Tamar base

HONG KONG, Apr 8: Britain said today it was determined to move a naval base located near downtown Hong Kong and have the area land-filled, despite China's protests that it wants to move its military there after taking over the colony in 1997, reports AFP.

The British Foreign Office spokesman in Hong Kong, Chris Osborne, said the British navy would begin next month to move out of the Hms Tamar Naval Base next to the central district.

The base is to move to stonecutters island, which lies between Hong Kong island and the colony's Kowloon Peninsula.

The Chinese side has known this decision to relocate the royal navy to stonecutters since 1989, Osborne said. "The relocation cannot be delayed any further."

He said China had already agreed that the Tamar Naval base could be land-filled and redeveloped for commercial purposes, including a proposed airport terminal linking Hong Kong island with the

planned multi-billion new airport off chep lap kok of Lantau island.

"We are therefore mystified by the Chinese statement," Osborne said.

The prospect of having a People's Liberation Army soldiers in the heart of Hong Kong after 1997 is not welcomed by many here, especially after the PLA was used to kill pro-democracy protesters in 1989.

The latest flap also comes at a time when China and Britain have clashed over Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten's proposals to expand democracy before 1997, something opposed by China.

Britain and China have also argued over the building of the airport, with China saying that the project could sap Hong Kong of reserves before London hands over the colony.

China's official Xinhua news agency on Wednesday quoted a spokesman for the senior Chinese representative to the Sino-British joint liaison group as saying wanted Tamar for its PLA

"It is imperative that the military lands currently used by the British garrison in Hong Kong be made available to the Chinese garrison for the defence of Hong Kong after 1997," the spokesman was quoted as saying.

He urged Britain to negotiate with China on the issue, adding that "if the British side is bent on its own way, it will be held responsible for all consequences arising therefrom."

The spokesman noted that under the terms of the Sino-British joint declaration and the basic law, the mini-constitution for Hong Kong after 1997, the defence affairs of Hong Kong will be China's responsibility after 1997.

"The Chinese side has indicated its readiness to resolve the question of the existing Hong Kong military lands through consultation with the British side and to turn some of the lands currently used by the British garrison into lands to be used for Hong Kong's social and economic development," he said.

BRIEFLY

Mccallie US envoy to Namibia: President Bill Clinton nominated Marshall Mccallie, who has held the number two post at the US Embassy in South Africa since 1990, as Ambassador to Namibia, the White House announced Wednesday, reports AFP from Washington.

An African affairs specialist, Mccallie has also served as second-in-command at US embassies in Lusaka, Monrovia, Abu Dhabi and Kinshasa.

Bus mishap kills 28 in Bulgaria: At least 28 people died and 18 were injured when a bus carrying mainly Romanian tourists drove into a ravine in Northeastern Bulgaria Wednesday, a civil defence spokesman told AFP, from Sofia.

The accident happened when an articulated lorry attempted to overtake the Turkish-owned bus and was forced to swerve to avoid an on-coming lorry, pushing the bus into the river.

The bus turned over onto its roof and dropped early 20 metres (65 feet) into the Yantra river, near the town of Byala.

The bus was carrying 40 Romanians, three people from the Commonwealth of Independent States and three Turks. It was travelling from the Romanian capital Bucharest to Istanbul.

ROK to send troops to Somalia: South Korea will send a 250-man army construction unit to Somalia to join UN peacekeeping operations, officials said Thursday, AP reports from Seoul.

The Foreign Ministry said the team will be dispatched around June for about one year after parliamentary approval later this month. It said the dispatch would cost about \$15 million.

The unit will be the first South Korean military force dispatched overseas since the Vietnam War. South Korea sent nearly 300,000 troops to Vietnam to fight alongside US soldiers.

Ministry officials said the government had originally considered sending combat troops, but scrapped the plan partly because of public opposition. About 5,000 Korean soldiers died during the Vietnam War.

Fire kills 11 in China: Eleven people died and three were injured after flames gutted an illegal karaoke bar in the southern province of Guangdong, a local newspaper reported Thursday, says AP from Hong Kong.

The independent Chinese-language Ming Pao said the fire broke out shortly after 3 a.m. Tuesday in the town of Pingshan in Huidong country, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northeast of Hong Kong.

The report said an explosion on the second floor of a four-story building triggered the fire, which quickly spread to the third floor.

When patrons of the Karaoke, located on the second and third floors, discovered that emergency exits were blocked, three jumped through a glass window and sustained unspecified injuries.

Seven men and four women died of smoke inhalation. The victims were all in Karaoke V I P rooms featuring cozy couches and microphones.

Gotoda succeeds Watanabe

TOKYO, Apr 8: Japanese Justice Minister Masaharu Gotoda, a bureaucrat turned conservative politician, said today he had accepted the post of Deputy Prime Minister left vacant by the resignation of Michio Watanabe, reports Reuter.

Gotoda, 78, told reporters the largely ceremonial post was offered to him by Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa.

"There's still some paperwork to clear up and I'm waiting for the official summons to go to the Prime Minister's residence (later today)", Gotoda told reporters.

North Korea boosts military spending to defend communism

TOKYO, Apr 8: Cash-strapped North Korea Wednesday unveiled in its 1993 budget an exceptional boost in military spending to defend its communist citadel at the slowest rate of national budget growth in 30 years, reports AP.

The arms outlay will account for 11.6 percent of 1993 state spending to "increase the defence power of the country in the face of the enemy's aggressive and provocative moves," Finance Minister Yun Ki-Jong told the opening session of North Korea's parliament.

The 1993 state budget was set at 40.45 billion won up 2.3 per cent from last year in revenue and up 2.9 per cent in expenditure.

