

## Al-Arqam's teachings non-Islamic: Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad said today the Al-Arqam Islamic Movement is a security threat to Muslim Malaysia and action would be taken to stop it from spreading its ideology, reports Reuter.

"Al-Arqam is teaching a religion that is not Islam. We have to take action before this deviationist teaching spreads," he said, answering reporters' questions after opening an Islamic civilisation festival in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Vernacular newspapers quoted Malaysia's Islamic Centre as saying that the banned Al-Arqam has about 100 armed militants among its 100,000 followers in the country.

However, the movements leaders have denied the allegations and called for a dialogue with the government to solve the matter.

Al-Arqam claims that their leader Asaari Muhammad is the long-awaited Imam Mahadi or messiah. He is in hiding overseas. Al-Arqam used to say that they wanted to rule the country but have kept low since 1991 when the government banned them.



Mahathir Mohammad

## France ready to intervene in Rwandan conflict

UNITED NATIONS, June 17: France has told the United Nations it is willing to command an intervention force to stem the bloodshed in Rwanda and to prepare the ground for a bigger UN peacekeeping force expected in late July, reports AFP.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed the French offer, which the other permanent members of the UN Security Council — Britain, China, Russia and the United States as well as France — did not try to block, diplomatic sources said Thursday.

The UN chief has been fuming over what he has called the "scandal" of the international community's very slow response to the massacre of possibly half a million Rwandans since the country

plunged back into civil war in early April.

Most of the victims have been ethnic Tutsis, with militia from the Hutu majority that has long dominated the government blamed for the bulk of the killings.

France, which said it was proposing a "strictly humanitarian" mission for Rwanda, made its offer contingent upon the participation of other countries including at least, one European nation.

Meanwhile, African nations are ready to back France over intervention in the Rwandan conflict, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said Thursday without specifying which ones.

He said such an operation should be "coordinated with

our partners and given the green light by the United Nations" and be undertaken for a "limited period and with precise objectives".

Juppe told French television he had already contacted Italian, Belgian and Spanish officials on the issue.

The French proposal to intervene in the war-torn state, already firmly rejected by the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front rebel movement, received only a lukewarm response among Paris' European partners.

Juppe refused to reveal which African states had given the idea a positive response saying only: "We are in the process of setting up something a bit complex and dangerous, and a little discretion is necessary."

"We have to move quickly, but this operation has to be mounted properly in conjunction with defence authorities," Juppe said, adding that misunderstandings with the rebels had to be ironed out.

He said discussions were now underway with RPF officials to explain the French position.

He explained the plan aimed to protect civilians, rather than take sides in the war. The rebels say France backs the government of Rwanda.

Juppe had said on Wednesday that Paris would be prepared to undertake "intervention on the ground" in Rwanda with France's main European or African allies to protect groups threatened with extermination.

### Israel frees 229 prisoners

JERUSALEM, June 17: Israel freed only 229 prisoners and handed over another 91. Palestinian common criminals to the Gaza police on Thursday, military sources said today, reports AFP.

The criminals were put in the Gaza city jail by the new Palestinian police force.

Palestinian officials said 131 of the "security" prisoners were from Gaza and the remainder from the West Bank. All returned home.

They signed an oath vowing to abstain from all acts of terrorism and violence and to obey the law.

They also had to acknowledge that they were released as part of a peace process, which Muslim fundamentalists oppose.

Army sources had announced Thursday that about 500 Palestinians were let out in a final wave of releases.

### No N-weapons in DPRK, says Russian minister

MOSCOW, June 17: Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov said today he doubted North Korea had the capacity to make nuclear weapons, though it could produce a small amount of plutonium, reports Reuter.

"I am sure that there are no nuclear weapons in North Korea today," he told the official ITAR-Tass news agency. "Making an atom bomb is too complicated a technical process."

Mikhailov was asked whether he thought North Korea, suspected by the United States and other countries of secretly building nuclear weapons in defiance of its international commitments.

