

# Cheney considered firing Schwarzkopf

WASHINGTON, July 25: US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney was so offended by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf that he considered firing him as com-



Norman Schwarzkopf

mander of allied forces in the months leading up to the Gulf War, a newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

In an upcoming book by Rick Atkinson of The Washington

Post, the author says that instead of relieving him, Cheney assigned a three-star general to act as a buffer between Schwarzkopf and his staff.

But the book, "Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War," says that Schwarzkopf had threatened to fire or court-martial his senior Army commander, Navy commander, Air Force commander, chief air targeter and the commanders of both Army corps in the desert.

But the newspaper's account of the book in Sunday editions says that despite the unflattering portrait of the Schwarzkopf personality, the general did practice subtle diplomacy when needed with the coalition's foreign forces and Saudi Arabian hosts.

The book is expected out in October.

Schwarzkopf sped around in a "motorcade larger than (Saudi King) Fahd's" and was preceded in every room by an enlisted aide who laid out a precise setting of water, orange juice, coffee and chocolate mocha, according to The Post.

# Lok Sabha reopens today with no-confidence motions on agenda

## Fate of Cong-I govt hinges on minor parties

NEW DELHI, July 25: The fate of Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's two-year-old government hinges on minor opposition parties as parliament reopens Monday with two no-confidence motions on the agenda, reports AFP.

The ruling Congress (I) Party and its allies command 663 MPs in the lower house against the fragmented oppositions 264, after six opposition MPs said they would abstain from the vote expected this week.

The Congress (I) remained confident on Sunday that it would survive the determined opposition challenge, but party sources admitted they were keeping their fingers crossed.

Both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — the main opposition party — and a centrist-leftist alliance have said they will move separate no-confidence motions to vote out the government.

The Hindu-revivalist BJP and the National Front and Left Front alliance have some 220 MPs between them in the 545-seat lower house.

The BJP and the National Front-Left Front alliance do not see eye politically, with latter accusing the BJP of fanning the flames of Hindu nationalism. But both are determined to bring down the curtain on Rao.

The BJP will be introducing its motion pressing charges of corruption against Rao, who has been accused of taking a huge payoff from Harshad Mehta, a Bombay stockbroker and the main defendant in a huge bank and stock scandal.

The Front's joint no-confidence motion will protest corruption "in high places," the government's open-market economic policies and its failure to curb Hindu fundamentalism.

"We may have differences, but we agree on one thing: re-

moving the government," said Swaraj, a lawyer, who added that the BJP would seek fresh parliamentary election if the government was voted out.

The communists were initially adamant on not voting for a BJP-sponsored no-confidence motion, but changed their tack after meeting the National Front leaders here on Friday.

The Congress (I)'s Gadgil called the decision "unfortunate."

Communist MP Yechury said that even if the Rao administration managed to overcome the co-confidence motions by "five to 10 votes, it will be a moral indictment of the government."

He said a narrow win for the government on the floor of the house would add to the government's instability and bickering in the Congress (I).

"The government will then survive from session to session"

of parliament, the Marxist said. The rest of the opposition consists of minor groups whose strength ranges from a solitary MP to the 20 members of a party led by former Federal Minister Ajit Singh.

Political sources said these parties now held the key to the future of the Congress (I) government.

The Ajit Singh group has said it will decide only on Monday, when parliament convenes for the monsoon session, which way it would vote on the motions.

Congress (I) spokesman Vithal Gadgil said the Ajit Singh Group was certain to bail out the government. "There are sufficient grounds for my optimism," he said.

"Nothing is going to happen to the government," added Sharad Pawar, a top Congress (I) leader and Chief Minister of the western state of Maharashtra.

# Police storm Golden Temple to nab 2 Sikhs

AMRITSAR (India), July 25: Indian police stormed the Golden Temple here in an overnight action to arrest two wanted Sikh rebels reportedly sheltering inside the holiest shrine in Sikhdom, officials said today, reports AFP.

