

Egypt to continue Abdel Rahman's trial

CAIRO, Nov 21: The trial of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, a blind Muslim cleric alleged to have masterminded acts of subversion in Egypt, will continue here Sunday, the higher state security court ruled Saturday, reports AFP.

Abdel Rahman, 55, and 47 of his followers are accused of having organised a "violent demonstration" in 1989 in El-Fayyum, some 100 kilometres southwest of Cairo, in which a policeman was wounded.

Abdel Rahman is currently being held by the US authorities, accused of leading a 15-member group which planned a series of murders, kidnappings and bombings, including the February 26 World Trade Centre blast that killed six people and injured more than 1,000.

On Saturday the court, which was transferred from El-Fayyum to Cairo for security reasons, ordered the "arrest" of Abdel Rahman and nine of his followers who have also evaded the Egyptian authorities. The Egyptian government demanded the cleric's extradition in July.

The court heard evidence from the principal witness, General Mohammed Seif al-Islam, who was hit by bullets during the demonstration.

The trial reopened on April 5 on the orders of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who cited a 1981 emergency law. The accused were acquitted at an earlier trial.

Islamic militants declared war on the Egyptian authorities in March 1992, launching a wave of violence in which at least 225 people have died.

Kurds protest German police raids

BONN, Nov 21: More than 20,000 Kurds demonstrated in the centre of Bonn Saturday to protest a series of police raids on Kurdish organisations that followed attacks on Turkish businesses in Germany, the police said, reports AFP.

The protesters condemned "intrusion by police and special commandos into cultural, sporting, artistic and workers' organisations, and into the homes of several Kurdish citizens in Germany," a statement by the organisers said.

Police have justified the raids as part of investigations into recent attacks on Turkish interest targets in Germany. The Kurdish community internationally accuses Ankara of re-

pressing Kurds within its territory.

Fevka-Kurdistan, the Kurdish group which called the demonstration, said it was concerned about the "threat of closure" of groups which had been raided, saying officials had branded them as responsible for the anti-Turkish attacks.

The group called on politicians, rights groups, lawyers and unionist to hold demonstrations in all European countries over the weekend to express support for its campaign.

German judicial authorities are currently investigating the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), which is under threat of being banned since a hostage-taking at the Turkish consulate in Munich on June 24.

Bodyguard, assailant killed Winnie escapes death

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 21: A gunman fired shots into Winnie Mandela's car Saturday night. She was not hit, but both her bodyguard and the assailant were killed in the ensuing gunfight, police said, reports AP.

Mrs Mandela, the estranged wife of African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, was being treated for shock, the independent SAPA news agency reported.

Police said they did not think the gunman was trying to kill Mrs Mandela. The shooting followed an argument between her bodyguard and some of the pedestrians thronging the streets after a downtown street festival, police said.

According to police, the attacker approached her car, which was stopped on a downtown street, pulled open the driver's door and fired shots from a 9mm pistol at the bodyguard who was driving.

The bodyguard managed to shoot back, and the gunman fell about 10 yards from the car as he tried to get away, a police spokeswoman, Lt Janine Smith, said.

She said Mrs Mandela was in shock when police arrived. Mrs Mandela was being treated with sedatives at her house in Soweto, ANC spokesman Ronnie Mamoepa said. He identified the slain bodyguard as John Lawrence.

Police said they did not know where Mrs Mandela had been traveling, and Mamoepa said no one from the ANC had been able to talk with her.

After the shooting, an apparent passerby tried to take the dead assailant's gun and was arrested, police said.

The gunman was described as a 28-year-old black man.



Winnie Mandela, estranged wife of ANC president Nelson Mandela is seen in this file photo taken August 20, 1993 in Johannesburg. A gunman opened fire Saturday on her car, killing her bodyguard, but apparently without injuring her. — AFP photo

US, Kuwait slate incursion by Iraqis

KUWAIT, Nov 21: The United States and Kuwait condemned an incursion by hundreds of Iraqis who marched into the Emirate for the second time in five days to protest against the UN demarcation of the sensitive Gulf War frontier, reports Reuter.

About 500 to 600 Iraqi civilians, mainly women and children waving Iraqi flags and portraits of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, arrived at the border in buses on Saturday and were accompanied by reporters.

