

BRIEFLY

Drug smuggler held in Spain: Spanish police have arrested a narcotics smuggler who swallowed enough cocaine to make 48,000 individual doses, a local government spokesman said on Friday, Reuter reports from Barcelona.

The man was arrested at Barcelona airport and the cocaine had a street value of eight million pesetas 60,000 US dollars, authorities said.

An X-ray revealed 61 packages of cocaine, weighing a total 800 grams (28 ounces).

Black cop shot dead in S Africa: A black policeman was shot dead while having his hair cut in Kwathema township near Johannesburg on Friday, Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

Police said the constable was attacked by group of armed men as he sat in a barber's chair. A total of 109 members of the South African police force were killed in the first six months of the year.

Road mishap claims 19 in Canada: A collision between a mini-bus filled with elderly handicapped people and a small truck carrying two gasoline tanks left 19 dead Friday, police said, AFP reports from Lacbouchette, Canada.

Both vehicles caught fire after the accident, which two people survived, said Bruno Savard of the Quebec provincial police.

The accident occurred when the truck tried to pass a second vehicle on a curvy road and collided head-on with the mini-bus coming from the other direction.

Quake toll rises to 158 in Japan: The death toll from the north Japan earthquake reached 158 on Saturday as rescue workers discovered more victims of the deadliest tremor to hit the nation in decades, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

More than 100 people were still posted as missing five days after the quake, which measured 7.8 on the Richter scale, a police official said.

Israel urged to free Lebanese girl: France Friday called on Israel to release a 16-year-old Lebanese girl kidnapped by Israeli agents in south Lebanon, saying such acts were an attack on Lebanon's sovereignty, reports AFP from Paris.

"We ask Israel to release the girl and to abstain from these kinds of acts, which we condemn, and which undermine Lebanon's sovereignty", Foreign Ministry spokesman Richard Duce said.

According to Lebanese police, the girl was abducted at a roadblock manned by the Israeli-backed south Lebanon army and Israeli intelligence agents outside the town of Arnun.

US-DPRK talks tomorrow: The head of the North Korean delegation to crisis nuclear talks with the United States said discussions are likely to resume on Monday, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said today, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

The official North Korean agency monitored in Tokyo said Kang Sok Ju, Pyongyang's First Deputy Foreign Minister, told reporters in Geneva where the discussions are being held that the two delegations held sincere talks on Friday.

Miyazawa brushes aside possibilities of debacle

TOKYO, July 17: Kiichi Miyazawa, anxious to show that rumors of his political death are much exaggerated, came out guns blazing in the last days of campaigning for Sunday's general election, reports Reuter.

"I think that we (the Liberal Democratic Party) are putting the worst behind us," the 73-year-old Prime Minister told journalists, brushing aside suggestions the scandal-ridden LDP could lose its 38-year monopoly on power.

"As you can see," he added, "I myself am alive and well and working hard (for victory)." News reports had called his cabinet a corpse.

Nevertheless, Miyazawa has kept a low profile during the two-week campaign, due as much to his abysmal popularity ratings as to his role as host at last week's Tokyo summit.

Even if the LDP clings to office, Miyazawa, widely seen as weak and ineffectual, is unlikely



Kiichi Miyazawa

to last much longer. Few in the party admire his handling of the crucial debate on cleansing Japan's money-driven politics.

Faced with opposition from government, prompting him to dissolve parliament and call snap elections.

Since the dissolution, nearly 50 lawmakers have quit the LDP to launch two new reformist parties which, according to opinion polls, are set to do well in the upcoming election.

The no-confidence vote marked an undignified end to the administration of a man who took office wreathed in smiles in November 1991, triumphantly acceding at last to the post he had long seen as his natural destiny.

Holder of 13 cabinet posts in a political career spanning four decades, Miyazawa was a prince long groomed to be king.

He almost won the top job in 1987, only for LDP barons to award it to Noboru Takeshita instead. He became finance minister and deputy premier, and was the clear heir-apparent.

One year later, he was consigned to political oblivion over

the recruit shares — for influence affair, then the biggest political scandal in post-1945 Japan.

Even after his 1991 rehabilitation, Miyazawa was unable to shake off memories of political corruption.

No fewer than four men named to his new cabinet and LDP executive were tainted either by recruit or other scandals, a fact not lost on the opposition.