It was worth 17.96 billion dollars at the selling rate prescribed by the Foreign Trade Bank of Korea in late February, made known recently here.

The Supreme People's Assembly opened its annual session while the international community stepped up pressure on Pyongyang to rejoin the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and allow the international Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA) to inspect two of its sites, suspected of being storehouses for materials used to build nuclear weapons. North Korea withdrew from the NPT nearly one month ago.

Yun said North Korea's military had grown to be "an invincible armed force and an impregnable fortress credibly safeguarding the security of the socialist motherland and people under whatever complicated situation."

Pyeongyang's suspected development of nuclear arms has also discouraged active investment in North Korea's planned economic zone on its border with China and Russia to woo much needed capital and technology and spur its stagnant economy.

The growth rate in state revenue, an indicator of economic growth, was the smallest since the mid-1960's when the start of Sino-Soviet rivalry led to reduced Soviet aid, and narrowed the possibility of help from China.

It stood at 2.7 percent in 1966 when North Korea had to extend its first seven-year plan by three years. After hovering above 10 per cent in the 1970's, the rate fell

to a low of four percent in 1986. It then fluctuated between five and seven percent until sagging to 4.2 percent in 1991.

Yun said actual revenue grew 6.3 percent and expenditure 6.5 per cent in 1992.

According to South Korea's state-run trade corporation, North Korea posted negative economic growth for the third straight year in 1992 amid alleged energy and food shortage following the collapse of its former communist allies.

The ratio of defence spending to the total budget was unchanged from last year at 11.6 per cent in the planning stage, the smallest since 1972 when North Korea reportedly reduced defence budget items to cover its real military efforts.

However, defence spending this year will amount to 4,692 million won, up 4.7 per cent from last year compared with a slight 0.4 per cent year-on-year rise in actual spending in 1992.

Afghanistan to reopen films

KABUL, Apr 8: Afghanistan plans to reopen cinemas in Kabul but only to show films that conform to Islamic principles — with no dancing but possibly a little singing, the Culture Minister said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

"We hope to reopen one or two cinemas to start with," Minister for Culture and Information Siddiq Chakari said in an interview.

They will have to be suitable films for our Islamic ideals. We can never have dancing, but some singing.

Off the Record

How did he touch you?

NEW YORK: A sex-crimes expert called by Woody Allen in his child custody battle said Mia Farrow mishandled the videotaped questioning of their adopted daughter, whom she accused Allen of molesting, reports AP.

"I concluded that the child lacked credibility," said Richard Marcus, a retired police lieutenant. "The manner in which the questions were asked, and the answer elicited, did not convince me that an incident had, in fact, taken place."

Another witness Tuesday, a friend of Farrow's, testified that it was her babysitter who first raised the possibility of abuse after seeing the filmmaker put his head in the child's lap.

Allen, 57, and Farrow, 48, lovers for a dozen years, are fighting for custody of their adopted children, Dylan, 7, and Moses, 15, and their biological son, Satchel, 5.

Marcus, who retired from the state police department in 1987, criticised the way Farrow questioned Dylan on the tape Farrow made and took to authorities.

She asks Dylan such things as "How did he touch you?" and "Did he take your underpants off?"

"To me, this smacks of prompting," Marcus said. "The child has a desire to seek approval" from her mother.

Allen said last month that child abuse experts from Yale-New Haven Hospital cleared him of Farrow's accusations. The secret report was turned over to Connecticut prosecutors deciding whether to file charges.

Allen denies the accusations. Farrow's friend, Casey Pascal, testified her babysitter told her about Allen putting his head in the girl's lap while she and Farrow were shopping in August. Pascal said she told Farrow about the claim the next day.

They show breasts to protest

NEW BRUNSWICK: Thirty students at Rutgers University's Douglass College bared their breasts at a student government meeting to protest what they say is the college's patronizing attitude toward women, reports AP.

The all-women college "is imposing stereotypes, myths and structures upon women that define us" said sophomore Jeanne Locicero, who helped organise Tuesday night's protest. "We want to be able to carve our own paths, take our own directions, and not be punished or chastised for it."

The protestors also were upset with results of last week's student government elections, Locicero said.

School officials and some students expressed dismay with the group's tactics.

"If we're going to be women, we'd better act like women," said Kim Roberts, the student government's vice president-elect. "You didn't see George Bush pull his pants down when he lost the election."

Bogus liquor

BEIJING: Seven people died and six others were handicapped in a series of poisoning from drinking bogus liquor in northeastern China's Helongjiang province, a report said on Thursday, reports AP.

The victims, including a village party's secretary, drank the liquor which came from an unlicensed distillery in the suburb of Jamusi near the border with Russia, the Xinmin Evening News said in its latest edition received in Beijing Thursday.

I got this playing with my daughter

WASHINGTON: Chelsea Clinton — not a close shave — is to blame for an ugly red scratch on President Clinton's face, he said Wednesday, reports AP.

Spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers told reporters Tuesday that Clinton scratched himself shaving, causing the four-inch mark below his right ear. But her boss had a different story Wednesday.

"I got this playing with my daughter. I'm ashamed to say," Clinton said Wednesday, breaking into a loud schoolboy giggle. He said he was "rolling around, acting like a child. It reaffirmed that I'm not a kid anymore."

Spokesman George Stephanopoulos later made light of reporters' prodding about why Myers blamed the scratch on a shaving mishap.

"There was some confusion," he said, adding sarcastically that, "We better get to the bottom of this. Sounds like a real scandal." The scratch had faded a bit by Wednesday.

