

Egypt to try 770 in military courts

CAIRO, July 9: Egypt has preferred 770 Muslim militants to military courts on charges of forming an illegal organisation to carry out bomb attacks and assassinate public figures to destabilise the country, reports Reuter. Security sources said on Thursday 330 militants would be tried in military courts in Cairo and the rest in Alexandria next week. The militants were arrested in May in a sweep in the greater Cairo area, Qalyoubia province and Alexandria. High state security prosecution charged the 770 with sitting up an illegal organisation, agreement to carry out collective killings, plotting to assassinate public figures and possession of leaflets inciting hatred against the Egyptian government. They were also charged with possession of arms and explosives to damage and destabilise national security. The security sources said the previously unknown group called the "Vanguards of the New Holy Struggle" is led by Ayman Zawahri, a militant leader living between Afghanistan and Iran. Most of the militants were previously members of the jihad (holy struggle) group which was behind the assassination of late President Anwar Sadat in 1981, they added. Egypt has been referring militants to military courts to ensure swift and harsh punishment for attacks which have targeted police, Christians and tourists. More than 150 people have been killed and 300 injured in political violence over the last 14 months in Egypt.

Muslims may be forced to accept three-way partition of Bosnia

SARAJEVO, July 9: Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic indicated his people might be forced to accept a three-way partition of the country, saying the alternative to indefinite civil war was "an ugly option", reports Reuter. In an interview with Bosnian radio, Izetbegovic appeared to signal the possibility of a change of heart, under duress, on a proposal for a loose confederation of Serb, Croat and Muslim mini-states in Bosnia. Many members of the Muslim-led Bosnian government see the partition plan as rewarding Serb insurgency and condemning Muslims to a ghetto existence in a rump state cut off from its traditional hinterland. Izetbegovic's comments came as international mediators Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg met Serbian leaders on Thursday for talks on the proposal and said they had clarified some areas which should be the basis of negotiations. "The alternative to negotiations would be continuous war, intensified war, with more suffering and more people killed," Stoltenberg said. Izetbegovic said Bosnians must be given a true picture of the situation, adding: "We have to say clearly if it's going to be division, it's going to be ethnic division." "It's acceptable to us only if we are forced. The other option is war without end. It's a very ugly option." "Bosnia is not going to commit suicide," he said at another point in the 90-minute interview, seemingly ruling out a fight to the finish advocated by some circles, particularly in the Bosnian military. AFP reports from London: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd has hinted that the international arms embargo against ex-Yugoslavia — which effectively prevents the besieged Bosnian Muslims defending themselves — could still be lifted if peacekeeping fails. Hurd, speaking at the G7 summit in Tokyo late Thursday, told television reporters he could envisage a situation where the United Nations' troops pulled out of Bosnia, the arms ban was removed and the warring sides were left to fight it out. "One can imagine a situation in which the UN effort in Bosnia has to come to an end because it is too dangerous to proceed." In that case, the arms embargo might well be lifted and all concerned would be left to fight it out from then until kingdom comes," he said. "If the UN effort collapsed, if it were simply not possible to go on keeping people alive, if our forces and other forces were withdrawn, if all negotiations came to an end, then it might be a situation in which the friends of each side say: 'Here's the kit, fight it out.'" Hurd added, he viewed this as a "policy of despair." Britain has been extremely reluctant to consider ending the arms ban, and this has strained its relations with US President Bill Clinton. Hurd recently described an end to the embargo as creating a "level killing field in Bosnia."

BJP opposed to seeking votes in name of religion : Advani

NEW DELHI, July 9: India's main opposition party Thursday justified the blending of religion with politics, saying faith played a major role in the lives of people, reports AFP. "Religion is the main source for ensuring a person's right conduct," Lal Krishna Advani, an MP and president of the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), told a news conference here. Banning religion in politics "may be all right for those who consider religion as the opium of the masses," he said, commenting on legislation that the government has proposed to separate religion and politics. But Advani claimed that his party was opposed to seeking votes in the name of religion, and added: "We don't accept organised church controlling politics, be it in any religion." The BJP has emerged as the second largest group in parliament after the ruling Congress (I) Party, chiefly on the strength of a campaign to erect a Hindu temple at the site of the now razed Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. The BJP's use of religion has been attacked by both the ruling party and the secular opposition. Advani said there were laws to check misuse of religion for political ends, and added that the main purpose behind the proposed legislation was to divert attention from corruption charges involving Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. Bombay stockbroker Harshad Mehta, prime accused in a 1.3 billion dollar bank and stock scandal, has claimed making a 10 million rupee (333,000 dollar) payoff to Rao.

