

Amnesty wants India to take action against custodial deaths

NEW DELHI, July 11: Amnesty International (AI) has asked India to take swift action at least in all cases of custodial deaths reported recently and strengthen legal safeguards for all those taken into custody, reports PTI.

In a report on "Rising reports of custodial deaths in Delhi", released recently, the world body said such an action would be the perpetrators to justice and to ensure that adequate compensation was promptly granted to the victims or their relatives.

Expressing concern over the government's "Lack of determination to translate into practice the commitment" to project human rights, AI said that the government had failed to take the concrete measures such as strengthening legal safeguards for detainees in custody.

Row over missile testing equipment Iraq offers new proposals to UN

BAGHDAD, July 11: Iraq has provided the United Nations with new proposals on how to defuse a row over the sealing of equipment at two missile test sites, a senior Iraqi weapons official said today, reports Reuters.

"We gave them good suggestions. They promised to study these suggestions," Husam Mohammed Ameen told reporters.

The nature of the proposals and the UN reaction to them were not immediately known.

The leader of the UN team charged with sealing the equipment left his Baghdad hotel in the morning for an inspection of the two sites 65 km (35 miles) to the south and south west of Baghdad.

Mark Silver, an American, said on Saturday he would leave Baghdad immediately if the Iraqis turned down the UN demand to have the two sites closed temporarily.

Mohamed Ameen and Silver both went to visit the sites where the Iraqis have been testing missiles with ranges close to the 150 km (95 miles) limit permitted under the terms of the Gulf War ceasefire.

A UN official in Baghdad said the missile testing equipment would not be sealed today. "We are waiting for a word from New York. Silver will be on normal inspection."

The UN scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction under the terms of the Gulf War ceasefire, ordered the sites close after Iraq rejected a Security Council demand to have monitoring cameras installed. It has told Iraq that it blocks Silver's mission it will demand destruction of the test sites.

Neither the UN nor the Iraqis would comment on the nature of the new proposals. One Iraqi official said, "The ball is in the UN court now."

AFP says: The head of a United Nations weapons inspection team met here Saturday with Iraqi authorities to discuss a UN plan to close off two missile test sites.

Mark Silver refused to comment to reporters following his 90 minute meeting, saying he wanted to contact UN officials in New York who are responsible for neutralizing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

But an Iraqi source said after the talks that "the ball is now in the court of the United Nations," which according to diplomats here suggests that Iraq may have put forward counter-proposals or placed conditions on the installation of the seals.

The sealing procedure was approved by the United Nations as a provisional measure to prevent Baghdad from using the facilities until it agrees to the installation of cameras to monitor the tests that are conducted there.

The Security Council has ruled that Iraq may not possess missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometers (93 miles).

Baghdad, according to Information Minister Hamed Yusef Hammadi, has not flatly rejected the installation of the cameras but has asked for the measure to be postponed.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia accused Iraqi forces of opening fire at its border and said that it has informed the UN Security Council of Iraq's "provocations".

A statement by the Foreign Ministry, issued on Saturday night and quoted by the official Saudi press agency, said the incidents took place on July 1 and July 4.

"Some Iraqi forces near the border of Saudi Arabia have on July 1 and 4 carried out some provocations,"

Aided ready to hold talks

MOGADISHU, July 11: Somali warlord General Mohamed Farah Aided, sought by UN forces with a 25,000 dollar reward for his capture, is ready to hold talks to end the crisis in the horn of Africa country, one of his aides said Saturday, reports AFP.

Hussein Dhimbri said he had seen Aided Saturday morning in Mogadishu and that the general was prepared to hold talks with leaders of UNOSOM, the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia, "on condition that they halt their bombardment and attacks" against Aided's supporters.

Aided "is well, is continuing his activities and moving around freely," Dhimbri said.

Dhimbri said he "condemned absolutely" the repeated attacks by Somali millions on UNOSOM forces, which he attributed to "bandits, or people who do not want peace in Somalia."

"For us the fighting is over," he said.

Off the Record



Video Jockey Sophiya Haque, also a singer, is seen in a recorded performance on MTV recently. — Star TV photo

Baby smuggling for adoption

GEORGETOWN: The Guyana government said on Saturday it was investigating reports of baby smuggling to Britain, where the infants fetch up to 10,000 pounds sterling, reports AFP.

Minister of Amerindian Affairs Vibart de Souza said the government was trying to confirm alleged illegal trafficking of Amerindian babies — smuggled from Guyana's Hinterland and sold in Britain.

The babies reportedly range from three months to 10 months old.

Official sources said the exact number of Amerindian babies smuggled to Britain or any other country for foreign adoption was not known.

Officials said that five board has no record of indigenous babies being registered for adoption during that period.

De Souza said he knew of two babies being held in Georgetown for dispatch to London.

