

EC asks Pak political parties to support democratic process

BRUSSELS, Apr 24: The European Community called on all parties in Pakistan here Friday to support the democratic process and urged that forthcoming elections there should be fair and free, reports AFP.

The EC said in a statement that it was hoping for a quick and clear legal decision from Pakistan's Supreme Court on whether the dismissal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his government was legal.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the government on Sunday for alleged

corruption and inefficiency, and dissolved the national assembly.

The EC noted that this was the third time since 1988 that a Pakistani Prime Minister had been dismissed and the assembly dissolved before the end of its term.

The European Community and its member states urge all concerned in Pakistan to display full support for the democratic process and express the hope that any fresh elections will be fair and free," the statement said.

More officers join strike protesting death of a constable Armed policemen march thru' Srinagar streets

SRINAGAR, India, Apr 24: A protest by Kashmiri policemen snowballed today as more officers joined a state-wide strike, called following the killing of a Muslim constable by Indian border guards, witnesses said here, reports AFP.

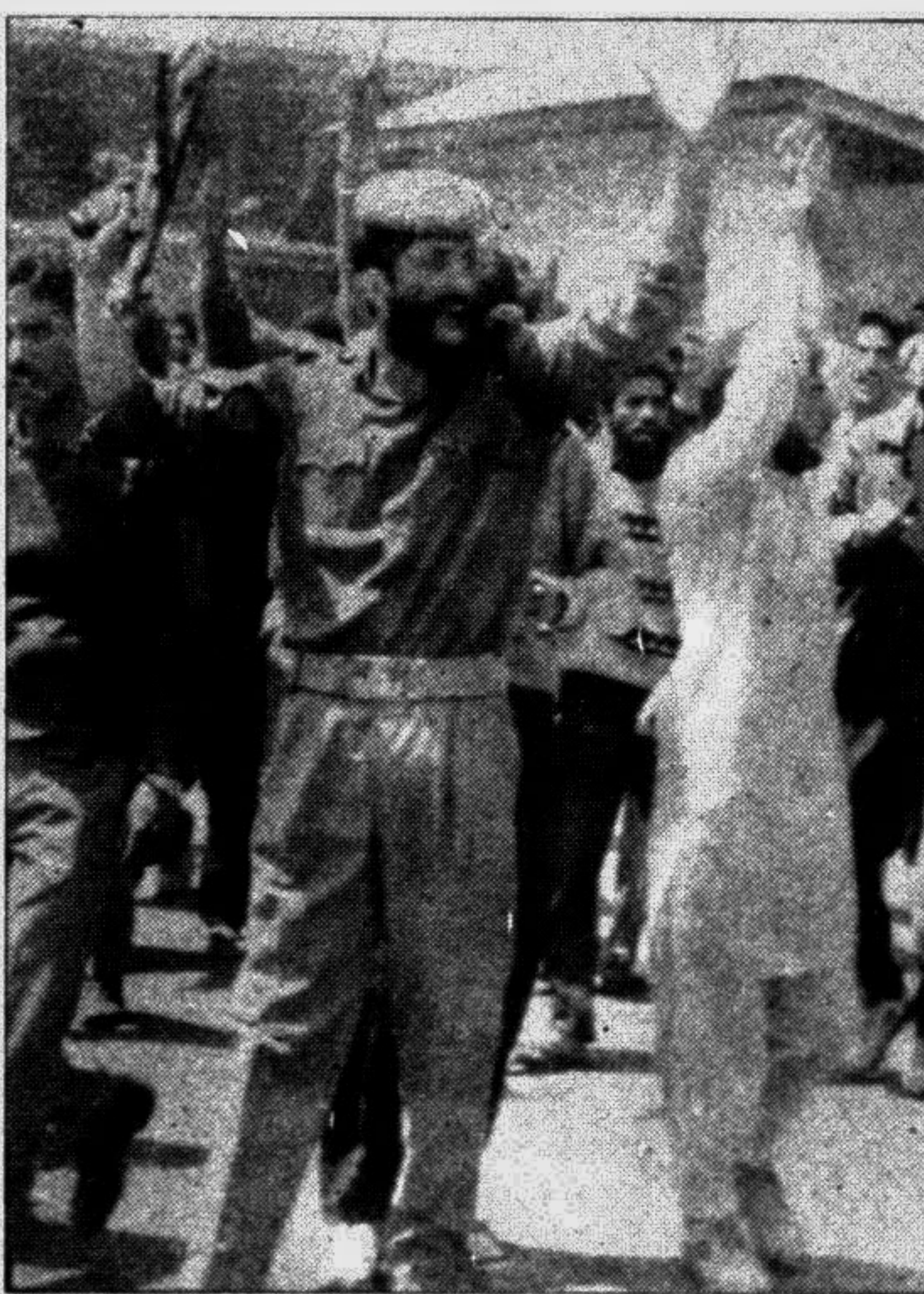
Some 8,000 Muslim policemen armed with automatic weapons walked through city streets today to demand the arrest of K Rajend-Ran Kumar, a senior police officer, for his controversial role in the death of constable Riaz Ahmad.