Fresh violence claims 3 Israelis, 2 Palestinians

JERUSALEM, July 9: Fresh Arab-Israeli violence claimed the lives of three Israelis and two Palestinians on the day when a US diplomatic team arrived in Israel to try to break a deadlock in Middle East peace talks, reports Reuter. An Israeli settler was shot dead south of Jerusalem while driving his car in the occupied West Bank late on Thursday night and soldiers killed a wanted Palestinian activist in the occupied Gaza Strip, the Israeli army said. Palestinian guerrillas earlier killed two Israeli soldiers in an ambush in South Lebanon. The army said its troops pursued and killed one guerrilla after the attack. The US coordinator of the peace talks, Dennis Ross, arrived in Israel as the head of a team sent by President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher for talks with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators. Ross, speaking after a two-hour meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, said his mission was to try to bridge the differences between the parties. This is the beginning of several days of discussions and I look forward to continuing to work on what we're doing now. UK rejects joint sovereignty over Northern Ireland LONDON, July 9: The British government late Thursday ruled out the possibility of joint Anglo-Irish sovereignty over Northern Ireland, saying such an arrangement would be unacceptable to the majority of people in the province, reports AFP. Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew was speaking after the House of Commons rejected Irish Minister Dick Spring's proposal for joint sovereignty. A newspaper interview, Thursday



LONDON: Raine, Countess Spencer (C), step-mother of Diana, Princess of Wales looks into the eyes of her new husband Count Jean-Francois de Chambain (R) after their wedding Thursday at Westminster Register Office.

Draskovic continues hunger strike, may die anytime

BELGRADE, July 9: Doctors attending Serbian opposition leader Vuk Draskovic, currently on hunger strike, have warned that he could die within hours, as peace mediator Lord Owen visited the clinic where he is being detained, reports AFP. The doctors wrote in an appeal to the court here, cited by the Borba newspaper Friday: "The deteriorating health of Draskovic demands a quick decision in order to avoid a fatal ending — which could come very quickly." "Draskovic's release would be a sensible and humane step. We warn you again to consider his case carefully as it may be only a matter of hours." Draskovic, who began a hunger strike Thursday last week, and his wife Darkica have been detained since June 2 on charges of public disorder after an opposition demonstration turned into a violent clash with police.

Russia's Far East declares republic

MOSCOW, July 9: Russia's Far East region based on the key port of Vladivostok, headquarters of the Pacific fleet, declared itself a republic on Thursday, reports Reuter. Interfax news agency said the Far East regions parliament passed a declaration raising its status to that of a republic — a week after the Economic Power House of Sverdlovsk in the Urals took the same step. Russia's major regions are protesting over what they regard as Moscow's neglect of their economic rights. By promoting themselves to republics — the highest tier in the Russian federation's territorial administration — they claim lawmaking powers to assert greater economic independence. Interfax quoted deputies at the Far East parliament as saying their move towards republican status had no political overtones but was dictated by economic necessity. The rich regions pay more taxes than 20 ethnically-based republics. The dispute over regional powers is the prime obstacle to President Boris Yeltsin's plans for a new constitution he hopes will seal his victory over conservatives.

Muhammad Ali in Baghdad: Former world heavy weight boxing champion Muhammad Ali has arrived in Iraq from Iran to try an mediate a release of POWs from their 1980-1988 conflict, says AFP from Baghdad.

Rashid hotel, used by foreign dignitaries and journalists, said he arrived in Baghdad late Wednesday during a false air-raid alarm. Sirens blared across the capital for 20 minutes. The US boxer and convert to Islam, previously known as Cassius Clay, faces a tough task in breaking the three-year deadlock on POWs. Iraq maintains it has freed all Iranian prisoners but Tehran insists 8,000 are in captivity. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, around 1,000 Iranian prisoners are still registered in Iraq.

