

Islamic court
set up in
India

NEW DELHI, Mar 28: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has set up the first Islamic court here following its controversial decision to set up Shariat courts all over the country to enable the Muslim community to refer and settle disputes relating to family matters, reports PTI.

The Darul Qaza (Qazi's Court) was established in the last week of January in south Delhi's Chhila area, having a large concentration of Muslims.

The court, presided over by Qazi Mohammed Kamil, is functioning in a first floor apartment of a newly constructed building in the crowded Chhila market.

Disputes involving marriage, divorce, succession and maintenance are being regularly brought to the court and the Qazi has issued notices to the respondents in several cases.

Eight cases are currently pending before the Darul Qaza and the court is conducting regular hearing in them. Qazi Mohammed Kamil told PTI in an interview.

Gulf states — Oman and

Qatar recently began "intensive efforts" to ease the embargo, but "this lobbying effort did not get the hoped-for results because of the Hebron massacre," a diplomat said, asking to remain anonymous.

Shara said if an Arab country wanted to lift the boycott, "that would be a separate decision which would have nothing to do with the Arab League."

Since the Israeli-PLO autonomy accord was signed on September 13, Washington has called for the indirect boycott to be lifted in exchange for US participation in developing the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, the first two areas earmarked for autonomy under the accord.

For Syria the main issue was not the massacre of 30 Palestinian worshippers by a Jewish settler in the West Bank town of Hebron, but the Israeli-occupied territories.

Syrian-Israeli peace talks have been deadlocked over the Golan heights, seized by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981.

Syria made no distinction between the direct boycott of Arab trade with Israel and the indirect boycott, Shara said.

Syria's official Tishrin newspaper said Sunday that Israel "had not broken off the negotiations with Arab parties, but it is also true it has made no step toward peace and made no effort to help the peace process succeed".

US commerce secretary Ronald Brown said in January that Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid had promised to raise the issue of the indirect boycott at the ministerial meeting in Cairo.

As the session opened Saturday, Abdel Meguid reiterated the Arab states condemnation of the massacre, and calls for adequate international protection for Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Arab countries have boycotted Israel since it was created in 1948. Three years later, they set up a body in charge of drawing up a "black

list" of international firms with interests in Israel.

Barring Egypt, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, only Kuwait has lifted the indirect boycott, last year.

The Arab League also condemned a recent Franco-Israeli military accord, saying it would harm the peace process.

The two countries signed the accord on March 10 ending a 30-year freeze on military cooperation.

Shara said the agreement would affect Arab-French relations, and it came at a time when "we are talking about peace even though Israel has a huge arsenal of all sorts of weapons".

The Arab League postponed the accord on creating an Arab Court of Justice and amending the League's charter, participants said.

On Sunday they discussed developing a joint strategy to safeguard water resources for Arab countries and accused Israel of "diverting Arab water resources".

UN team begins mission to Iraq tomorrow

MANAMA, Mar 28: A team of UN ballistic missiles experts are to begin a two-month-long mission to Iraq on Wednesday as part of preparations for long-term monitoring of its weapons programmes, a UN official said Sunday, reports AFP.

John Larabee, an American at the head of the 14-member team, said they would draw up detailed protocols for the monitoring and verification of missile sites around Iraq.