All the babies were reportedly smuggled from western areas bordering Guyana's frontier with Venezuela.

T B accelerates AIDS?

NAIROBI: Tuberculosis (T B) kills three million people in the world each year, World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Kenya Paul Chuke said here on Friday, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at a meeting organized by Kenya's health services, Chuke said "A sense of urgency is created by the return of T B which we all thought was at last disappearing and its comeback is linked to HIV infection."

The WHO official said T B was once a disease of poor people, immigrants and wartime refugees but it is afflicting people from all walks of life.

Explaining the relationship between T B and AIDS, Chuke said, "If someone has dormant T B infection and his immunity is depressed as in the case of AIDS, the silent T B bacterial will be re-activated and progress to full-blown clinical T B."

Belcher kills children

WASHINGTON: More than 100 abortion opponents have been arrested since the group Operation Rescue sent thousands of its supporters to blockade abortion clinics in major US cities Friday, reports AFP.

On Friday, the group launched its 10-day nationwide, "Cities of refuge" campaign from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to San Jose, California.

At a suburban Philadelphia Clinic, police arrested 113 hymn-singing protesters after they blocked doors at the center. Police in San Jose, California, arrested 16 anti-abortion demonstrators outside the home of Gynecologist Jonathan Belcher as they allegedly distributed leaflets saying "Jonathan Belcher kills children."

In Cleveland, Ohio, the anti-abortion Crusaders found them selves outnumbered by abortion rights groups when they went to protest at four clinics.

"You can torture us, you can jail us, you can do whatever you want, but we will not bow down," the reverend Patrick Mahoney, executive director of the Virginia-based Christian defence coalition, said during an Operation Rescue church service in suburban Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Operation Rescue, founded in 1987 as one of the country's most militant anti-abortion groups.

Romance made her success

LONDON: Prolific novelist Eleanor Hibbert, who wrote under the name of Jean Plaidy, Victoria Holt and Phillipa Carr, left more than 8.5 million pounds (12.60 million dollars) in her will released on Saturday, reports Reuters.

Hibbert, who died in her 80s while on a Mediterranean cruise earlier this year, wrote more than 200 novels and her successful mix of realistic historical detail and colourful romance made her one of Britain's most commercially successful writers.

Hibbert was born to humble beginnings in south London, around 1910. She had 14 pen names and invariably featured in the top 100 authors most borrowed from British libraries.

Throughout her life Hibbert remained a personal enigma, and her birth date and marriage are omitted from who's who. Her estate, including unpublished works and letters, has been left to unnamed personal legatees. She and her husband had no children.

Azeris, Armenians urged to speed up peace talks

BAKU, Azerbaijan, July 11: International mediator Mario Raftelli urged Azerbaijan and Armenia on Saturday to speed up peace talks to put an end to fighting around the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, reports Reuters.

Raftelli heads a mission from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), trying to end five years of conflict over the Armenian-dominated enclave inside Azerbaijan. Armenians have pushed out most Azeris this year.

The Azeri side has accepted the CSCE peace plan. Now it is a question for Armenia. Raftelli told reporters in Azerbaijan's capital Baku, the first leg of a tour which will also take him to the Armenian capital Yerevan and Nagorno-Karabakh this week.

"I'm in Baku to secure a peaceful settlement to the Karabakh problem, to stop military activity," he said after meeting Acting President Geidar Aliyev, who claimed power last month after a rebellion ousted the elected leader, Abulfaz Elchibey.

Several thousand people have been killed in the Karabakh fighting since 1988.

Raftelli said fighting in the enclave, which has intensified in recent weeks with Armenian forces taking control of virtually all of Nagorno-Karabakh and laying siege to the central Azeri town of Agdam, had delayed urgent measures needed for a truce.

The mediator's trip, originally set for June 5, was postponed after last weekend's intense shelling of Agdam from surrounding heights controlled by Armenian forces.



PHNOM PENH: A government army Soviet made T-62 tank advances past a farmhouse near the Thai border on July 8 about 25 kms from the Preah Vihear Temple which was captured by Khmer Rouge forces earlier this week. Some reports have stated that Khmer Rouge troops attacked from Thai soil although it has been denied by the Thai government. — AFP photo

EC-US meet to press Iran to abandon N-plan

BRUSSELS, July 11: US and European Community officials held talks here on US requests for concerted action to put pressure on Iran to abandon its programme of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, reports Reuters.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Edward Djerejian said the meeting would initiate an effort to hold joint studies on how to deal with the problem.

"This is a working group and we are very encouraged by the cooperation we are receiving from the Europeans to look into this issue in quite some depth," Djerejian told Reuters as he arrived for the meeting.

Djerejian met officials from Denmark, Belgium and Greece — the so-called EC Troika representing the last, current and next countries to hold the community's rotating presidency.