Before long, they had even more sensational revelations to exploit as two new dirty money scandals broke, one involving a close political ally, the other destroying LDP kingmaker Shin Kanemaru, the backroom boss who gave him the job.

Besieged by popular demands for urgent action, Miyazawa solemnly pledged to reform an electoral system seen as increasingly unfair and as the root cause of "money politics," within the current session of parliament.

Shevardnadze rejects Russian peace plan

MOSCOW, July 17: Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze rejected on Friday a Russian peace plan to halt fighting between Georgian government forces and separatists in Abkhazia, Interfax news agency reported here, says AFP.

Shevardnadze told a closed-door session of the Georgian parliament in Tbilisi that the peace plan presented by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov "contains several points we do not agree with," Interfax said.

Georgian forces launched an attack earlier on Friday to retake two towns seized by separatist rebels near the regional capital Sukhumi.

Abkhazian forces seized the towns, Chrom and Akhalsbeni respectively north and west of Sukhumi, during an offensive two weeks ago. They rejected an ultimatum to withdraw from the towns by midnight on Wednesday.

Interfax quoting Georgian press reports from Abkhazia said the offensive was continuing Friday evening and that



Eduard Shevardnadze

Abkhazians had been forced to retreat and had suffered losses.

According to Interfax, Shevardnadze told deputies that in Moscow last September Georgia had signed an agreement on Abkhazia which included certain concessions required by the situation at that

time. "This time, we will accept no compromise which goes against Georgia's interests," the report quoted Shevardnadze as saying.

Peace accord in Liberia

GENEVA, July 17: Liberia's warring factions reached a peace agreement today, a mediator said, reports AFP.

Cannan Banana of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) said the agreement included a ceasefire and arrangements for a transitional government.

The accord was reached after a week of UN and OAU sponsored talks here aimed at ending three-and-a-half years of civil war in the West African country.

Only a day earlier, a UN spokeswoman had said the talks were stalemated over the issue of political structures to be created once the fighting stopped.

UN spokeswoman Therese Gastaut said Friday the unre-

solved questions included the composition of the transitional government, the staging of elections and the makeup of a court which would supervise the voting.

Banana and UN envoy Trevor Gordon-Somers had said Thursday that if an agreement were reached, it would be submitted to a summit of the economic community of West African states next week in Benin.

This organization has stationed peacekeeping forces in Liberia.

Meanwhile, More than 100,000 people in rebel-held areas of central and north-eastern Liberia are facing famine and disease on a scale comparable to that in Somalia

Two Malaysians to die for drug trafficking

SINGAPORE, July 17: Two Malaysians were sentenced to death for drug trafficking by the High Court today, the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) reported, says AFP.

Wong Kok Men, 21, and Lim Yat Kong, 22, were found guilty of transporting four packets of heroin weighing 47.11 grams (1.6 ounces) from a flat into a car. Their occupations were not mentioned.

The offence was committed in August 1991.

Their appeal against the death sentence is automatic and is likely to come up for hearing in about one year.

Possession of more than 15 grams (0.53 ounces) of heroin is deemed to be a trafficker and the death sentence is mandatory on conviction.

Lankan planes bomb Tamil village: 4 killed

VAVUNIYA (Shri Lanka), July 17: Air force planes carried out bombing raids over a Tamil village near this northern Sri Lankan town, killing at least four civilians and destroying 10 shops, travellers from the area said today, reports AFP.

Aircraft bombed the village of Karadipoku located inside territory controlled by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Friday afternoon, the travellers said.

Military officials said they were unaware of any civilian casualties but confirmed that fixed-wing ground attack aircraft were carrying out strikes inside LTTE-controlled areas in north-east Sri Lanka.

Plot to kill Bush

KUWAIT CITY, July 17: The trial resumed here today of 11 Iraqis and three Kuwaitis charged with plotting to assassinate former US President George Bush, reports AFP.

The state security court was to hear the testimony of the last defendant, Badr Al-Shammari, a 20-year-old Kuwaiti.

Since the trial opened on June 5, two Iraqi suspects, read Adel Amir Al-Assadi and Wali Abdel Hadi Al-Ghazali, have confessed to links with the Iraqi Intelligence Services.

But all the others have denied any knowledge of the alleged plot to kill Bush during a visit to Kuwait in April.

US warships fired 23 cruise missiles at the Iraqi Intelligence Service headquarters in Baghdad in retaliation for the alleged plot, although Iraq has also denied any involvement. Six civilians were killed in the attack.