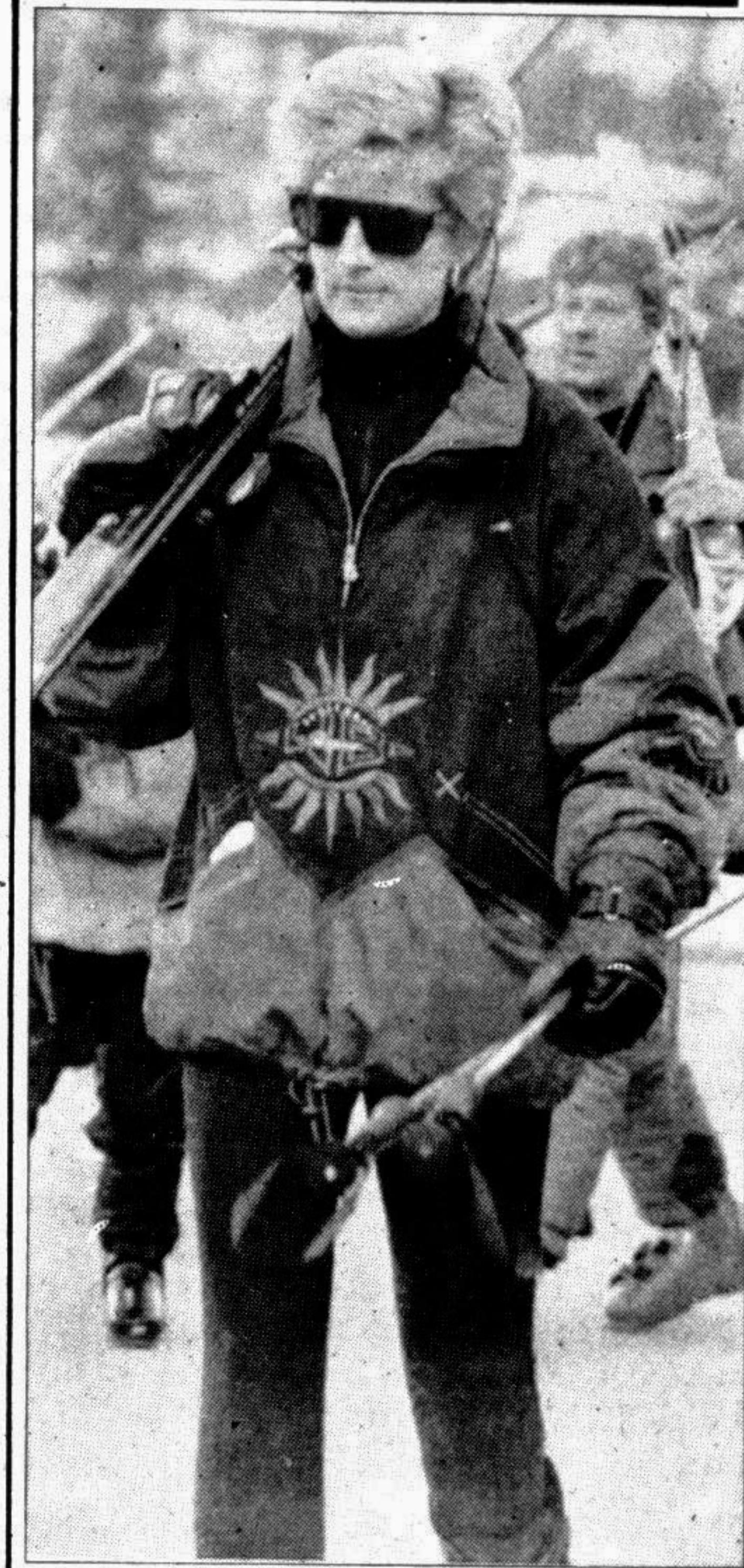
The documents would contain "detailed guidelines which will assist the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspectors during ongoing monitoring" of Iraq's missile facilities under the programme of long-term monitoring, he said.

UNSCOM, based in Bahrain, is in charge of eliminating post-war Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres (90 miles).

Larabee said the team would spend up to two months in Iraq visiting about 20 missile facilities.

On Saturday, UN inspectors left Iraq with air samples from a former chemical weapons centre.

Off the Record



Arab League wants trial of Lockerbie suspects

CAIRO, Mar 28: The Arab League Sunday said the trial of two Libyans suspected of involvement in the destruction of a US airliner over Scotland in 1988 should be held by the International Court of Justice with Scottish judges, reports AFP.