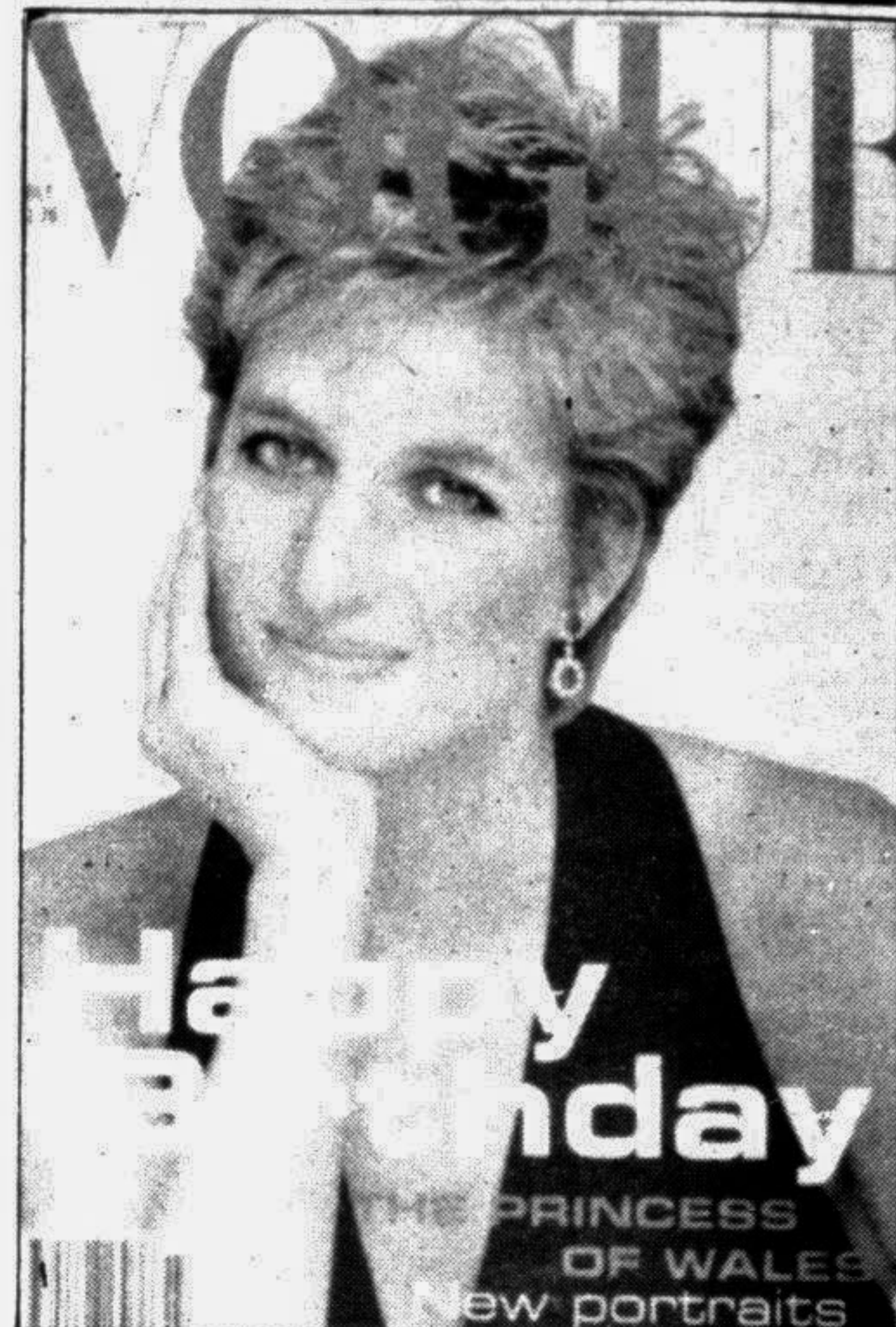
### US to close 27 military bases in Europe

WASHINGTON, June 17: The Pentagon identified 27 US military installations in Europe to be closed, including two large bases in Germany, officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

A news released said the Neureut Barracks at Karlsruhe and the Rhein Ordnance Barracks at Kaiserslautern would be among the sites to be closed along with communications centres and warehouses in Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Britain and elsewhere in Germany.