90 Myanmar troops killed in clash with rebels in 2 weeks

BANGKOK, July 17: The combined forces of Myanmar opium lord Khun Sa and a Shan state faction have killed more than 90 government soldiers and wounded scores in heavy fighting in the past two weeks, a guerrilla source and resident said, reports Reuter.

The two sides have been engaged in heavy fighting in Mong Nawng in the centre of Myanmar eastern Shan state as a breakaway faction of the separatist Shan State Army (SSA) continues to resist Yangon's rule, the resident who was visiting Bangkok said on Friday.

The troops, caught off guard as the rebels attacked with recoilless rifles and rocket launchers, suffered heavy losses after the guerrillas attacked and captured four of their outposts, the source said.

"The Myanmar soldiers are

in a disadvantageous position because they are being attacked with the more sophisticated weapons of the guerrillas," he said.

Yangon has in the past two weeks sent about 1,000 fresh soldiers to the jungle battlefield to combat the force, made up of about 300 SSA guerrillas and one battalion from the Mong Tai Army (MTA), Khun Sa's private army, a close associate of the drug warlord said.

An MTA battalion usually comprises between 700 and 1,000 soldiers.

Senior MTA official Lieutenant General Kan Jate came from a Khun Sa stronghold on the edge of Shan state near the Thai border to supervise the fighting, the source said.

The 300 SSA guerrillas are part of a faction which opposed

Egypt hangs 5 more Islamic militants

CAIRO, July 17: Five Islamic militants were hanged today in the Egyptian capital for a series of attacks, including a foiled assassination bid on the information minister and bombings at tourist sites, officials said, reports AFP.

The five sentenced on May 27 were among 22 people condemned to death since October. The latest executions raised to 14 the number hanged since May, with the other eight Islamic militants still on the run.

As part of a crackdown on Muslim fundamentalists waging war on the secular government since March 1992, another seven military were hanged in a Cairo prison on July 8.

Ahmad Al-Husseini was found guilty of opening fire on Information Minister Safwat Al-Sharif in an attack on April 20

and also of the bombing of Agiza Pyramid in March that caused no casualties or serious damage.

Hassan Shalankani and Ibrahim Sayed Abdel-Al were convicted on both counts as well as for the murder of a police officer and an explosion on a tour bus outside the Cairo Museum that also caused no casualties.

Tareq Abdel Razzak was hanged for the bus attack and for possession of arms and explosives, while Ashraf Al-Sayed Ibrahim was found guilty of a Molotov cocktail attack in which three South Korean tourists were slightly wounded.

The latest five were sentenced in military court like but all one of the 22 condemned to death. President Hosni Mubarak ordered the trials in military court.

Christopher's move to revive ME talks

BEIRUT, July 17: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher plans to visit the Middle East within two weeks to try to revive Arab-Israeli peace talks, Syria's Foreign Minister Farouq al-Shara said today, reports Reuter.

Speaking to reporters on arrival at Beirut airport, Shara indicated that Damascus rejected an Israeli warning to curb guerrillas attacking Israeli forces in south Lebanon.

A US team led by peace talks coordinator Dennis Ross carried the warning from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to Damascus on Sunday and a Syrian reply back to Israel.

On his week-long mission, Ross held talks with Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian and Syrian leaders in a bid to