Djerejian described the meeting as a follow-up to talks in Luxembourg last month between EC Foreign Ministers and Secretary of State Warren Christopher at which the US side advocated a collective EC-US policy of containment against Iran.

The US mission to the EC said Djerejian would stay in Europe after the EC talks to meet Dennis Ross, US special envoy to the Middle East peace negotiations, but it would not elaborate.

Christopher said Iran was the most worrisome of what he called dangerous state contributing to tensions in areas like the Middle East.

Washington has long sought to persuade its allies to curtail trade ties with Iran to force it to end its weapons build-up.

Tehran Radio last month announced that German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had sent Rafsanjani a message on problems in expanding economic cooperation, but hoping a bilateral economic commission could meet soon to boost trade and economic ties.

Arab self-rule in occupied areas discussed

JERUSALEM, July 11: A US team on a Middle East peace mission met Israeli and Egyptian officials on Saturday to discuss plans for Arab self-rule in the occupied territories, reports Reuters.

The Americans said after meeting Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Saturday night that they would continue their discussion with him next week.

"I really spent time briefing the Prime Minister on discussions we had," said Dennis Ross, the US chief coordinator of Middle East peace talks, referring to discussions in Cairo earlier in the day.

"We'll be continuing discussions and we'll be back with the Prime Minister in the next couple of days."

The US officials declined to say where they would be on Sunday, but they had a meeting scheduled for Monday with Palestinian negotiators in Jerusalem.

Three Muslim fundamentalists to die in Algeria

ALGERIA, July 11: An Algerian court sentenced three Muslim fundamentalists to death on Saturday for conspiring against the security of the state, belonging to a "Terrorist Association" and armed robbery, reports Reuters.

The official APS news agency said the special court in the eastern city of Constantine, one of three set up last year to combat Muslim fundamentalist unrest, sentenced a fourth activist to life in prison.

All four were present in court.

Algeria has sentenced more than 145 fundamentalists on to death on various charges since the start of 1992. Six were executed at the start of this year.

Elsewhere, gunmen on Saturday shot and wounded a lawyer who served on an official Commission of Inquiry into the assassination a year ago of Head-of-State Mohamed Boudiaf.

APS said Mohamed Ferhat was hit in the hand and shoulder when unidentified gunmen fired on him as he drove in his car in the centre of Oran west of the capital Algiers. His life was not in danger.

Algeria has been rocked by Muslim fundamentalist unrest since its army-backed leadership cancelled the second round of voting in a general election the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front had been poised to win.

Dozens of members of the security forces and civilians have been killed in Algeria in the past seven months in attacks the authorities blame on Muslim activists.

Boudiaf's widow, Fatima, has accused the Commission of Inquiry of not establishing the truth behind his murder despite having the necessary means at its disposal.

BRIEFLY

Mujahideen trade POWs: Two rival Afghan Mujahideen factions, the Hizb-e-Wahdat and the Ittehad-i-Islami, have exchanged a number of prisoners of war (POWs), Xinhua reports from Islamabad.

They exchanged each others POWs following one week of talks in Kabul, a report from Kabul said yesterday.

A Hizb-e-Wahdat delegation called on Ittehad-i-Islami leader Sayyaf and showing reciprocity. An Ittehad delegation also called on Hizb-i-Wahdat chief Abdull Ali Mazari. As a result the Ittehad-i-Islami released 14 prisoners Friday while the Hizb-e-Wahdat released seven prisoners of the other side.

3 French UN troops shot: Gunmen shot and wounded three French UN peacekeeping troops at Mogadishu port on Saturday, a UN spokeswoman said, Reuters reports from Mogadishu.

Major Lecann Swieczkowski told reporters they were hit by snipers while overseeing the unloading of supplies from a ship. Two were hit in the abdomen and one in the shoulder, she said. Their condition was not immediately known.

Floods claim 8 in China: At least eight people were killed in floods in southern China's Guangxi province, a report said yesterday, AFP says from Hong Kong.

In addition to the deaths, 19 people were reported injured in the floods when the swollen Liujiang river in the southern industrial city of Liuzhou broke its banks, the China News Service said.

Nearly 3,000 people were marooned in their homes after heavy rainstorms that struck the region from July 7, the report said.

15 found dead in Algeria: Fifteen people, including four women and four children, have been found dead in a remote part of the southern Algerian desert, state radio reported Saturday, AFP says from Algiers.

The badly decomposed bodies were discovered Tuesday at Tamroult Echegaa, 339 kilometers (212 miles) southwest of Tamansasset in southern Algeria, near their vehicle on a road leading toward Tin Zaouatine on the border with Mali.

Dozens of people, who embarked on a desert adventure into the desert without a guide and without informing police of their itinerary, lose their way and die of dehydration.