Ahmad was arrested by paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) troops on Wednesday, according to police sources, and killed in their custody after Kumar, a member of the Federal Police Service, had reportedly told them to teach Ahmad a lesson.

Scores of policemen were protesting inside the city police control room, nerve-centre of a government drive against Muslim secessionists in Srinagar, witnesses said.

Official said policemen from other parts of the Muslim-dominated state were pouring into the city to join the offices here despite attempts by the border guards to seal off Srinagar, a former tourist resort.

There have been no clashes so far between the tens of thousands of Indian army and BSF troops deployed in Kashmir and member of the predominantly Muslim Kashmir police force, much of which is sympathetic to de-



SRINAGAR, India: A policeman brandishes his weapon during demonstration inside the Police Control Room (PCR) Friday to protest the death of a colleague after he was allegedly killed while being taken into custody by the Indian security troops.

mands for independence.

On Friday thousands of Kashmiri policemen left their posts to reach an UN complex here Friday to protest the killing of a constable by Indian guards, as authorities ordered a probe into the death.

The policemen drove down the streets of Srinagar defying a government ban on protests by men in uniform to meet with United Nations observers posted here to monitor cross-border militancy in this divided Himalayan state.

Witnesses said the protesters were demanding action against a top Hindu policeman for his alleged role in the controversial death of a Muslim constable in the hands of India's Border Security Force (BSF) personnel.

The Muslim officers drove past Srinagar's downtown Lal Chowk area in a convoy of eight vehicles shouting "we want justice" before converging on the UN complex near the scenic Dal Lake. BSF guards dotting the former tourist city did not try to stop the angry officers who too had taken to the streets carrying their service rifles and pistols, witnesses added.

Srinagar residents cheered as cries of "we want freedom" were heard from the officers, many of whom are sympathetic to Kashmiri Muslim demands for independence from India.

They also took over the main police station of Srinagar. Ruban hub of the Muslim secessionist drive.

Off the Record

Soccer teammates jailed for raping retarded girl

NEW YORK: Three former high school football teammates were sentenced Friday to up to 15 years in youth detention for raping a mentally retarded teen-ager, reports AP.

A fourth defendant was sentenced to probation and community service.

They were cited as adults, but Superior Court Judge R Benjamin Cohen cited their ages and the likelihood that they could be rehabilitated in sentencing three of them to youth detention.

A 15-year adult sentence normally would carry a 4-year minimum, but the sentence to a youth facility means the three could be released earlier if deemed rehabilitated.

Clinton to address gay marchers via letter

WASHINGTON: President Clinton will address a Sunday homosexual rights demonstration via a letter, reports AP.

Clinton's letter — yet to be drafted — will be read to a scheduled rally of gays and lesbians and their supporters by Democratic Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, said White House press secretary Dec Dec Myers.

The president himself will be out of town for the weekend at Williamsburg, Va, Camp David, Md, and Boston.

Myers denied to reporters that Clinton was leaving Washington to avoid addressing the marchers in person.

Solar objects named after spy novels

HONOLULU: The most distant reaches of the solar system are home to rock-and-ice objects named after characters in British spy novels, reports AP.

The objects — "Smiley" and "Karla" — were discovered in the area beyond Pluto, the farthest planet from the Sun, with the University of Hawaii's 88-inch (225 centimeters) telescope atop Mauna Kea on Hawaii Island, university astronomer David Jewitt said Thursday.

Jewitt and University of California astronomer Jane Luu found the first object in late August, 4 billion miles (6.5 billion kilometers) from the Sun. By comparison, Earth is a mere 93 million miles (150 million kilometers) from the Sun.

