BDIFFIN

4 Muslim rebels shot dead in Java: Indonesian police shot dead four members of an extremist Muslim sect who killed a police chief in West Java carlier this week, the official Antara news agency reported yesterday, Reuter says from Jakarta.

Police in Majalengka in West Java confirmed the shooting took place on Thursday during a police attack on the sect's meeting place but declined give details.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population but the government of President Suharto has crushed any attempt to turn the country into an Islamic state.

Landslide kills 3 in Manila: Monsoon rains triggered explosions of superheated debris from

the Mount Pinatubo volcano, spraying volcanic, ash on the former U.S-run Clark Air Base and nearby towns, scientists said Friday, AP reports from Manila. In Manila, the rains late Thursday triggered a landslide

which smashed a home in a squatter settlement, killing a mother and her two children, police reported.

Two days of heavy rains have flooded streets and communities around Manila, causing massive traffic jams and forcing

authorities to suspend classes.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the explosions of Pinatubo debris sent clouds of ash as high as 1,500 meters (5,000 feet).

Myanmar troops kill Thai national: Myanmar soldiers killed one Thai villager and wounded four others on Thursday when they started shooting without warning across a small river marking the frontier, border patrol policemen said, Reuter reports from Thailand.

They were eutting wood near the Moei river about 20 km (12.5 miles) south of Mae Sot in northwestern Thailand when 10 Myanmar soldiers opened fire with mortar and small arms. The site was just across from a former camp of the Myanmar

rebel group, the Karen, which the military seized in 1989 and now occupies with a force of about 300 soldiers. The soldiers may have thought he Thais were Karen gueril-

Beijing may ban fireworks: The streets of Beijing may be silent next Chinese New Year for possibly the first time in centuries if the city government

approves a proposal to ban fireworks, AP report from Beijing. The official China Daily newspaper said Friday that the Standing Committee of the Beijing Municipal People's Congress is expected to approve the ban at its next meeting, scheduled for November.

The reason is safety: firecrackers injured 544 Beijing resi

dents, including eight who lost eyes, and sparked more than 200 small fires at the start of the Lunar Year of the Rooster in

Ghali calls for immediate ceasefire in Lebanon

WASHINGTON, July 30: The United Nations lead a worldwide condemnation Thursday of Israel's assault on southern Lebanon and urged an immediate halt to fighting in the region, reports AFP.

"The policy of deliberately forcing people to abandon their homes must be stopped forthwith and those who have been displaced should be enabled to return in peace and security," **UN Secretary General Boutros** Boutros-Ghali said in a state-

He called for "an immediate cease-fire and for the cessation of all hostilities."

The Israeli blitz in Lebanon has left 114 dead and 422 wounded since Sunday. Israeli attacks have destroyed villages and led to the exodus of some 400,000 people.

The declared Israeli aim is to force civilians flee their homes to pressure the Lebanese and Syrian governments to intervene and halt anti-Israeli attacks by Hezbollah and other groups.

Since the operation began, Hezbollah and Palestinian radicals have fired about 200 Katyusha rockets at northern Israel, killing three people and wounding 33.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said the Israeli operation 'went far beyond the borders of Southern Lebanon where the Hezbollah and other extremist groups are based." On Wednesday, US President

Bill Clinton called for an immediate ceasefire.

The Arab League was expected to urge the UN Security Council to adopt a new resolution calling on Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Esmat Abdel Meguid, the

League's Secretary General, said in Cairo that "the international community must assume its responsibility toward the Israeli aggression... as such actions threaten the peace process."

Ireland said it deplored the Israeli attacks and called for an immediate end to the offensive. saying it was endangering the lives of both civilians and UN peacekeepers in the region.

Israeli shells hit the position of an Irish contingent of the United Nations interim force in Lebanon on Thursday.

The Finnish government condemned the ongoing violence and said bombing civilians would not solve the regions problems.

A worsening of the situation would harm the prospects of the Middle East peace talks, the Finnish government said.