They then crossed a border which Baghdad refuses to recognise, although it has been defined by the United Nations, and entered a country it still claims as its own.

Kuwait described the incursion as a media charade and said the international community should "exercise its responsibilities to deter the (Iraqi) regime so that it obeys international resolutions."

The Interior Ministry of the oil exporting Emirate of 1.5 million people urged the international community to make its much larger northern neighbour honour Gulf War ceasefire terms.

It said the Iraqis planted the Iraqi flag on part of a security trench being dug to keep out Iraqi infiltrators.

The United States said the incident showed Iraq was trying to repudiate its post-war obligations and question the legitimacy of the UN-guaranteed boundary.

On Tuesday 250 Iraqis, staging their biggest incursion in months, planted the Iraqi flag on Kuwait soil to protest against the border security trench.

Off the Record

Order to shave

BANGKOK: Three senior Thai police officers have been ordered to shave off their moustaches by the country's acting police chief during a provincial tour of inspection, local media reported on Sunday, says Reuter.

Police General Prathin Santiprapob demanded the razor job on the three men, one a provincial district chief inspector, after a speech to 150 officers in Narkon Ratchasima Province, about 250 km (150 miles) northeast of here.

The papers said the offenders were angrily asked by Prathin if their lip hair was necessary, when told no, he curtly told them to shave.

The officers saluted and disappeared into the crowd, the papers said.

Prathin, known for his straight talking, was named acting police chief after last month's transfer of General Sawasadi Amorniwat who is facing a probe for his handling of a case of less majesty against the Thai royal family.

Pregnant US cows mingle with Russian guards

MOSCOW: Nostrils flaring and rumps wobbling, 104 pregnant US cows mingled with fur-capped, armed Russian guards at a Moscow airport on Saturday at the start of the herd's new life in the Russian steppe, reports Reuter.

The mixed-breed cattle, a gift to Russia's agricultural college from Denver businessman Oren Benton who owns the Diamond Six D Ranch in Colorado, were accompanied by a mounted American cowboy complete with Stetson hat, leather over leggings and a red bandana tied round his neck.

Following at their first encounter with Moscow's biting winter weather, the cows gingerly picked their way across the ice-covered tarmac of Moscow's Sheremetyevo 2 Airport after a 17-hour flight on a federal express DC-10 cargo aircraft.

Kevra Jordan, vice-president of Benton's Ranch, said the herd provided an opportunity to show that mixed-breed cattle could survive the long, cruel Russian winter and to help educate people here in the ways of US western ranching. He added that the herd was the fourth to be shipped to Russia since 1990.

Affair a gossip

MANILA: Philippine First Lady Amelia Ramos says she would not hesitate to leave her husband, President Fidel Ramos, if she finds proof he has a mistress, reports Reuter.

"I'm not a quarrelling fishwife," Mrs Ramos said in an interview published Sunday breaking her silence about a Manila newspaper report her husband had an affair with a fashion model.

"I say give me proof of all these things that they say, I won't hesitate to leave because I'm a pretty independent person," she said in the Sunday Chronicle newspaper.

President Ramos, 65, who is currently visiting the United States with his wife, has dismissed the report as gossip. The Ramos' have five daughters.

Mrs Ramos, a former administrator at Manila's international school, said she heard stories about her husband having a girlfriend but brushed them aside.

"I hear these things that his new girlfriend is so and so, he's not even met this girl. So I said, 'unless he's Superman, I don't know how he's gonna do it.'"

Asked about his alleged affair with a fashion model, she said, "I think some people would like me to flare up and go to the press and make a big thing about it. But I'm not gonna add to the fire."

"Let media do what they want to do. You can't tell people what to write, you can only wish they be fair," she added.

She dismissed suggestions the allegations had upset her. "Who saw me? Was I crying, was I closeting myself? I was doing my own thing. If you're upset, you'd be ashamed to go out, you don't go to office, you won't be able to smile."

"You have to be pretty resilient," she said when asked how she and her husband had kept their marriage together for 40 years.

Men unable to restrain sexual impulses?

FREDERICTON, New Brunswick: The University of New Brunswick lifted the suspension Friday of a professor whose column appearing to condone date rape created a campus uproar, reports AP.

Matin Yaqzan, an assistant match professor, was suspended November 12 after writing in the student newspaper that men are unable to restrain their sexual impulses, and promiscuous women should regard rape as an inconvenience and demand money rather than express moral outrage.