Some 50 heavily-armed officers raided the 400-year-old complex and searched for the militants in the temple hostels housing Sikh pilgrims, they said.

The police raid lasted about an hour, witnesses said.

The two wanted Sikh separatists were wanted for the abduction of an industrialist a fortnight ago in this northern Indian state, police said.

Witnesses said the raiders detained at least 10 Sikh visitors in a police station of this holy Sikh city after storming the Golden Temple, adding that the pilgrims were released after in-

terrogation. The two wanted militants were not found in the shrine, the officials added.

Sikh managers of the temple Sunday reacted angrily saying Saturday's raid was a government plot to "heap dishonour" on the name of the Sikh community.

The raid was aimed at maligning the Sikh community," said Manjit Singh, a secretary of the Sikh Gurdwara Prabandak Committee, a religious forum which manages the administration of the Golden Temple.

The overnight storming of the Golden Temple is the second such action by the police on the shrine since October last year when Punjab detectives raided the complex and arrested several wanted militants.

Indian commandos laid siege to the temple in May 1988 and rained thousands of bullets on militants hiding inside.



A Bosnian Serb soldier fires towards Muslim position outside the northern Bosnian town of Breko on Saturday. — AFP photo

# Kurdish rebels kidnap 4 French tourists in Turkey

TATVAN (Turkey), July 25: Kurdish rebels kidnaped four French tourists in southeast Turkey today, provincial government officials said, reports Reuter.

They said, a group of armed guerrillas of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) blocked a highway linking the towns of Tatvan and Van and abducted the tourists.

The officials said the guerrillas fled with the tourists. The names of the tourists could not be obtained immediately and it was not clear how they were travelling.

Six foreign tourists have now been kidnaped by separatist PKK militants in eastern Turkey in the past three weeks.

Two British tourists, Tania Jan Miller and David Michael Rowbottom, were seized three weeks ago, also in the Tatvan area. Their fate is still unknown.

# BRIEFLY

**44 die of cholera in Pakistan:** At least 44 people, including several children, have died of cholera in northern Pakistani communities devastated by three weeks of flooding, officials said Saturday, AP reports from Islamabad.

The government said the report from the district of Mianshra included deaths Thursday and Friday.

The government has declared a medical emergency as the epidemic hit many other towns and more than 100 cholera patients were admitted to hospitals.

The government has rushed medical teams and medicine to the affected areas.

Most of the affected towns lack clean drinking water and proper medical facilities.

**Israeli soldier shot in Gaza:** An unidentified gunman on Saturday shot and wounded an Israeli soldier in occupied Gaza city before driving off, military sources here said, AFP reports from Tel Aviv.

The soldier was wounded when a man opened fire on an observation post near Gaza's military administration buildings, the sources said, adding that he was evacuated by helicopter to the Soroka Hospital in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba.

The army surrounded the attack site for several hours and carried out searches, Palestinian sources said.

**18 Kurds killed in Turkey:** Turkish security forces killed 18 Kurdish rebels in clashes in eastern Turkey, officials said Saturday, AFP reports from Ankara.

One guerrilla surrendered in the town of Mus following the clashes Friday, said a military spokesman in Diyarbakir, headquarters of a government campaign against separatist rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

**14 killed in Colombian air crash:** Flying in a plane seized from drug dealers, the man appointed one month ago to improve Columbia's poor air safety record died in a crash that also killed 13 other people, AP reports from Bogota.

The death toll rose to 14 when a 4-year-old girl died Saturday night at Simon Bolivar Hospital of burns she suffered from the twin-engine Cessna Titan slammed into her Bogota neighborhood just minutes after takeoff, the television news programme TV Hoy reported.

All seven people aboard were killed, including Fernando Corrales, the head of Colombia's civil aeronautics board, and his deputy, said the board's operations director, Col Luis German Paz.

# Parliament gives Shevardnadze authority to sign peace plan

TBILISI, July 25: Parliament gave Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze authority Saturday to approve a Russian-mediated plan to end fighting in the breakaway province of Abkhazia, reports AP.