Norway's government also appealed for a ceasefire. "We'can not accept attacks

on the civilian population, disproportional retaliation, or continued acts of violence," Foreign Minister Johan Joeroen Holst said. Norway has issued state-

ments to the governments of Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Iran, which back the radical Hezbollah militia responsible for many Katvusha attacks on Israel.

In Khartoum, the Sudanese government pledged its support to Lebanon to help it "stand up to the aggression and liberate all their territories."

The bombing were a grave escalation of repeated violation of the Lebanese territories and Lebanese sovereignty and independence", the Foreign Ministry



Sarah, are being treated at Jabal Aamel Hospital. They were wounded during Israeli shelling of Koulaila, a village - AFP photo in South Lebanon on Thursday.

Tories suffer defeat in by-election

LONDON, July 30: Prime Minister John Major's Conservative government, its political fortunes tumbling, on Friday lost a south England's parliamentary stronghold to centrists in a record-breaking special election defeat, reports AP.

By-elections are a traditional time for protest votes. The Conservatives, who have suffered a string of misfortunes since winning a fourth successive term in April 1992, had been expected to lose Christchurch, a seat it had held since

But the scale of the victory by the Liberal Democratic Party in the affluent coastal district marked a new blow for Major.

" It is a very disappointing result," Major told reporters.

" The important thing is what we need to do to get the country thoroughly back on its feet," he said. " We've been through a difficult period". Liberal Democrat Diana

Maddock overturned a 23,015vote Conservative majority to take Christchurch by a margin of 16,427 votes ahead of the governing party's Rob Hayward. The main opposition Labor

Party, which had no hope in Christchurch, was squeezed to just 3 per cent of the vote.

The 35 per cent Conservative-to-Liberal Democrat swing in the vote since 1992 was the biggest recorded against a government in a by-election since World War II. "The message to him (Major)

is very clear," said Mrs Maddock, a 48-year-old teacher. Change your policies or change

of the vote - 33, 164 compared with Hayward's 16,737 - in what had been the Conserva tives' 15th strongest district.

Senior Conservative blamed the historic defeat on voters anger over Britain's slow economic recovery - unemployment remains stubbornly above 10 per cent - and on party infighting over the treaty on

European union. " In think the example of disunity inside the party frankly hasn't done us any good," acknowledged Conservative Party

chairman Sir Norman Fowler. The defeat in Christchurch. where the previous legislator died in May, cut Major's slim majority in the 651-member

House of Commons to 17. The Conservatives in 1992 regained three key parliamentary districts lost in special elections in the previous few years.

Iraq denies Pentagon

BAGHDAD, July 30: The Iraqi government on Thursday denied a Pentagon report that US planes had fired missiles at two anti-aircraft missile sites in southern Iraq, reports Reuter.

"We find no explanation for such a strange statement by the American Defence Department," an official spokesman said in a statement handed to foreign journalists in Baghdad "No radar site in the south-

ern region was attacked and no sound of explosions was heard the unnamed spokesman said. The US Defence Department

said two US navy planes fired missiles at Iraqi anti-aircraft missile sites on Thursday in retaliation after the fighters were US pilots patrolling two "no

fly zones in Iraq are under orders to attack if radar locks onto them.

Ramos seeks truce with church over birth control

US admn defends UN

operation in Somalia

WASHINGTON, July 30: An warned that UN pullout would

MANILA (Philippines), July 30: President Fidel Ramos is seeking a truce with the influential Roman Catholic Church over the government's controversial programme to curb this country's spiraling population. reports AP.

in a television interview this week, Ramos, a Protestant, said he mannecking a meeting with: Catholic bishops to discuss their complaints over the programme, which includes distribution of free condoms and birth control advice to poor families. Ramos said he was confident "we can arrive at a working agreement where we will not go out calling each other names.

end to military operation in

Somalta could bring a return of

lawlessness and famine, admin-

istration officials said Thursday

in defending the UN peacekeep-

ing force in the African nation,

the UN's basic approach" of se-

curing the peace in Somalia

while continuing humanitarian

aid and promoting political rec-

oneiliation, said George E.