The school said his duties have been reassigned and he will not return to the classroom this term.

Yaqzan has refused to speak to reporters. His wife, Carole Yaqzan, said he welcomed the lifting of the suspension. But she said he also wants a public apology—and compensation—from the university "for the pain and suffering... and the humiliation they have subjected him to."

In a letter to the Saint John Telegraph Journal published Friday, Yaqzan defended his article and said he had been "harassed and terrorised" by the media since writing it.

Yaqzan said his advice about monetary compensation for promiscuous women may be a matter of opinion. "However, the very fact that a girl has had multiple sexual partners is the reason to believe she is not against the act itself, rather she detests the imposition against her will," he said.

In Prince George, British Columbia, the head of the College of New Caledonia will meet Monday with students who say a criminology professor gave them an assignment to plan a perfect rape.

President Terry Weninger said the assignment to design a perfect crime—either a fraud, burglary or an assault—was withdrawn when the professor learned some students were offended.



BRIEFLY

Tamils kill soldier, 2 airmen: A Sri Lankan soldier and two airmen died in two separate attacks by Tamil separatist rebels in the east on Sunday, a military spokesman said. Reuter reports from Colombo.

The airmen died when two mines exploded during a road clearing patrol in the eastern Batticaloa district.

One soldier died and five others were injured when the rebels fired at a group of soldiers in the Trincomalee district, the spokesman said.

5-minute storm in Sydney: A five-minute storm packing tornado-like winds devastated a small township in northern New South Wales, police and emergency services officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Sydney.

The storm, which roared out of the dark without warning at 9 PM (1000 GMT) on Saturday, flattened eight houses and damaged more than 130 in the township of Tucabia, about 400 miles north of Sydney.

Police and emergency services officials said they were astonished no one was killed or seriously injured when the storm hit. Two people were slightly hurt.

Ciller re-elected party chief: Prime Minister Tansu Ciller was overwhelmingly re-elected head of Turkey's governing True Path Party Saturday after brushing aside a rival candidate who decided to stand at the last minute, AFP reports from Ankara.

At a party conference here, Ciller won 1045 votes from delegates against only 29 for Mehmet Karakuchuk, a local True Path official from Istanbul, some 60 ballots were spoiled.

Ciller became party leader in June at a special party congress, replacing Suleyman Demirel who was elected Turkish President in May, she was the first woman in the republic's history to become Prime Minister, in a move welcomed by the international community which saw her as a symbol of democracy in a Muslim state.

3 Greek nationals held in Turkey: Turkish police on Saturday captured three Greek nationals suspected of heroin smuggling, the Anatolia agency reported, AP reports from Istanbul.

The suspects, posing as tourists, were apprehended when they arrived at Ataturk airport to fly to Denmark, the dispatch said.

The Greeks, two women and one man, were travelling with phoney Italian passports and were carrying nearly 3.3 kilograms (7.3 pounds) of heroin, authorities told Anatolia.

Quake shakes central Alaska: A moderate earthquake shook south-central Alaska Saturday, setting off alarms in the Anchorage area. No injuries or serious damage was reported, AP says from Palmer (Alaska).

The Earthquake Information Service at Golden, Colo, measured the quake at 5.1 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was about 70 miles (112 kilometres) west of Homer.

Gail Luedtke, an Anchorage police dispatcher, said there were no reports of injuries or damage to buildings.

Storm claims one in Philippines: One person was reported killed while another was confirmed missing yesterday as tropical storm Kyle whipped the central Philippines, AFP reports from Manila.

Kyle, with maximum winds of 75 kilometres an hour, was tearing northwest between the Cuyo and Semirara Islands groups at 10:00 AM (0200 GMT) on its way to the Calamian Islands and South China Sea, the weather bureau said.

Sarajevo airport reopens

SARAJEVO, Nov 21: Sarajevo Airport was reopened to aid flights today after a one-day shutdown caused by ice and snow on the runway, an official said, reports AFP.

The Airport had been forced to shut because chemicals used to clear the runway proved ineffective, a UN protection force spokesman said Saturday.

Two flights had been able to land before closure was ordered after British Hercules C-130 transporter experienced difficulty breaking.