A total of 895 bases and military installations have been closed or reduced in the United States and abroad since 1990 for budget reasons.

## Off the Record



Although her public appearances are few now, Britain's Princess of Wales is back on the front page of prestigious fashion magazine Vogue's July issue. — AFP photo

### 5 pc US teenagers attempt suicide

NEW YORK: One in 20 teenagers say they have tried to commit suicide, and one in eight say they have at least considered it, a survey found, reports AP.

The Gallup Organisation study said 5 per cent of American teenagers say they have tried to commit suicide and 12 per cent say they have come close to trying.

The study is a follow-up to a 1991 Gallup survey, which found that 6 per cent of teenagers had tried to commit suicide and 15 per cent came close to trying.

The new poll was conducted nationwide in April and May among a random sample of 903 youngsters ages 13 to 19, who filled out confidential questionnaires.

The poll released Wednesday, co-sponsored by Gallup's non-profit institute and Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield, had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 per cent.

In the current poll, those who said they considered suicide were allowed to name more than one reason. Thirty-six per cent cited problems growing up, drug abuse was named by 35 per cent, peer pressure, 31 per cent, and getting along with parents, 28 per cent.

### Dolphins and seals — health hazards

LONDON: Britain's Agriculture department on Wednesday warned the public to stay away from seals, dolphins and whales because they can carry a harmful bacteria, reports Reuter.

"This action follows a recent discovery of previously unrecorded brucella organisms in seals, dolphins and porpoises in waters around Scotland," the ministry said in a statement.

"The public should not therefore handle seals and other marine mammals including whales which may be washed ashore, or have close contact with, for example, groups of seals at pupping time."

## BRIEFLY

### 3 Zulu miners killed in S Africa:

Three Zulu mine workers were killed and several wounded on Thursday night when fighting erupted at a migrant workers' hostel east of Johannesburg, a mine spokesman said yesterday, Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

He said Zulu workers of the East Rand Proprietary Mines Ltd returning to work after special leave were attacked by unidentified employees. No further details were immediately available.

"Violence broke out at 9pm last night and claimed the lives of three. Several were injured."

### Chinese flood toll rises to 129:

At least 129 people have died in the floods which have ravaged southern China for the past week, according to an early toll reported by The China Daily Friday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Seventy people lost their lives when typhoon Russ hit Guangdong and Guangxi provinces in the south of the country on June 7 and 81 while at least 40 others were swept away in flash floods, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, quoted by the paper said.

Other provinces in the south and southeast of China were also affected by flooding, especially Jiangxi where at least 19 died, several hundred thousands homes in the region were destroyed.

### Thai minor girl held with drugs:

Thai anti-drugs police yesterday detained an eight-year-old girl after finding heroin hidden in her underpants, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

They decided to search the child while looking for her parents on a drugs-related matter in Samut Prakan 25 km (15 miles) south of Bangkok. Police said they found 14 small bottles filled with heroin.

The child will be charged with being a heroin courier. It was likely the juvenile court would send her to a reform school, police said.

### Haiti dumps drugs into sea:

The Haitian military, which faces allegations of involvement in drug trafficking, dumped 590 pounds (268 kg) of cocaine into the sea Thursday to draw attention to its anti-narcotics programme, Reuter reports from Port-Au-Prince.

Witnesses said the cocaine and 75 pounds (34 kg) of marijuana were thrown into the sea just off the coast of Port-Au-Prince by soldiers carrying automatic rifles.

US drug agents have said there is circumstantial evidence to support drug trafficking allegations against the military chiefs who deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in a 1991 coup but say they lack hard evidence to indict them.

## 3 to vie for Britain's Labour leadership

LONDON, June 17: Acting leader Margaret Beckett and two challengers, Tony Blair and John Prescott, will vie for the leadership of Britain's opposition Labour Party, the party announced Thursday, reports AFP.

The three were nominated by Labour MPs as candidates to succeed John Smith, who died of a heart attack last month.

All three received the mandatory minimum of 34 nominations to stand. However, another would be candidate, former secretary of state to the treasury, Denis Davies, received only seven nominations.