Moose, assistant secretary of

state for African affairs, in

fronts, it will remain mired in-

definitely in Somalia, trying to

provide relief at the mercy of

fugitive warlord Mohammed

Farrah Aideedshave been criti-

cized for increasing violence in

and other countries have ac-

cused the UN command of los-

ing sight of its humanitarian

US participation in the peace-

keeping force, said the "current

UN search and destroy strategy

is a dead end that is only de-

stroying what goodwill the

United States once enjoyed in

Foreign Relations Committee,

Undersecretary of State for

Political Affairs Peter Tarnoff.

But in hearings of the Senate

Rep Ben Gilman, a critic of

the capital of Mogadishu. Italy

UN military actions against

warlords," Moose said.

"If the UN fails to move on all

There is nothing wrong with

reports AP.

House hearing.

Although the programme is modest compared to strategies used by China and India, population control has emerged as a major issue in this country. where 85 per cent of the people are nominally Catholic. Numerous economists have

cited the Philippines 2.48 per cent annual population, growth rate as a major obstacle to reviving an economy which has been stagnant for the last three

The Philippines which is slightly larger than Nevada, had a population of 42 million two decades ago but riow ranks as the world's 14th most populous country with nearly 65 million

mean "a resumption of lawless

ness and violence and a return

. He added that if the opera-

tion were to abort prematurely.

there would be great concern in

the Islamic world and elsewhere

that we didn't have the staying

Italians are playing 'a loyal,

director of operations for the

Joint Staff, said that while the

goal of capturing Aideed, "he's

been marginalized." He said the

warlord has been off the radio

for a few days, his second in

command has been captured

and his supporters are down to

a hard-core group of about 300.

The United States on May 5

turned over control of its

Somalia operation to the UN

command, and now has about

4,000 troops, including 1,000

combat troops, as part of the

Mogadishu since Aideed's forces

were blamed for a June 5 am-

bush that killed 24 Pakistani

peacekeepers and US-led forces

retaliated with strikes against

majority of the Somali people

deeply regret the killings and

strongly support" the UN force.

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herze-

NATO members aren't set up

Moose noted that "the vast

Aideed's power bases.

Violence has escalated in

UN's 21,000 member force.

UN command has failed in its

supportive role.

Tarnoff insisted that the

Lt. Gen. John J. Shechan,

. Defence agency report

US military presence in Japan vital to East Asian security

TOKYO, July 30: Defense Agency said Friday a continued US military presence in Japan remains vital to East Asian security, potentially thrcatened by North Korea's missile and suspected nuclear. programme, reports AP.

In an annual report, the agency said Asia's post-Cold War situation is still shaky compared to that in Europe.

Tension is mounting on the Korean Peninsula, mainly because of Pyongyang's new missiles and suspected nuclear weapons development, it added. North Korea's new Rodong-

missile could reach more than half of Japan, and will pose a great danger if equipped with nuclear warheads, the report

in Washington Wednesday, US Central Intelligence Director R James Woolsey confirmed that North Korea has tested the

new intermediate-range missile. The missile, with a range of 1,000 kilometers (625 miles), can carry nuclear, chemical and biological payloads as well as conventional warheads, Woolsey said in testimony before a

House foreign affairs panel. "With this missile, North

Korea could reach Japan; Iran could reach Israel; and Libya could reach US bases and allied capitals in the Mediterranean region," Woolsey said. Japanese defense officials

earlier reported that the missile was tested in the Sea of Japan "with considerable accuracy" in late May. Masataka Suzuki, the agen-

cy's defense counselor, said Japan is seriously concerned, but declined to say what countermeasures it might take. Japan, the only nation in the

world that has experienced nuclear attacks, has promised not to produce or posses nuclear weapons. North Korea, which claims

its nuclear programme is peaceful, banned international inspectors from two suspected nuclear waste sites earlier this year and said it was dropping out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. in talks with the United

States in June, the Communist North reversed its decision to withdraw from the nuclear controls treaty. Talks are continuing on the inspection issue. Another potential flashpoint

in the Asia-pacific region is a dispute over ownership of the Spratly Island group among China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunci and the Philip pines, the report noted. "The US-Japan security ar-

rangements contribute not only to Japan's security but also to the peace and security of the Far East," the defense report After its defeat in World War

II, Japan renounced the use of force in settling international Its 240,000-member military

is called the Self-Defense Forces, and a treaty promises US help if Japan is attacked.