Altered gene increases risk of ovarian cancer

LONDON: An altered gene dramatically increases the risk a woman will suffer from ovarian or breast cancer, according to a worldwide analysis presented Monday that confirms previous smaller studies, reports AP.

Scientists from 13 centers contributed data from 214 families that had a strong history of breast or ovarian cancer. The results confirm that women with an altered gene on the 17th chromosome have a 59 per cent chance of getting breast or ovarian cancer by age 50.

The study is published in the April issue of the American Journal of Human Genetics.

BRIEFLY

Thatcher cancels visit to Zagreb. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has cancelled a visit to Zagreb to receive an honorary degree because of "horrible" attacks by Croats on Muslims in Bosnia, her spokesman said Friday, reports AFP from London.

Thatcher was shocked by pictures broadcast on British television showing charred corpses of a Muslim family in a village near Vitez in central Bosnia, the spokesman said.

"Lady Thatcher will not be going to Zagreb University to receive an honorary doctorate as previously arranged. She has changed her plans in view of the horrible attacks made by Croats on Muslims in central Bosnia," he said.

The visit was to have taken place in the first half of July, although no specific date had been fixed, the spokesman said.

Storms claim 18 in China: Eighteen people were killed in heavy thunderstorms and hailstorms in southern China's Guangxi province during the past week, an official report said Saturday, reports AP from Hong Kong.

Six were directly hit by hailstones as heavy as 110 pounds (50 kilograms) and as wide as 12 inches (30 centimeters). One worker was killed by lightning. More than 300 others were injured, the China News Service said.

The storms, which lashed the area from April 17 to 21, caused more than \$1.6 billion in damage by destroying 20 bridges, 539 houses and 214 acres (87 hectares) of farmland in 18 counties.

At its peak, the storm dumped up to 1.6 inches (40 millimeters) of rain per hour, the report said.

The same storm also killed 15 people in neighbouring Guangdong province, two Beijing, funded newspapers reported earlier this week.

One killed, 60 hurt in Gaza clash: Israeli soldiers Friday shot dead a Palestinian teenage and wounded 60 other people during clashes in the occupied Gaza Strip, Arab sources said, reports AFP from Gaza.

Anwar Fuad Abu Kallub, 18, was shot in the head when soldiers opened fire on demonstrators near the Shifa hospital, they said, adding that 60 others were wounded in the incidents.

His death brought to 1,052 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces since the start of uprising in the territories in December 1987, according to an AFP toll from Palestinian sources.

The latest outbreak of violence comes as Palestinian delegates to the Middle East peace talks were set to return to the negotiating table on April 27 in Washington.

Ruling party sweeps ROK by-polls: Aided by President Kim Young-sam's growing popularity, the governing party scored sweeping victories Saturday in by-elections to select three national legislators, reports AP from Seoul.

After Friday's votes were counted, all three candidates from the governing Democratic Liberal Party won by comfortable margins over candidates from the main opposition Democratic Party.

The sweeping victories are widely seen as showing strong public confidence in Kim's two-month-old government, which is pushing major political and social reforms.

The party now controls 156 seats in the 299-member National Assembly.

Kim, the first civilian president in 32 years, has launched series of anti-corruption reforms since taking office in February. A recent poll shows more than 7 per cent of Koreans surveyed supported him.

Gorbachev gets honorary degree: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was given a honorary doctorate in a ceremony here yesterday by Japan's Soka University for his contribution to world peace, reports AFP from Tokyo.

The degree was handed to Gorbachev by Kazuo Takamatsu, Rector of the university founded by the influential Buddhist group Soka Gakkai before some 7,000 attendants.

Takamatsu said that Gorbachev had also contributed to east-west detente and global environmental protection.

Gorbachev arrived here a week to assume the presidency of the International Green Cross (IGC), a non-governmental organization formed recently by the UN-backed global forum to help reduce environmental disasters caused by man.

12 militants killed in Turkey: Twelve suspected left-wing militants were killed in a recent clash with security forces in the east of the country, the Anatolia news agency said Friday, reports AFP from Ankara.

The dead, said to be members of the Dev-Sol organization (Devrimci Sol, revolutionary left), were killed Sunday near Tunceli in the region of Anatolia, the agency said.