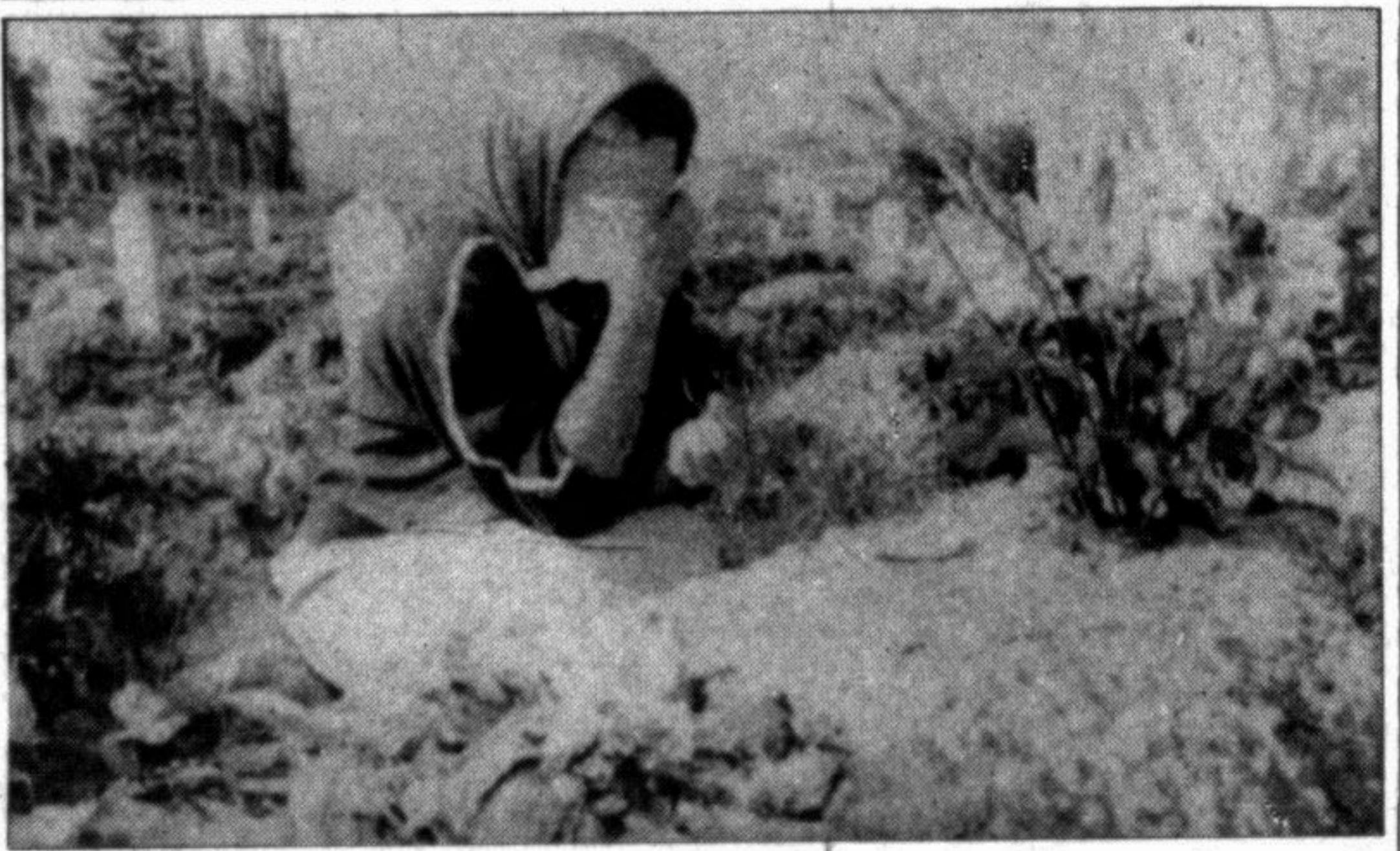
breathe new life into the peace process after 10 rounds of talks.

Shara said the Ross team informed Syria that Christopher planned to visit the Middle East within the next two weeks.

Rabin, through Ross, warned Syria, the main foreign power in Lebanon, to cut supply lines from Iran guerrillas in Lebanon following the killing of five Israeli soldiers last week.

"Our stand on the (guerrilla) resistance is known," Shara said at the start of a one-day visit to Beirut to brief Lebanese leaders on Syria's talks with Ross.

"Resistance is a legitimate right of every people under foreign occupation and we don't accept messages," he said.



SARAJEVO: A Muslim Bosnian woman cries Friday after she placed flowers at the grave of her dead 14-year old son Mirza who was killed by a grenade attack earlier this week in Sarajevo. Photo — AFP/UNB

Castro ready for talks with Clinton

SALVADOR (Brazil), July 17: Cuban President Fidel Castro said on Friday that he was open to talks with US President Bill Clinton, but made clear that Cuba's internal situation was not open to discussion, reports Reuter.

"We don't negotiate our country, our revolution or the conquests of socialism. I would negotiate for my life, but not for my country," Castro told reporters at the third annual Ibero-American Summit in Brazil's former colonial capital.

Castro described Clinton as "decent man, a man of peace" and said, "It seems to me that he is of a different generation of north America."

Two ex-ministers, military chiefs held for corruption in ROK

SEOUL, July 17: South Korea's Anti-corruption prosecutors today arrested two ex-defence ministers and two military chiefs and charged them with taking a total of more than 1 million dollar in bribes in connection with military procurement projects, reports Reuter.