The plan calls for an immediate cease-fire and a gradual demilitarization monitored by UN observers.

More than 2,000 people have been killed since Abkhazia, a former resort area of northwest Georgia, declared independence last July.

After stormy debate Saturday, legislators withheld approval of the peace plan, instead leaving the decision up to Shevardnadze, who is known to favor it.

Previous peace agreements have collapsed.

Under the plan negotiated by Russian presidential envoy Boris Pastukhov and Georgian and Abkhazian leaders, Georgian troops would be withdrawn from all "conflict zones" inside Abkhazia within 10 to 15 days after the deployment of international observers.

Abkhazian separatist forces and volunteers from the Russian North Caucasus, who control up to one-third of the region, would be disbanded or required to leave the territory.

Lawmakers have accused Russia of siding with Abkhazia, and were unhappy at the prospect of Russian soldiers being part of a peacekeeping force monitoring the cease-fire.

AFP reports: Two columns of Armenian tanks continued their advance today into Azerbaijan, heading north and east of Agdam, according to the

Azerbaijan defence Ministry cited by the Itar-Tass News Agency.



Eduard Shevardnadze. The tanks left Agdam — the Azeri town seized Friday by

Armenian forces — and were moving north toward Barda and east toward Agjabedi, the Azerbaijan ministry in Baku said.

The Armenian advance met no resistance from Azeri forces but the evacuation of tens of thousands of fleeing refugees, notably those from Agdam, was at serious risk, the ministry warned.

Azerbaijan's acting President Getdar Aliyev meanwhile appealed today to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the security council to take "urgent measures against the Armenian aggressor," Itar-Tass reported.

The Azeris for their part launched another air raid over eastern Arminza early Saturday which left 10 dead.

# 250 fundamentalists face trials in Cairo

CAIRO, July 25: An Egyptian court is to try 250 Islamic fundamentalists, including Palestinians and women, in one of the largest trials in the country's history, legal sources said on Sunday, reports AFP.

They said the prosecution would officially announce the charges in early August and the trial would follow in a Cairo military court.

The fundamentalists are accused of setting up an illegal organisation, "Talaah Al-Fatah" (vanguard of conquest), and possession of arms with the aim of overthrowing the government. The sources said some of the

group would be charged with killing two civilians in Cairo and the attempted murder of three policemen in 1990. They could face the death penalty or life terms of hard labour.

Among the group, 18 Palestinians, allegedly "trained abroad to carry out terrorist acts," and an unspecified number of women face such charges for the first time in an Egyptian court, they said.

In October, President Hosni Mubarak ordered the transfer of the trials of armed Islamic militants from civilian to military courts, which pass harsher and swifter verdicts.

# Yeltsin returns to Moscow

MOSCOW, July 25: Russian President Boris Yeltsin returned to Moscow today, cutting short his holiday, Itar-Tass News Agency said, reports Reuter.

A Yeltsin spokesman had said on Saturday the president would return to Moscow to deal with a series of challenges to his government's authority from the conservative parliament.

Yeltsin had issued a brief statement on Friday saying he was considering interrupting his holiday on the northern Russian city of Novgorod because of what he called a threat to Russia's young democracy from the parliament.

Parliament, in a series of resolutions passed just before its summer recess, voted to allow Yeltsin's privatisation campaign, set new restrictions on foreign banks and more than double the planned budget deficit in a snub to reform efforts.

# Pak PM Qureshi leaves for US

ISLAMABAD, July 25: Pakistan's interim Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi left today for the United States on a five-day private visit, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said, reports AP.

Qureshi, 63, who had a brief stopover in Karachi, will have a medical check up in the United States.

During his stay he might also have meeting with some US officials.