The trial should also be held in accordance with Scottish law, the resolution of the Arab League Foreign Ministers said. It did not condemn international sanctions ordered against Libya by the United Nations for refusing to hand the men over for trial.

Both Britain and the United States want to try the Libyans in connection with the crash of a Pan Am Boeing 747 which blew up over Lockerbie.

Laura said on March 22 that it accepted the idea of a trial before the international court in the Hague with Scottish judges on the bench.

The Princess of Wales carries on Monday in Austria her skis to a cable car. Princess Diana and her two sons arrived at the ski resort on March 23 for their annual pre-Easter holiday.

— AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Gaviria elected OAS chief: Colombian President Cesar Gaviria, who had the support of the United States and other large countries in the region, was elected Sunday as head of the Organisation of American States (OAS). Reuter reports from Washington.

Gaviria, who will be Secretary-General of the 34-member organisation for five years, immediately called for the creation of a free-trade zone stretching the length of the Americas.

Gaviria will take office in August. He defeated Costa Rican Foreign Minister Bernd Niehaus by 20-14 votes.

Somalis free 2 hostages: Somalis kidnappers freed a Kenyan and an Australian, both employees of the catering company supplying UN forces, after 16 days of captivity, a relative said Monday, AP reports from Brisbane.

Wayne Hargreaves of Australia and John Warui of Kenya were released Sunday evening in Mogadishu in exchange for a package of food, said Hargreaves' wife.

No ransom money was exchanged, said Denis Hargreaves. She said both men were well and were celebrating their release with company staff.

African leaders' meet this week: Kwazulu homeland ruler Mangosuthu Buthelezi said Sunday that Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, ANC President Nelson Mandela and South African President Frederik de Klerk might meet this week, AFP reports from Johannesburg.

In an interview on SABC public television, Buthelezi, who is also leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Buthelezi said: "It is possible this week there will be a meeting between de Klerk, Mandela and the King."

Mandela, wrote letter to Zwelithini last week requesting talks with the Monarch. An historic first meeting between the two in the Kwazulu capital of Ulundi was cancelled on March 18 over fears for Mandela's safety.

Two killed in Los Angeles: A Japanese student and his Japanese-American friend shot in carjacking in Los Angeles were declared brain dead Sunday, hospital officials said, AFP reports from Los Angeles.

An unidentified gunman shot Takuma Ito, who is Japanese, and Go Matsura, who was born in Japan but has US citizenship, in the head before taking their car and fleeing a supermarket parking lot in the Los Angeles suburb of San Pedro, police said.

The Friday night shooting prompted Japan's Foreign Ministry in Tokyo Sunday to caution Japanese travellers to be especially careful about violence in the United States.

4 shot dead in Egypt: Four Muslim militants including a woman were shot dead and four policemen wounded in a shootout in southern Egypt on Sunday night, security sources said, Reuter reports from Assiut, Egypt.

The militants thought to be members of the radical Gamma Al-Islamiya (Islamic group), opened fire from a car at two police vehicles passing through the town of Al-Ghainim in Assiut province, they said.

A police sergeant and three officers — a captain and two lieutenants — were shot in the arms and the legs.

Heavy turnout in Ukraine's polls: A heavy turnout in Ukraine's first post-Soviet parliamentary election confounded pundits who had predicted that voters disheartened and impoverished by economic decline would stay away from the polls, Reuter reports from Kiev.

President Leonid Kravchuk may also have been surprised that three-quarters of the 36 million voters cast ballots in Sunday's first round of the election.

Kravchuk had forecast a "power vacuum" as a result of Ukraine's cumbersome electoral laws and called for the postponement of presidential elections set for June.

Govt troops kill 9 Tamils: Government troops yesterday gunned down at least nine Tamil guerrillas and seized several automatic weapons, ammunition and communications equipment from the victims, a military spokesman said, AFP reports from Colombo.

There were no casualties among troops, he added.

Among the items seized from the dead rebels were some communications equipment, six automatic weapons, 28 anti-personnel mines and 10 grenades, the spokesman said.