Former defence ministers Lee Jong-Koo and Lee Sang-hoon, and former air force and navy chiefs Han Jool-sok and Kim Chul-woo were formally charged, prosecutors said.

"They have admitted that they took the money but denied that the money trading was connected with the government's arms purchase projects, a prosecution official said. But

we have acquired enough evidence to prosecute them."

Lee Jong-Koo, defence minister from 1990 to 1991, is charged with taking 180 million won (225,000 dollar) from two domestic firms in connection with construction projects in the military.

His predecessor Lee Sang-hoon is charged with receiving 30 million won (38,000 dollar) from Hyundai Precision and Industries Co, parts supplier for K-1 tanks developed in South Korea.

State Radio said investigators earlier this week questioned Kim Woo-Choong, founder of the mighty Daewoo Group, about allegations that he gave 120 million won

(150,000 dollar) to Lee Sang-hoon in bribes.

Prosecution and Daewoo officials were not available for comment on the report.

Daewoo Corp, the group's trading arm, was the local consultant for Lockheed Corp between 1980 and 1991 when South Korea was embarking on a military build-up project, codenamed "Yulkok".

Lockheed won an 810 million dollar order in 1991 for six anti-submarine patrol planes.

Prosecution sources said former navy chief Kim Chul-woo was suspected of taking 300 million won (375,000 dollar) from a local arms contractor in connection with the purchase of ships.

The contractor was also arrested on bribery charges.

Former air force chief Han was suspected of taking embezzled 168 million won (208,500 dollar) when he was air force chief from 1990 to 1992.

State radio said the younger brother of incumbent defence minister Kwon Yoong-Hae was questioned on Saturday about allegations that he received 50 million won (63,000 dollar) from an arms dealer last year.

Kwon was quoted as saying he only borrowed the money from the dealer and returned it later.

His brother was in charge of the military modernisation pro-

gramme before taking up his cabinet post in February.

Last week the board of audit and inspection said it had round evidence that dozens of former and active-duty military officers were involved in corrupt deals.

On president Kim Young-Sam's orders, the board had investigated recent military hardware purchases, including a 5 billion dollar fighter purchase plan. Opposition politician said they involved corrupt deals.

The government, citing cost-saving, chose to by F-16 falcons built by General Dynamics after originally plumping for F-18 Hornets produced by McDonnell Douglas.

Beijing denies building base in South China Sea

BEIJING, July 17: China denied today that it was building a military air base in the disputed South China Sea, reports AFP.

A book published by the Public Security Ministry reported that China was constructing the base to prepare for possible combat in the strategic region, triggering concern by several neighbours.

"The allegation that China is building military bases in the South China Sea is totally groundless, nor does China have any intention to manufacture small aircraft carriers," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

The base, according to the book, was located in the Paracel Islands, 600 kilometres (375 miles) from the Spratly Islands, which are claimed by China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia, the

Philippines and Brunei.

The spokesman, asked to comment on the book, said only that Beijing's desire to peacefully handle rival claims and engage in joint exploration "remains unchanged."

The book, military secrets, was published last month by the police officer educational publishing house after being approved by censors. It disclosed for the first time details of China's military purchases and plans.

It said that China had already bought 24 advanced Su-27 jet fighters and five heavy military transport planes from Russia.

China was also continuing efforts to obtain an aircraft carrier as part of its "determination" to build a blue water naval fleet, the book said.

Time bomb at Srinagar airport defused

NEW DELHI, July 17: A bomb disposal squad defused a powerful time bomb today outside the VIP lounge at the airport in Srinagar, the summer capital of the strife-torn Indian state of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

The news agency said the explosive was hidden in a lunch box.

Airport officials told PTI that the head of the Kashmir chapter of the ruling Congress (I) Party was waiting to fly from Srinagar to Jammu, the state's winter capital, when the device was found.

According to an October 1991 agreement with Washington, South Korea is to buy 12 F-16s from the United States by 1995.

The Audit Board has said former president Roh Tae-woo might be investigated in connection with the fighter purchases.

President Kim on Wednesday sacked top generals for their alleged involvement in corruption over the arms purchase projects. A reshuffle of lower officers is expected soon.

Kim, the first president without a military background for more than three decades, has led a drive to rid south Korea of corruption since his inauguration in February.