The former World Bank official was appointed caretaker Prime Minister on July 18 under an army brokered political settlement that led to the exit of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and his rival Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

# Off the Record



A model of Russian designer Valentin Yudashkin presents an evening dress on July 22 during the last show of the Fall-Winter 93-94 high fashion collections in Paris. — AFP photo

# 23pc Indian women enjoy premarital sex

BOMBAY: Most wives are faithful to their husbands in India — the land which gave the world the Kama Sutra — but nearly a quarter of those polled in a rare survey said they were not virgins on their wedding day, reports Reuter.

Femina magazine, which published the poll, said it had commissioned the Indian Market Research Bureau to find out why women would want to marry in a society where cultural values had changed radically.

"Our readers, at least the section represented by the respondents, apparently do not seem to subscribe to this somewhat cynical point of view," said Femina, Indians leading women's magazine. It did not say how many women were polled.

The poll found that only seven per cent of women admitted to having sex with someone other than husbands.

But 23 per cent of women surveyed had sex before marriage, Femina said. "Given our present exposure to western promiscuity, sex is important even before marriage."

The survey found that good sex in a marriage was of major importance for only 11 per cent of the women surveyed.

# Hospital for drug-addict elephants

BANGKOK: Elephants hooked on amphetamines by exploitative owners will soon be able to kick the habit at government expense, reports AP.

The Forest Industry Organisation, a state enterprise, will open up a veterinary hospital to treat drug-addicted elephants as well as those injured in logging work, the Bangkok Post reported Saturday.

The darker side of pachydermal existence has only recently been disclosed in the national press, with reports that a number of elephants have become drug addicts after their handlers fed them fistfuls of amphetamine pills to force them to work longer hours.

The forestry organization's managing director, Aduldej Chakrabandhu, was quoted as saying the veterinary hospital will be established at the Elephant Training Centre in Lampang province, 510 kilometers (317 miles) north of Bangkok.

# Potato guns as dangerous as real firearms

MARTINEZ: Hurling potatoes are an unlikely source of concern for most people, but police say a new fad, potato guns, can fire a spud 1,000 feet (300 meters) per second and are nearly as dangerous as real firearms, reports AP.

During a test, Martinez Police Officer Mike Marchiano shattered a windshield and dented a car, taking the pain off a door.

"If it hit someone on the head, it would break their skull," he said. "If it hit someone over their heart, it would crush the tissue. It would be like taking a sledgehammer to it."

# Tigers raid 3 army outposts: 30 killed

COLOMBO (Sri Lanka), July 25: About 500 Tamil Tiger rebels raided three army outposts in northeastern villages, killing 15 soldiers and 15 Sinhalese civilians, the government said Sunday, reports AP.

Helicopter gunships destroyed two tractors on which the attackers were fleeing after the Saturday midnight attack, but it was not immediately known how many casualties the rebels suffered, military officials said. Fifteen soldiers also were wounded, they said.

The attack, the second on security forces over the week-

end, was apparently to mark the 10th anniversary of an anti-Tamil carnage by the Sinhalese in which 2,000 people were killed.

The July 1983 massacre turned a simmering demand by some Tamils for a separate homeland in the north and the east into a full-fledged insurgency, led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. More than 18,000 people have been killed since then.

On Saturday, the guerrillas used mortars and automatic weapons during the simultaneous attacks on the military outposts in Janakapura, Kokkuduval and Kovilpoint villages in Nullattivu district, said the officials who cannot be identified under briefing rules.

Most of the civilian victims in Saturday's attack were killed in Japakapura village near the outpost. The rebels also set fire to the outpost, a one-story wooden building, the officials said.

The three neighboring villages, located in a forest area cleared for vegetable cultivation, is inhabited by Sinhalese settlers. It falls within the region claimed by the Tamil Tigers as the traditional Tamil homeland.

# Israeli warplanes bomb Hezbollah bases in Lebanon

JERUSALEM, July 25: Israeli warplanes bombed Iranian-backed Shiite Muslim guerrilla bases in southern Lebanon Sunday, and the army warned it would use "any means necessary" to maintain calm along Israel's northern border, reports AP.

The strike against the Hezbollah, or Party of God, guerrilla organization followed renewed attacks on outposts of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army militia Sunday morning, Israeli radio reported.