"Japan has continued to enjoy peace and prosperity for nearly half a century since the end of the war, in the everchanging world community. There is no denying that this is due largely to Japan's own defense efforts as well as the effective functioning of the Japan-US security arrangements as a consistent war deterrent," the report said. Peacekeepers view air strikes in Bosnia as last resort

Khmer Rouge fires mortars at Dutch unit PHNOM PENH, July 30:

Khmer Rouge guerillas fired mortars on Friday at a Dutch unit of the United Nations peacekeeping force in northwest Cambodia, a UN spokeswoman said today, reports Reuter.

"There are no casualties so far. None that we know of," said spokesman Susan Manuel The firing was taking place at a Dutch company base at

Phum Nimit, near the Thai border, she said. The Khmer Rouge boycotted UN supervised elections in May after refusing to abide by key sections of the peace accord signed by all Cambodian fac-

China executes 10 highway bandits

tions in Paris in 1991.

BEIJING, July 30: A group of 10 highway bandits was executed in Chongging, in China's southwestern Sichuan province, for robbing passengers on longdistance buses outside the city. the China news service reported today, says AFP.

Most of the convicts were peasants, the youngest of which was 19 years old, the semi-officials news agency said.

Armed with knives, the bandits boarded long-distance buses playing the roads to Chongging to rob passengers of money. One passenger was killed and six others injured, it

Highway bandits are one of the main targets of an ongoing anti-crime campaign.

Uruguay to accept Bosnian refugees MONTEVIDEO, July 30:

President Alberto Lacalle said Thursday that Uruguay would be willing to accept children who have become war refugees from the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict if other countries do the same, reports AFP. In a statement issued by the

government, Lacalle said his country would take in an unspecified number of children.

The idea came up during a meeting between the Uruguayan leader and birth International President Kent Shiner,

the statement said.

tracked by Iraqi radar. She scooped up 62 per cent

Diana spends marriage day without Charles

Off the Record

LONDON: Princess Diana spent her 12th wedding anniversary Thursday away from her husband and her country, introducing her 8-year-old son to the royal duties which she may relinquish, reports AP.

Diana, 32, is separated from Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, and royal watchers say divorce and an exit from the royal fish bowl is in the cards.

It was the couple's first anniversary since the bombshell announcement of their separation in December, and it attracted only a fraction of the frantic media attention devoted to many of the previous 11 when their marital problems were still just ru-

Instead, the spotlight was on Prince Harry, performing his first official royal duty from the turret of a Scimitar light tank.

Harry, third in line to the throne behind his father and elder brother Prince William, accompanied his mother on an inspection of British forces based in Germany.

Wearing a made-to-measure army uniform, with HRH (llis Royal Highness) the Prince embroidered above the left chest pocket. Harry clambered into the tank where he got a rundown on the working of the 10-ton vehicle.

Man fathers child after vasectomy

LONDON: DNA tests helped prove that a man had fathered a child despite having had a seemingly successful vasectomy, the British Medical Journal reported Friday, says Reuter.

The man had a vasectomy in 1987 and semen samples taken soon after showed no sperm. But the man's wife became pregnant in 1990 and gave birth in 1991. Repeated tests showed the man had only a few non-mobile

sperm, which cannot swim and therefore are assumed to be incapable of causing pregnancy. But DNA tests established that the map was indeed the father of the child.

Minister hires whores to attend dinner party

BANGKOK: A coalition of human rights, pro-democracy and women's groups Friday demanded the resignation of a Cabinet member accused of offering prostitutes as party favours at a dinner for lawmakers, reports AP. The groups said Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's government

should punish officials engaging in sexual misconduct and set up a government agency to solve the country's prostitution Deputy Finance Minister Boonchu Trithong hosted the party

at a Bangkok hotel Wednesday night for about 30 fellow legisla tors from the New Aspiration Party. Thai Rath, the country's biggest newspaper, reported that

Boonchu hired prostitutes to attend the party and sleep with any willing legislators.