Meanwhile, gas supplies to Sarajevo's 380,000 citizens remained intermittent, reported radio Sarajevo, as low pressure caused by overdemand cut off many sanctions of the city only days after supplies were restored following an accord with Bosnian Serbs.

Kashmiri dies in custody Fresh battle leaves 7 dead

SRINAGAR (India), Nov 21: An Indian soldier and six Muslim militants believed to be mercenaries were killed in a fierce gunbattle in Kashmir, police sources said Sunday, reports AFP.

Army troops shot dead the guerrillas inside a forest at Badgam, some 20 kilometres (12.5 miles) from this summer capital, during a 90-minute firefight which ended at midnight Saturday, the sources said.

"We think all the militants were foreigners," a police officer said. "But we don't know their nationalities yet."

The battle also left an Indian soldier dead and two army personnel, including a captain, injured.

Troops seized five AK-47 rifles in the forest and launched a massive operation to flush out other militants.

Several Islamic mercenaries, including many veterans of the Afghan war, are known to be fighting on the side of Muslim separatists in Kashmir, India's

only Muslim-majority state.

More than 7,000 people, have died in the separatist campaign since 1989.

Meanwhile, Indian authorities imposed a curfew today in a city area here after hundreds of angry Muslims took to the streets to protest the death of a militant in official custody.

The curfew was clamped at Balmaloo district after men and women marched to the house of the dead man, Mehraj-ud-Din Bangaroo, screaming slogans demanding Kashmir's independence from Indian rule, witnesses said.

The spontaneous demonstrations erupted after police brought back the body of Bangaroo, a leader of the outlawed Muslim brotherhood group who was arrested by the federal Border Security Force (BSF) here on November 5.

Residents alleged that Bangaroo had been tortured to death by the BSF.

The protesters kissed the militant's body wrapped in a blanket, his face betraying

1000 officials fired for graft in Thailand

BANGKOK, Nov 21: Corruption is rife in the civil service, and more than 1,000 officials have been fired for graft in the last five years, a newspaper Sunday quoted a deputy prime minister as saying, reports AP.

Banyat Bantadant said the rapid growth of the civil service, low salaries and past political instability are to blame for increasing corruption in the bureaucracy, the Bangkok Post reported.

An average of 220 officials a year are fired, but even more are protected by their corrupt superiors, Banyat said.

The country's recent economic boom swelled the ranks of civil servants, reducing efficiency and straining the government's ability to pay competitive salaries. Some officials use graft to supplement their income, he said.

Banyat said the government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has concentrated on improving efficiency, but is saddled with problems stemming from a series of short-lived previous governments.

Dalai Lama office welcomes Clinton's statement

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: The Dalai Lama's office here today welcomed US President Bill Clinton's appeal to China to talk to the Tibetan spiritual leader and Nobel Peace laureate as "very important," reports AP.

"We really welcome that this is a very important statement," said Migyur Dorji, chief representative of the Dalai Lama's bureau. "It is the first time a US president is directly telling China to have a dialogue."

"It indicates that the United States is serious about the Tibetan issue, especially in the preservation of Tibetan culture and religion," Dorji added.

Clinton told Chinese President Jiang Zemin at a meeting in Seattle on Friday that Beijing should hold a dialogue with the Dalai Lama, who lives in India.

Israel to use army to rein in Jewish settlers

NEW YORK, Nov 21: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, facing wave of violence that threatens the peace process, said Saturday he would use the army to rein in Jewish settlers bitterly opposed to any accord with the PLO, reports Reuter.

Rabin told CNN's Evans and Novak programme that police and army units would be turned against the settlers, most of whom are armed, in order to fulfil terms of a peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

"We are responsible to fight terrorism, to maintain law and order with the Israelis, Rabin said, noting the army had been used in the past to enforce order among settlers in the territories.

"And the Israeli police will carry out inquiries, and if the issues are required to be

brought to the court, they will be brought to the court", he said.

The Prime Minister's comments echoed a similar warning issued Friday by Israel's army chief.

Groups of settlers have stormed through Palestinian areas, damaging houses, cars and businesses, to protest attacks on Jews and Israel's agreement to turn over occupied land to Arab control under the September 13 pact.

Since signing the accord on Palestinian self-rule, 21 Palestinians and 12 Israelis have been killed. Under the deal, Israel will begin withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho December 13.