38 feared drowned in Nepal: Some 38 persons were feared drowned early Saturday when their bus plunged into the Chitra canal near Haripur, 260 kilometres (160 miles) south of Kathmandu, a police source said, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

The source said that a passenger bus with 51 people aboard had started from Jhaunkabar Sunsari district and was on its way to Haripur when it fell into the canal.

Thirteen of the passengers managed to swim safely to the bank of the canal, while 14 bodies had been recovered from the accident site.



LONDON: File picture dated 1914 of Czar Nicolas II with his wife Czarina Alexandra (back right), the Czarovitch Alexi (2nd right) and his four daughters, scientists confirmed Friday that they have proved "virtually beyond doubt" that the human remains found in Russia in 1989 were that of the Romanov family.

De Klerk slates Mandela

DURBAN, (South Africa), July 11: President Frederik De Klerk criticised African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela on Saturday for not putting South Africa's interests first, reports AFP.

Addressing a youth conference of his governing National Party in this east coast city, De Klerk responded to Mandela's political savaging of him on their recent visit to the United States to receive a joint award.

Mandela had said before receiving the Philadelphia Liberty Medal that he did not regard De Klerk's government as legitimate and that it was the ANC's prerogative to decide when sanctions against South Africa could be lifted.

South Africa's future "will not be decided by petty squabbling," De Klerk said.

"Arabs don't accept Sudanese because they are black"

KHARTOUM, July 11: When the army seized power in Sudan in 1989 and handed in to ideologues who declared an Islamic revolution, shocked western and secular Arab powers prepared to deal with an Arab Iran, reports Reuters. Four years later, there has been no shortage of political conflict between Khartoum's rulers and their ideological foes abroad. But at home, this huge African country still feels anything but a puritanical Muslim society. Most women dress as they always did. They cover their arms, legs and hair but they do it with loose, brightly coloured shawls, quite unlike the heavy black or grey chadors worn by Iranian fundamentalists and their

admirers in the Arab world. Few women cover their faces. Sudan's legal system applies traditional Islamic law. But unlike Pakistan or most of the Gulf countries, the Koranic punishment of amputation for theft has not been used. Sudan's African-style music still thrives. Singers are national celebrities and big bands play at weddings. Men and women dance together, at least middle class celebrations. Khartoum residents say that despite a crackdown on alcohol, the local distilling industry is still going strong, run by southern Christians. It is more normal for policemen to accept a bribe to return the date: whisky appa-

ratus they confiscate than to prosecute. The obvious reason for the lack of change is that Sudan's Islamic takeover has been driven by relatively small group, Hassan Turabi's National Islamic Front, which was consistently the third most popular party during the democracy period. Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979 was a mass movement. But even Turabi's supporters seem to be driven less by concern to enforce code of behaviour at home than by a yearning to assert a distinct identity for Sudanese in an Arab and Muslim world that has often looked down on them. The Sudanese are always

fighting to be taken seriously," said one long-time foreign resident. Whatever fine words are said about one Arab nation, they know other Arabs don't really accept them as equals because they are black and African. "What do they have to prove what they are? They have their religion and their language," he added. Other Arabs, especially from rich Gulf countries, commonly refer to Sudanese by Arabic terms meaning "Negroes" and even "slaves". In pre-modern times, Arabs were heavily involved in trading in black African slaves. In a stereotype strikingly similar to white prejudice about blacks, Arabs often regard

Sudanese as naturally lazy and unable to manage their own affairs. Northern Sudanese in turn adopt these views about their southern compatriots. One southerner, affluent Arabic speaker who worked in Saudi Arabia, said he is actually better treated there than his northern compatriots. "The thing was, I always said that was African, not Arab. The northerners would say they were Arab and the Saudis didn't like this. I don't know a single northerner who came back with a positive experience." Unlike Iran, Khartoum rulers are not so much concerned with radicalising people who are already Muslims as in

converting the non-Muslims of the south so they at least bear a Muslim name and show loyalty to Islam as a badge of identity. The process has been going on for centuries of Sudan's 26 million people, the 18 million or so in the north usually referred to as Arabs, to distinguish them from southerners who see themselves as belonging to African tribal cultures. The two sides have been fighting a bitter civil war for most of the four decades since the country gained independence in 1956. Sudan is a traditional society, any movement which does not recognise that is bound to fail," Turabi said in an interview recently.

Workshop on toxic trade

CHARLESTON, July 11: More than sixty South Carolinians Tuesday attended the first of two Greenpeace sponsored workshops on making their communities Waste Trade Free Zones, according to GP.

On the opening day of the visit of the Greenpeace ship MV Greenpeace, participants were introduced to the issue of international toxic trade — the business of exporting waste to developing countries — and South Carolina's role in this horrible practice.

Marcelo Furtado, of Greenpeace's Toxic Trade Campaign, highlighted the export last year of over 3,000 tons of hazardous waste as fertilizer by a South Carolina company to Bangladesh.