Pitch black '93 starts soon: The air forces of Australia, Singapore and the United States will carry out a combined exercise called "Pitch black 93" starting later this month, the Pentagon said Thursday, AFP reports from Washington.

Some 70 aircraft are to take part in the exercise near Darwin, Australia, between July 26 and August 13. Pilots will simulate attacks on the northern parts of the country which will be defended by the Royal Australia Air Force, the Pentagon said in a statement. C'wealth meet on women ends: Commonwealth ministers responsible for women's affairs ended a meeting in Nicosia on Thursday with a pledge to world for greater participation of women in public life, Reuter says from Nicosia. Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General Moni Malhoutra told reporters, ministers had recognised the need for affirmative action for women. Cholera claims 253 in Bihar: An epidemic of cholera has claimed 253 lives in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, the Times of India newspaper reported yesterday, AFP says from New Delhi. More than 10,000 others have been affected by the disease, the daily said in a report from the state capital Patna. It did not say when people began dying.

2 Israelis killed in Lebanon: Two Israeli soldiers were killed and three wounded when guerrillas attacked their patrol in Israel's South Lebanon security zone on Thursday, security sources said, Reuter reports from Lebanon.

A bomb exploded near the armoured patrol of the village of Jarman on the road to Aishiyeh, three km (two miles) inside Israel's self-styled security zone, they said. Guerrillas then attacked the patrol with machineguns and anti-tank rockets from close range. The situation amounted to "a rape of the UN charter, the universal declaration of human rights and Geneva Conventions" and deserved immediate attention of governments and organisations fighting for human rights, Khan said. He appealed to the United Nations, the United States and Islamic nations to "persuade, even pressure, India to put an immediate end to this savagery in Kashmir." Police and hospital sources say at least 12,000 people have been killed since the rebellion started in early 1990 in the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India. PTI reports from Srinagar: With the nabbing of almost the entire top hierarchy of pro-pakistan "Al Jihad" in Baramulla on Wednesday, the backbone of the militant outfit has been "effectively broken", a Defence Ministry spokesman claimed here yesterday. The spokesman said the operation against the armed militants and their collaborators and supporters would be further intensified. In a raid Wednesday, troops captured five top Al-Jehad militants including its divisional commander for the twin districts of Baramulla and Kupwara and rescued three senior functionaries of Baramulla district held hostages by them. Those captured have been identified as Abdul Qayoom Bidar, Divisional Commander for Baramulla and Kupwara, Mohammad Yousuf Wani, Deputy District Commander, Dawood Ahmad Dar and Abdul Ilamid Dar, both company commanders, and Majid Dar, chief motivator and recruiter for Al-Jehad, the spokesman said. Their interrogation is likely to yield some "vital clues" about that activities, contacts and collaborators of the militant outfit.

JKLF for int'l pressure on India

ISLAMABAD, July 9: A Kashmiri militant leader called on Thursday for international pressure on India to end its "savagery" in suppressing a separatist revolt in the disputed Kashmir region, reports Reuter. The Pakistan-based Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Amanullah Khan, said in a statement that Indian security forces had killed more than 200 Kashmiris in the past 10 days. Many of them were youths 'shot dead or tortured to death in interrogation camps or killed on roads without any provocation', he said. The situation amounted to "a rape of the UN charter, the universal declaration of human rights and Geneva Conventions" and deserved immediate attention of governments and organisations fighting for human rights, Khan said. He appealed to the United Nations, the United States and Islamic nations to "persuade, even pressure, India to put an immediate end to this savagery in Kashmir." Police and hospital sources say at least 12,000 people have been killed since the rebellion started in early 1990 in the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India. PTI reports from Srinagar: With the nabbing of almost the entire top hierarchy of pro-pakistan "Al Jihad" in Baramulla on Wednesday, the backbone of the militant outfit has been "effectively broken", a Defence Ministry spokesman claimed here yesterday. The spokesman said the operation against the armed militants and their collaborators and supporters would be further intensified. In a raid Wednesday, troops captured five top Al-Jehad militants including its divisional commander for the twin districts of Baramulla and Kupwara and rescued three senior functionaries of Baramulla district held hostages by them. Those captured have been identified as Abdul Qayoom Bidar, Divisional Commander for Baramulla and Kupwara, Mohammad Yousuf Wani, Deputy District Commander, Dawood Ahmad Dar and Abdul Ilamid Dar, both company commanders, and Majid Dar, chief motivator and recruiter for Al-Jehad, the spokesman said. Their interrogation is likely to yield some "vital clues" about that activities, contacts and collaborators of the militant outfit.