The deaths occurred after militants launched a rocket attack on a police station in Akcapinar, near Tunceli. The police caught up with and engaged the militants some kilometers (miles) away, killing 12 of them, the agency said.

Dev-Sol, which specializes in urban guerrilla warfare, was severely weakened in March in two security operations in Istanbul during which eight members died, including the group's number two.

Lankan opposition blames govt for killing of Athulathmudali

COLOMBO, Apr 24: An opposition party blamed the government on Saturday for the assassination of its leader, who was gunned down at an election rally in view of 1,500 people, reports AP.

But President Ranasinghe Premadasa mourned the death of his opponent, Lalith Athulathmudali and ordered authorities to find out who planned and carried out the killing.

No one has claimed responsibility for the shooting, which occurred Friday evening when a lone gunman opened fire on Athulathmudali at a rainy outdoor rally.

Athulathmudali, 56, had served as Premadasa's national security minister, in charge of the military's effort to defeat Tamil guerrillas fighting for independence in the north and east.

He later turned against Premadasa, sponsored an unsuccessful impeachment campaign in 1991 in parliament, and created the opposition Democratic United Liberation Front.

"Lalith Athulathmudali was a victim of violence launched by the killer squad of the Premadasa government," said Gamini Dissanayake, vice president of the Democratic United Liberation Front and a close colleague of the victim.

The assassination will "underline more clearly to the public the brutality of the system we were trying to change," he said at a news conference.

Athulathmudali's position as a one-time security adviser also raised suspicions against Tamil Tiger rebels, who have murdered other Sri Lankan political and military leaders. The civil war has gone on since 1983.

In a condolence message, Premadasa condemned the "cowardly and gruesome act" and directed authorities to track down the assailant. The state-owned radio said the government will seek Scotland Yard's help.

The Democratic Front has emerged as a serious challenger for the May 17 provincial elections. The balloting is

seen as a test of popularity for Premadasa, who faces a presidential election in 1994.

People who saw the killing told the news conference that a tall, lean man standing near the stage where Athulathmudali was speaking tossed away his cigarette, pulled a revolver from beneath his black T-shirt and opened fire.

After hitting Athulathmudali three times, the gunman shot and wounded a bodyguard who fired at him, shot three more bullets, fell down, got up, and fled the scene, the witnesses said.

"Our information is that the person who shot Lalith also was shot and injured," said Wickrema Weerasuriya, a party official.

The rally in Kirulapone, a suburb of Colombo, was Athulathmudali's last campaign stop of the day, and he began by saying he would cut the speech short because it was raining.

It was then that the attack came. Lalith shouted in Sinhalese "Mother, I have been shot and he fell down." Upti

Dhamika, the organizer of the rally, said at the news conference.

Initial medical evidence indicates that one lethal bullet passed through his lungs and heart.

AFP adds: Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa has called on Scotland Yard to help investigate the assassination of opposition leader Lalith Athulathmudali, officials here said Saturday.

Premadasa directed the Defence Ministry to call in the services of Scotland Yard to investigate Athulathmudali's slaying in Kirulapone area here Friday, an official statement said.

Premadasa also directed the Foreign Ministry to arrange for the arrival of the Scotland Yard team at the "very earliest" to work jointly with Sri Lankan police.

Earlier, the Sri Lankan leader condemned Athulathmudali's assassination and said that the government would use "all the resources at its command" to track down the culprits.



An elderly Eritrean is one of thousands who went Friday to the polls in Dekembare, 40 km (25 miles) southwest of Asmara, in a referendum on Eritrean independence from Ethiopia after a 30-year old war.

Pakistan to free prisoners for kidnapped diplomats

QUETTA (Pakistan), Apr 24: Pakistan agreed Saturday to release two convicted gunmen in exchange for three European diplomats held hostage in southwestern Afghanistan, officials said, reports AP.

The kidnap victims — Jack Dadds of Britain, Stefan Chalt of Germany and Gert Piening of Holland — are anti-narcotics agents with their embassies.

Mohammed Nabi Noorzai, a renegade rebel commander, kidnapped the three at gunpoint and demanded the release of his two brothers arrested by Pakistani authorities several weeks ago on gunrunning charges.

UN body urges China to combat torture in Tibet

GENEVA, Apr 24: The UN committee on torture has called on Chinese authorities to combat torture, especially in Tibet, to curb detention without trial and to publish statistics on capital punishment in China, reports AP.