Tony Blair, the shadow home secretary and widely seen as a "moderniser" on the right of the party, was strong

favourite to accede to the leadership. He obtained a total of 154 nominations.

Beckett, who has led the Party in an interim capacity since Smith's death, and Prescott, shadow employment secretary, were nominated by 42 and 46 Labour MPs respectively.

Regarded as traditional left-wingers, they are also standing for the deputy leadership, and received 106 and 101 nominations respectively for that post.

The winner of the leadership contest will not be known until July 21 following a complex procedure involving additional votes by unions and party members in the constituencies.

## Fresh DPRK's offer can be promising step: Clinton

WASHINGTON, June 17: President Bill Clinton said Thursday that a new North Korean offer to resolve the nuclear crisis could be a promising development.

"Today there are reports that the North Koreans in discussions with (former US) President Jimmy Carter have offered new steps to allay the international community's concerns" about its nuclear programme, Clinton told reporters.

"If North Korea means by this also that it is willing to freeze its nuclear programme while talks take place this would be a promising step," Clinton said.

"We want to know what they meant and if it represents a change of position" and the United States would be seeking further clarification from the North Korean side, Clinton said.

"In the meantime we will continue to consult on sanctions at the United Nations."

Carter said after meeting with North Korean President Kim Il-Sung in Pyongyang on Thursday that North Korea was now willing to allow international nuclear inspectors and monitoring equipment to remain in place, after earlier threats to expel them.

North Korea also said it wanted to replace its graphite nuclear reactor with a light water system which cannot produce weapons-grade plutonium, Carter said.

Carter is officially on a private visit but has been in close touch with US authorities and

reported back to them on Thursday on his meeting with Kim. He is due to meet with the North Korean President again Friday.

Clinton stressed that confirmation of Pyongyang's pledges would come through diplomatic channels at the United Nations in New York. A State Department official said working level talks on the issue could begin as soon as this weekend.

Meanwhile, South Korea said today it was examining apparently conciliatory signals from North Korea and expressed hope the dispute over Pyongyang's suspected nuclear weapons programme would be settled through dialogue.

"The government will make all possible efforts to settle the North Korean nuclear programme in peaceful ways and through dialogue," a Unification Ministry spokesman said.

The comments came at the end of a security meeting called to discuss indications that the North might be softening its opposition to international inspection of its nuclear programme.

## Israeli Gen doubts peace with Syria

JERUSALEM, June 17: A top Israeli peacemaker said in an interview published today he doubted Israel and Syria would make peace this year, reports Reuter.

"I don't believe this year it will be possible to complete the negotiations with the Syrians," Major-General Amnon Shahak also Israel's deputy army chief, told the Davar newspaper.

"If the dialogue between us and the Syrians will not continue in '94, something special will have to be done to renew it afterwards," said Shahak, whose deal with the PLO launch Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho last month.

Shahak, who is not directly involved with the Syrian nego-

tiations, said that based on his experience with the depth of problems that come up, it was highly unlikely negotiations with Syria could be finished by the year's end even if they were to begin in two weeks.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry declined comment on the report. An editorial in the official Syrian newspaper Al-Baath on Thursday said the United States and other sponsors of Middle East peace moves should not expect to see results this year without getting together with Israel.

Syria's talks with Israel have been stalled for two years despite numerous efforts by Washington to break the impasse over the Israeli-held Golan Heights.

### Strike paralyses Tamil Nadu

MADRAS, India, June 17: India's southern Tamil Nadu state was shut down today by an officially-sponsored strike to demand more spots in schools for low-caste Hindu students, officials said, reports Reuter.

Shops and government offices were closed, buses were not running and all trains and flights in and out of Madras.

More than 10,000 policemen were deployed in Madras to prevent possible clashes between the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and its key rival, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

The strike was called by the AIADMK to protest against New Delhi's refusal to support efforts by the Tamil Nadu State assembly to reserve 69 per cent of seats in educational institutions for low-caste students.

The federal government in New Delhi has declined to support the move because it contravenes a Supreme Court ruling that reservations for the lower castes should not exceed 50 per cent.