LTTE rejects UNHCR move to open passage to camp

COLOMBO, July 9: Sri Lanka's dominant Tamil Tiger guerrillas have rejected moves by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to open a safe passage to their besieged stronghold, reports AFP. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which earlier agreed to the UNHCR initiative, has now decided to back out of the plan to open a ferry route under international supervision, an LTTE leader said earlier this week. Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's main ideologue, told a public meeting in the northern Jaffna peninsula that the move was unacceptable because there were no guarantees that civilians would not be harassed by the army. Tigers have blocked civilians from using the only land route to the Jaffna peninsula while security forces have banned boat traffic on the Jaffna la- goon, effectively cutting off the peninsula from the rest of the mainland. However, hundreds of civilians braved a three hour ferry ride in LTTE-operated boats to cross the prohibited waterway despite sporadic naval attacks that have left dozens of boat passengers dead. Diplomatic sources said UNHCR offered its good offices to open a safe passage because of the severe hardships faced by civilians in the region. Diplomats said the Tiger rejection was a serious embarrassment to the UNHCR. The UNHCR office here sought a fresh mandate from its headquarters in Geneva last year to become virtual peace keepers in maintaining the proposed ferry route, diplomatic sources said. The Tigers are leading a protracted guerrilla war to establish an independent Tamil homeland in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. Balasingham said the draft agreement with the UNHCR was unfavourable to them as it would allow pro-government Tamil groups to arrest LTTE sympathisers and also prevent Tiger cadres from using the safe passage. "Our cadres won't be able to move through this passage. (But) even now they are travelling through this passage. How can we agree to this. This agreement is not favourable to our people." "And we like to conduct talks — we are not prepared to trust the Sinhalese of the majority community) and be deceived. Our leader (Velupillai Prabhakaran) stated that if we want to live with the Sinhalese amicably, we should be given an autonomous state with the amalgamation of the north and the east," Balasingham said.

Off the Record

'Smart bomb' can cure cancerous tumour?

WASHINGTON: Cancer researchers for a pharmaceutical company said they have developed a so-called "smart bomb" that releases a chemical killing cancerous tumours, reports AFP. The chemical was able to achieve cancer cures in a large percentage of human cancer cells implanted in laboratory mice and rats, the report said. The report published Friday in the journal Science is authored by Pamela Trail, a scientist with the Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharmaceutical Research Centre in Princeton, New Jersey. The substance dubbed BR96-dox, linked to the anti-cancer drug doxorubicin, aims to resolve the problem of killing cancerous cells without attacking normal tissues, the researchers said. It solves the problem by using a substance that finds the tumour and releases the anti-cancer drug. "The damage that may have been done to normal tissues was entirely reversible," Trail said adding that the test animals could tolerate high doses of the chemical. The researchers implanted cells from human lung, breast and colon cancers into rats and mice bred to have no immune reaction to the tumours. Some doses cured 70 per cent of the mice and up to 94 per cent of the rats implanted with lung cancer cells, she said. "What we call a cure is when the tumour completely regresses and you can't feel the tumour," Trail said. "We call it a cure if the tumour didn't reappear for up to a year."

Bone of Buddha stolen

KATHMANDU: A supposed bone of the Buddha, revered by millions of people, was stolen Thursday from an underground chamber where it was preserved in a Kathmandu temple early Thursday, police said, reports AFP. The relic had been kept in a hermetically sealed flask in a fireplace steel safe. Only the lid of the flask was retrieved by police dogs near the scene, police said. Buddhist scholars here said it was one of eight bones taken from the sages body before it was cremated and distributed to followers. This particular bone went with the spread of Buddhism to Sri Lanka then brought in 1947 from Sri Lanka to Nepal, where the Buddha was born 2,536 years ago, as a gift from the Sri Lankan people. The news of the theft of the relic spread like wildfire among Nepal's millions of stunned Buddhists. The relic was last seen in public in April, when it was brought out to mark the Buddha's birthday. Local Buddhist leader Lok Darshan Bajracharya said, "We are grieved and stunned to hear about the news of the theft." He called on the Nepalese Government to do its utmost to retrieve the relic and punish the thieves.