China, along with the 71 other signatories to the UN convention against torture and degrading treatment, is regularly asked to reply to questions from the committee's 10 independent experts.

Following two days of debate the committee said Friday it was concerned over "the use of detention without trial and cases of torture reported by various non-governmental organisations, particularly in Tibet" and asked Beijing to do more to prevent torture and punish perpetrators.

Alexis Dipanda Mouelle of Cameroon, speaking for the committee, said he was pleased with Beijing's cooperation but called for the separation of the judiciary from the police and asked for detainees to be given rapid access to their lawyers and families.

He also asked Beijing to lift its objections on ratifying the convention, which are preventing any fact-finding inquiry by the UN committee.

In a report submitted in January, the Chinese government said the "Notion of political crime does not exist in China" but acknowledged 4,239 "perpetrators of counter-revolutionary crimes" were in detention.

Russians protest Yeltsin's reforms

MOSCOW, Apr 24: More than 10,000 Russian holding red banners and white-yellow-black flag protested against Boris Yeltsin and his market reforms on Friday, two days before a referendum that could seal the President's political fate, reports Reuters.

The communist and nationalist demonstrators marched down Moscow's central Tver street, surging past a police line and parked lorries intended to block the approach to the Kremlin.

But there was no serious clash. The procession, past the Kremlin Walls to the old communist party headquarters

Arrest of Sunjay Dutt unnerves Bombay's film industry

BOMBAY, Apr 24: The arrest of a top Indian actor and a police probe into links between Indian movie-makers and the gangsters blamed for last month's deadly bombings here have unnerved Bombay's bustling film industry, reports AFP.

The arrest Monday of Sunjay Dutt for illegally possessing an AK-56 rifle purchased from conspirators in the March 12 blasts which killed nearly 300 people has forced the industry to disassociate itself from the actor.

The arrest of Dutt, son of veteran actor Sunil Dutt, an MP from the ruling Congress (I) Party, stalled the release of several mega-budget productions

which had earned him hundreds of thousands of dollars. Producers estimate that losses stemming from his arrest could be around 23 million dollars, they said 15 films in production had been halted although the actor had been paid in advance for 20 films.

"Why should we be held to ransom for the acts of indiscretion or terrorism by artists?" said an Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association spokesman.

The statement came as police began looking for actress Mandakini for alleged links with Dubai-based Indian Mafia Don Dawood Ibrahim, considered a key figure behind the Bombay blasts along with the

Muslim Memon brothers. Up to 40 Hindi language films starring Dutt, considered India's Sylvester Stallone, have run into bad weather in the country where militant Hindus have ordered theatre owners to stop their screens.

Billboards of Dutt's films have been garlanded with shoes and posters torn down since his arrest along with two film producers who sold the assault rifle to Dutt.

Most affected in the industry is Subhash Ghai, who directed "Villain", a multi-million dollar film in which Dutt plays the title role of a terrorist, a crime for which he has now been booked by the Bombay police.

"Villain" had only three days of shooting left and was slated for release on May 14. I am shocked," said Ghai, one of India's most talented producers.

Police ordered a wide probe as interrogations of Dutt and the arrested producers, Sanjeer Hingora and Hanif Kadawala, led to the belief that they were linked to Ibrahim and the Memons, who fled to Dubai after the attacks.

Police say the blast conspiracy was hatched in a restaurant owned by Hanif and that the probe has exposed the links between the movie industry and the crime syndicates, which run vice, extortion and smuggling rackets here.

Film industry sources said that over the past several years underworld dons entered the industry to launder money and expand their operations.

Lavish premieres became the fashion in an industry in which nearly 90 per cent of new films bomb at the box office every year. India's "Hollywood" produces more films annually than any other country.

There used to be a dozen premieres every week, but now there is hardly one or two," said A Khan, former chief of the Bombay police detective cell.

The Film Makers Combine (FMC), a body of film producers, decided Thursday to take

Belgium now federal state

BRUSSELS, Apr 24: The Belgian parliament Friday completed amendments to the Belgian constitution aimed turning the unitary state into a three-part federation, reports AFP.

The Chamber of Deputies approved the final two changes of a constitutional reform package hammered out by the coalition government with political allies.

The changes will formally make Belgium a federal state comprising Dutch-speaking Flanders, French-speaking Wallonia and the Brussels region. The three regions will be given new autonomy