Kashmir blast kills 2

NEW DELHI, Mar 28: A bomb exploded in the hall of a bus station in the northern state of Kashmir, killing two people and wounding 14 others, United News of India reported Monday, says AP.

The explosion in Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu-Kashmir, occurred late Sunday when passengers were about to board two night buses for nearby towns.

No one claimed responsibility for the blast, but Muslim militants often are blamed for violence in the border state.

The report analyses Benazir's performance in the backdrop of the reverses she suffered recently, including the diplomatic defeat at the hands of India on a resolution brought before the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva to condemn New Delhi on the question of situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Quoting her former aides, the Islamabad dateline report said, "She does not encourage

Hekmatyar welcomes UN team

CHARASAB, Afghanistan, Mar 28: Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said on Sunday he would guarantee security for a UN peace mission in areas controlled by his forces who are fighting to topple President Burhanuddin Rabbani, reports Reuter.

Hekmatyar said in an interview at his Charasab base south of the capital Kabul that the mission, headed by former Tunisian Foreign Minister Hamed Mestiri, should not make an end to factional fighting a condition for visiting Afghanistan.

At least 28 people were killed and more than 130 wounded in an exchange of rocket fire between rival factions in Kabul on Saturday, sporadic shelling continued on Sunday but there was no information of any casualties.

Hekmatyar's assurance came after a similar pledge last week by a spokesman for Rabbani.

Mestiri arrived to begin his mission in the Pakistani capital Islamabad on Sunday from Geneva, where he said on Friday that heavy fighting might prevent him entering the besieged Afghan capital.

Hekmatyar said any mission could face dangers but he said Mestiri and his colleagues should not wait for the restoration of peace and termination of fighting.

The report says Benazir has played the Islamic card and belied her liberal reputation, sustaining the Draconian laws that underlie the inferior status of women in Pakistani society.

In case of rape, for example, the burden of proof is on women to prove their innocence. "When a woman files for rape, she runs the risk of accusing herself of committing adultery," explains Asma Jahangir, of the Pakistan Commission of Human Rights.

The fact remains that Benazir does not have the courage or sometimes the support to do away with laws.

Benazir is Aurangzeb of Pakistan

debate or discussion, so all the people who had independent views on the party drifted away from her. Her image has further suffered since she fought with her mother.

"In our culture, family life is very important. The last of the great Moghuls, Aurangzeb, is very unpopular because he imprisoned his father and killed his brothers for the sake of power. People compare her to Aurangzeb because she is trying to do to her only surviving brother what the emperor did to his family," the report said, quoting Rao Rashid, a former Inspector General of Police who served as adviser to both Benazir and her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

According to Dr Akmal Hussain, a Cambridge-educated Pakistani economist, after 45 years of freedom, Pakistan remains an essentially feudal society ... in a feudal environment.

Quoting her former aides, the Islamabad dateline report said, "She does not encourage

18 tonnes of hashish seized in Pakistan

BEIJING: China is trying to help 200,000 street children who have fallen through the cracks of the rapidly disintegrating socialist security system, reports Reuter.

The public-awareness drive is aimed at raising money to provide shelter and schooling for children aged between four and 11 "thrown onto the streets as the result of regional disasters, broken families and inadequate pastoral care," the official China Daily said Monday.

"The kids survive by begging and sleep in the cities' wharves and railway stations at night," the newspaper said.

"Mortality and disability rates among homeless kids are said to last three months and it is being projected as one of the better methods for spacing births."

This is the first time that an anti-fertility vaccine will be introduced in India. The contraceptive is in use in 90 countries but it was opposed in India on the grounds that it played upon the reproductive system.

Depo Provera is the brand name for Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (DMPA). It is being brought to India by Max India Limited and the US Upjohn Company as the first pharmaceutical product of their collaboration. It will be an intramuscular injection to be administered in the shoulder or the thigh.

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