US presses DPRK to accept N-site inspection

TOKYO, July 9: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher upped pressure on North Korea today to accept inspection of suspected nuclear sites when talks resume next week on defusing the crisis over Pyongyang's atomic programme, reports Reuter. Speaking ahead of a visit by President Bill Clinton to South Korea that is expected to be dominated by the nuclear issue, Christopher reiterated the US position that US-North Korean negotiations reopening on July 14 in Geneva would not continue indefinitely without progress.

North, South America continue to violate human rights

LONDON, July 9: Government and national security forces continued to commit "gross human rights violations" in both North and South America in 1992, the rights group Amnesty International said in a report Thursday, says AFP. Among types of violations carried out last year, the group's annual report for the Americas listed summary executions, "disappearances," arbitrary detentions, torture and political imprisonment. The group said, "many governments failed to make any serious attempt to bring those responsible for recent and past violations to justice, and their agents continued to commit crimes with impunity." It said at least 3,700 people had been summarily executed in 11 countries across the continent in 1992, both by government forces and by death squads. Countries named included Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala and Haiti. Amnesty condemned what it called the "sprawling number of executions" in the United States, in particular in Texas. It said 31 convicted prisoners were executed in 1992, while some 2,600 were on death row in 34 states. The group noted that the United States was one of only six countries worldwide which allow the execution of prisoners who were minors at the time they committed their crimes. "Disappearances" remained in practice in at least 18 countries on the continent, with hundreds of cases in Colombia and Peru. Hundreds of people were still missing from past years in El Salvador, Uruguay, Argentina and Mexico. Meanwhile, human rights in Asia showed "little sign of improvement" in 1992, with torture, political imprisonment, "disappearances" and executions still widespread, AI also said in its annual report. In some countries, such as the Philippines, Indonesia and East Timor and Sri Lanka, this was part of a pattern going back years, but in others such as Papua New Guinea — where "dozens" had been executed by government forces — the killings were a new development. In Thailand, soldiers opened fire on unarmed civilians, killing 52 peaceful demonstrators, while hundreds of people were injured or simply "disappeared" after protests were violently suppressed by the security forces in May, 1992. Amnesty said at least 16 people had disappeared in police or military custody in the Philippines, and that scores of people had been killed by government forces in Indonesia and East Timor. In Cambodia, during the last few months of 1992 and the beginning of 1993, there had been a "growth" in the number of political massacres by the army and the Khmer Rouge, despite the presence of 16,000 soldiers and 6,000 UN peace-keeping troops. China alone recorded 1,891 death sentences and 1,179 executions, although the true figures were expected to be higher. In Pakistan, at least 19 prisoners were executed, while 130 were sentenced to death. In India "hundreds" of political activists were executed in Jammu, Kashmir and Punjab while torture and ill-treatment of detainees was widespread with women often raped in police cells or army custody. Torture, including rape, was also "frequently" in China and Pakistan where at least 15 people had died in custody. In China, the most frequently reported methods were severe beatings, shocks from electric batons and sleep deprivation. In Indonesia and East Timor, more than 180 prisoners of conscience were held during 1990 while only 30 were sentenced, and at least 300 others were serving lengthy sentences after "unfair trials." In Vietnam, at least 70 prisoners of conscience were held in prison, although five were released along with over 100 officials of the pre-1975 government — many of whom had been held without trial for up to 17 years. In Myanmar, more than 1,550 political prisoners remained in detention, including Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi who had been held under house arrest since 1989.

Highest Saudi award for Pak PM

ISLAMABAD, July 9: Saudi Prince Turki Al-Faisal, head of his country's information services, arrived here Thursday for a meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, an official source said, reports AFP. Al-Faisal, a special envoy of King Fahd, announced that the Saudi government had decided to confer upon Sharif its highest award — the Shah Abdul Aziz medal — in recognition of his services to the Islamic community. The Prince, who earlier played a role in mediating the Afghan conflict, arrived in Pakistan during a power struggle between Sharif and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.