The agreement provides for Jewish settlements in the occupied territories to remain, but

terms for their security are still being negotiated.

Earlier, Syria condemned remarks by Rabin made this week in which he said "Israel would keep its hand on the trigger while talking peace with Arab neighbours."

After the statement it does not seem that Israel is seriously intending to walk along the road of the right peace, official Damascus Radio commented.

This Israeli mentality would sooner or later undermine all chances of peace, the radio said in a daily commentary that usually reflects government thinking.

Rabin said in Montreal Thursday that although Israel welcomes peace, he has no illusions that it will happen overnight and recent events mean Israel will still be wary of more violence.

State elections to determine fate of Narasimha Govt

NEW DELHI, Nov 21: India's main opposition party is banking on the Hindu god Rama to help sweep crucial state elections as it mounts its most determined bid for power in the world's largest democracy, reports AFP.

The Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) is seeking to break the four-decade-long grip of the ruling Congress (I) Party on the country's turbulent politics.

BJP leaders are confident of winning the staggered elections this month in four states, where BJP governments were sacked after the December razing of the 16th century Babri Mosque, and in the capital New Delhi.

A victory would signify that the BJP has finally arrived to

take the place of the Congress (I), India's oldest political entity which has ruled almost uninterrupted since independence in 1947, party managers said.

"We are confident of taking power in the next parliamentary elections if things continue as they are," a BJP leader, Devdas Apte, told AFP here, calling his party the only alternative to the fracture Congress.

"We are the party of tomorrow," said another leader, Lalji Tandon.

The BJP, with 9.5 million members and 119 members of parliament (MPs), has expanded rapidly during the last five years on the strength of a Hindu-revivalist wave, leaving critics stunned in this nation of 950 million people.

In the process, the BJP has

shattered the country's secular tolerance, struck an uncompromising anti-Islamic stance, and is promising a new-look India rooted in Hindu ethos.

"The BJP has emerge as the harbinger of the new awakening," said Lal Krishna Advani, the suave party president pro-

ject as a future premier.

"Whereas in the past, politics was divided into Congress and anti-Congress formations, the fault line today is between the BJP and the rest," Advani said.

The BJP says a Congress defeat in the current elections would force Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, who heads a minority government, to quit or

demand for the construction of a Rama temple on the rubble of the Babri Mosque to garner Hindu votes.

Nine years ago, the BJP was just one of India's many parties with only two seats in the 545-member parliament.

For years, the BJP ploughed a mostly lonely furrow, its influence limited to the northern

heartland. It had nothing approaching a nationwide following.

Its fortunes began to change when Hindu fundamentalists launched an emotional campaign in 1986 against the Babri Mosque, saying it was built at the birthplace of Rama.

The movement saw a sharp resurgence of Hindu consciousness. The BJP, which was at the vanguard of the campaign, reaped the harvest in the 1989 election by winning 89 seats in parliament.

In elections two years later, it broke ranks with other opposition parties and went it alone, electing 119 MPs and taking power in four of India's 25 states, including the most populous and largest.

By 1991, the BJP had be-

come the darling of Indian industrialists and attracted scores of luminaries, including former judges, bureaucrats, army officers, movie stars and sportsmen.

But BJP leaders say the party's future will depend largely on how it performs in the current elections, particularly in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, where the Babri Mosque was located.

"I do not think we will lose in any state," said Pramod Mahajan, a party leader. "But losing Uttar Pradesh will be like losing other states as well."

Political observers said that if the BJP fails to win Uttar Pradesh, its dreams of becoming India's ruling party will suffer a major setback.

Some refugees told AFP the Iranian authorities had asked them to leave before the end of the year.

3000 Iraqi Kurds return home

ARBIL, Nov 21: More than 3,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees have returned to northern Iraq from Iran since the beginning of November, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said Saturday, reports AFP.

Kurdish officials in northern Iraq said more than 70 families were crossing the border each day, the majority from the Ziveh refugee camp in the Orumiyeh region of northwestern Iraq.

The camp was set up by the Iranian authorities in 1988 to house Iraqi Kurds fleeing attacks by Iraqi government forces, which were believed to have killed nearly 5,000 people.

Some refugees told AFP the Iranian authorities had asked them to leave before the end of the year.