## 900 foreigners flee Aden under heavy bombardment

SANAA, June 17: About 900 foreigners arrived in Djibouti Friday after fleeing the besieged Aden under heavy bombardment as northern forces closed in on the southern Yemeni stronghold, officials reported, reports AP.

Sanaa Radio warned Friday that President Ali Abdullah Saleh's military will continue to bomb Aden and advised civilians to stay away from strategic targets.

At least 18 people were killed and 40 wounded in the shelling Thursday, the Kuwait News Agency reported from the beleaguered city.

The northern warning was issued despite a pledge Thursday by Saleh, the northern leader, to agree to a new cease-fire in the six-week-old civil war in Yemen.

In Aden, the southern leadership Friday urged the UN Security Council to brand Saleh and his government war criminals.

The radio quoted the south's foreign minister, Abdullah Abdel al-Majid al-Asnaji, as saying in a statement the north had embarked on a dangerous military escalation

and were "attacking cities and residential districts."

The country plunged into civil war after the 4-year-old union of North and South Yemen collapsed amid a bitter feud between Saleh and his former vice president, Ali Salim al-Beidh, the southern leader.

The evacuees included Americans, Britons, Tunisians and Palestinians arrived safely in Djibouti aboard a ferry after sailing 250 kilometers (155 miles) overnight across the Gulf of Aden, said Jean Francois Golay of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The ferry was operated by the Geneva-based International Organization for Migration, officials said. It was not immediately known if there would be further evacuations from Aden as Saleh's forces close in.

Hundreds of foreigners were evacuated from Sanaa, the northern capital, soon after the war began May 4.

Five ceasefires have so far collapsed within hours of taking effect. Both sides accuse the other of shooting first.



Aziza, a 27-year-old Southern Yemeni militawoman, standing June 16 at a checkpoint in the capital Aden. — AFP photo

Saleh has agreed to meet with southern leaders at an as yet undecided site abroad to discuss a new cease fire, a source close to UN mediator Lakhdar Brahimi said Thursday.

Saleh's assault brigades, which heavily outnumber the southern forces, have battled to the outskirts of Aden and control a large swathe of territory east of the former southern capital.

Sanaa Radio said possible targets for attack in Aden included the airport, all military camps and the naval base, the radio and television stations, the south's military headquarters and the central offices of Beidh's Yemeni Socialist Party.

Northern forces have been escalating their shelling of Aden in the last few days. Northern officials say they are not targeting civilian areas in their campaign to capture the capital of the breakaway southern state Beidh proclaimed May 20.

But reports from the city indicate there have been scores of civilian casualties amid worsening shortages of food, water and medicines

with the population of 350,000 swollen by refugees.

Saleh deflected five weeks ago that his forces would not bomb southern population centers. But Aden's airport, which has a military section, and other key facilities have been hit.

The oil refinery has been out of action since it was bombed by northern warplanes June 5.

A UN team surveying the emergency needs of people in northern-controlled areas reported that Saleh's forces have inched to within 10 kilometers (6 miles) of Aden, Ani told The Associated Press.

Ani said Saleh's troops have advanced several kilometers (miles) south of the village of Sabir on the main road running north from Aden. Sabir was on the front line a week ago.

Ani said the UN team of physicians and water and food specialists, who returned to Sanaa Thursday, reported serious conditions in Sabir and nearby towns and villages, including al-Houta, capital of Lahij province.

### Germany to open office in Jericho

JERICHO, June 17: Germany will open an official bureau in Jericho, the seat of the Palestinian self-rule government, within a few weeks, German officials said Friday, reports AP.

That would make it likely the first country to establish a government branch in the autonomous areas. France opened a cultural center in the town of 15,000 last month.

The main task of the German office will be to coordinate with the Palestinian authorities how the millions of dollars in German aid are being spent, said a German Foreign Ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We want to make sure the money is being spent in a useful way. In the aid projects, we would also like to focus on areas we are good in, such as waste removal, water treatment and vocational training," said the official.

Germany has pledged about 250 million marks (dhs 150 million) in aid to the autonomy areas over the next five years, as part of the total European Community package of dhs 530 million.