It also comes as the Israeli Cabinet continues to discuss the Lebanon situation at its weekly session, and as Israeli civilians in northern towns were reported headed to bomb shelters.

# Myanmar women returning from Thai brothels carry HIV

KUALA LUMPUR, July 25: Myanmar remains much of a political pariah in the international community because of its repressive military rulers, but its isolation has not saved it from the AIDS scourge, reports IPS.

Regional health experts at a recent conference, here said an increasing number of Myanmar women employed as sex workers in Thailand are returning home infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which cause the dreaded disease.

They said extreme poverty and a changing communal structure are driving young Myanmar hilltribe women to work in Thailand, where they often end up in the sex trade — and giving a new dimension to the south-east Asia's AIDS epidemic.

Since police began cracking down on Thai brothels in 1989, authorities have noted than an increasing number of those rescued have been Myanmar women AIDS volunteers say the numbers of these women who tested positive for HIV has been very high.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates there are now more than 100,000 people infected with HIV in Myanmar, out of a population of 40 million.

There is an inevitable link between prostitution and AIDS and controlling the trafficking of women and girls is one way to control the spread of AIDS in south east Asia," says Jackie Pollock of the International Volunteer Services (IVS) in Chiangmai in northern

Thailand. Pollock, who submitted a paper on the trafficking of Myanmar women at an AIDS conference here in April, says while factors that lead women to sell sex are universal, some are particular to a country.

In Myanmar the violent suppression of the pro-democracy movement in 1988 and the subsequent militarisation of Myanmar society completely destroyed community structures and uprooted social organisation. "Women have been abused and further devalued," she says.

Since 1988, thousands of Myanmar have been forced to work as porters for the military. Some are prisoners serving sentences for criminal offences while others are men and women abducted from their villages by the military.

For every 100 families in a village, about two to three men must be provided to the army or a US 5,000 dollar fine must be paid in order to avoid conscription.

"The only choice parents have is to send their daughters to the army to oppress the people or to send their daughters to Thailand to make enough money to pay the army," says Pollock.

Many Myanmar women porters also say they are forced to turn into comfort women in the evenings after lugging the heavy loads for the soldiers all day. Says a Chiangmai sex worker from Myanmar: "When I was in my village, Myanmar soldiers came and forced me to have sex with them. It was as if I were a prostitute, except that I received no payment, at least

now I receive some payment and it is not so dangerous for me."

The opening up of Myanmar's economy has also brought its own pressures: as "yantram trades with Japan and Thailand and more and more firms sell their products in Myanmar, the local population wants to earn more money to buy these goods."

For some Myanmar women, working in Thai brothels may allow their families to survive, but for others it opens up the possibility of a better life, says Pollock.

She says Myanmar women lured into the sex trade by a friend, a relative or a trusted person in the community. These "agents" offer the women high-paying jobs in Thailand and give the families an advance on

the girls' salary. The girls thus start work with a debt to pay off.

The women then become virtual prisoners inside the brothels. The poor living conditions often lead to health problems and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and AIDS.

On a police raid on Rangong town brothel in southern Thailand last year, one-third of the 90 women arrested were found to be HIV-positive.

As a matter of policy, Bangkok repatriates Myanmar women after they are rescued from brothels directly to the military junta in Yangon. Myanmar opposition groups and aid workers oppose such repatriation, expressing concern for the girls' safety.

Most of the civilian victims in Saturday's attack were killed in Japakapura village near the outpost. The rebels also set fire to the outpost, a one-story wooden building, the officials said.

The three neighboring villages, located in a forest area cleared for vegetable cultivation, is inhabited by Sinhalese settlers. It falls within the region claimed by the Tamil Tigers as the traditional Tamil homeland.

The Tamils say the government is deliberately settling Sinhalese to change the demographic balance of Tamil-majority areas. The government denies the charge.

Most of Sri Lankan Tamils, who form 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 17 million people, live in the northern and eastern districts.