The report said Boonchu distributed green eards - which he called "keys to heaven" - to his guests, who could exchange them for sexual favours.

Fujimori proposes life sentence for drug barons

LIMA, Peru, July 30: Prestdent Alberto Fujimori proposed establishing the life prison sentence for drug traffickers and kidnappers Wednesday in a speech to mark his third armi versary in power and his 55th birthday, reports AP.

Fujimori addressed Congress elections.

govina, July 30: Although NATO is ready to bomb Serb forces who attack UN troops in Bosnia, the peacekeepers view air strikes as a last resort, reports AP. yet to carry out the strikes, and ground action probably would be preferred if UN troops were

attacked, said the peacekeepers' for the first time since shutting spokesman. Cmdr. Barry tt down in April 1992, accusing it of blocking his efforts to combat drug trafficking and terror-It's an option we don't think ism. Itis backers won control of needs to be used at this time, the new Congress in November Frewer said of the air strikes. "We hope it will never have to be

Secretary, General Boutros Boutros-Chali said Wednesday that the warplanes could begin their mission early next week. Frewer said the peacekeep-

go to Slovenia, Austria and Germany

ZAGREB: Ekrema Brkic cries as she holds her six year-old

son for the first time in 16 months after he was transferred

from the Serbian besieged town of Velika Kladusa to Zagreb

for family reunion Thursday. After meeting their relatives,

the refugees, who are proteges of the ICRC, will reportedly

ers' commander in Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Francis Briquemont of Belgium, sought to play down comments from NATO officials who say they are ready to respond to any UN request for air Whatever signals they send

is their business," Frewer said. "For us, use of force is only to be used in self-defense.

NATO planes have been au

thorized to give air protection to a proposed force of 7,500 peacekeepers that would guard the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, and five other mostly Muslim areas surrounded by Serb forces. The planes also could be used to shield peacekeepers elsewhere in Bosnia from Serb attacks.

- AFP photo

On Wednesday, President Clinton reaffirmed that the United States was ready to provide air cover at the United Nations request.

The air shield would bolster a UN no-fly zone over Bosnia that has gone largely unchallenged. Air strikes would also

in the Balkan conflict by ' .6nation Western military alliance, and would be the first NATO has used its formidable air power to protect Peacekeepers have been hit

represent increased in solver-

by all the warring sides in the Bosnian conflict, and UN approval for air strikes could deter further attacks. Most recently, French peacekeepers in Sarajevo came under a 45-minutes Serb bombardment on Sunday. No one was hurt, but Briquemont ordered immediate retaliation from the ground in case of a recurrence.

NATO officials reiterated their readingss ' us' the alliance's air power of protect UN peacekeepers. wearly 70 American, French, British and Dutch warplanes have been deployed at Italian air bases since late last week for this purpose.

"NATO has been 100 percent ready to respond stnce July 22. said Col. Randy Schoel, spokesman for NATO's European command headquarters in Casteau, Belgium. "We have been waiting for a request from the United Nations, which we have not received.

But Frewer said only a few of

the planned 40 to 50 teams of In Belgium on Thursday, forward air controllers have arrived in Bosnia, and suggested it would be weeks before the necessary personnel and equipment were in place. "You can declare it ready.

but there are certain practical considerations like communications, chain of command, rules of engagement," Frewer said. "These take time."

Even when everything is ready. Frewer said, Briquemont would have to personally authorize any air action and would be likely to prefer a swift response by ground forces.

fires at boat : 9 killed COLOMBO, July 30: Nine Shri Lankan civilians were killed when the Navy fired at a

Lankan navy

boat crossing a forbidden lagoon in the northern Jaffna peninsula, residents said today, reports Reuter. They said eight others were injured in the attack when the boat's engine failed and it began

drifting early on Thursday morning. About 20 people were on board. Residents said the rebels

usually give protection to the boats crossing but leave before it becomes light.