

Australia departs 12 Chinese today

CANBERRA, July 19: At least 12 Chinese boatpeople who were refused refugee status in Australia will be deported to the Chinese province of Guangdong tomorrow, reports Reuters.

The Immigration Department said lawyers for two others — girls aged nine and 12 — plan a last appeal in the federal court to be allowed to stay.

The boatpeople were among a group of 24 who arrived on the northwestern coast of Australia on December 5 last year. The remaining ten have litigation pending, an Immigration Department spokesman said.

The spokesman said the department planned to use two small Australian air force Falcon jets to fly the boatpeople to Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province.

Suu Kyi begins her sixth year of detention today

BANGKOK, July 19: When she begins her sixth year of detention Wednesday, one of the world's most famous political prisoners will probably follow what her husband has described as an "austere and disciplined" regimen, reports AP.

At her lake-side home in Myanmar capital of Yangon, Aung San Suu Kyi, 49, will rise before dawn to meditate and listen to the news on short-wave radio. The rest of the day, she will read, exercise and do household chores.

At night, she will listen to music. She is said to prefer classical but recently has expressed a fondness for the reggae of the late Bob Marley. Perhaps she will tune in to the Norway-based opposition radio station, the Democratic Voice of Burma.

Suu Kyi, leader / of

Myanmar's pro-democracy movement and winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, was arrested on July 20, 1989 under a law safeguarding the state from "subversive elements."

Foremost among her admirers are the millions of Myanmar people who oppose the country's military junta. Fearful of official surveillance, the residents of Yangon refer to her in whispers as "The Lady."

"She stands for all Myanmar people," said Nyen Aung, a Myanmar student who demonstrated Tuesday in front of the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok.

Suu Kyi, daughter of the country's founding father, Gen Aung San, who was assassinated in the run-up to independence in 1948, has grown in stature as she stoically waits

for the junta to deliver on promises of restoring democracy.

In one of her very few opportunities to speak out publicly earlier this year, she also



lately rejected the government's longstanding offer to free her if she went into exile. "The concept of driving

somebody out of their own country is totally unacceptable to me," she said. "They have tried to pressure me to leave the country in ways that no self-respecting government should try."

In 1990, her National League for Democracy won a landslide election victory, but the military nullified the results and cracked down on opposition. Restoration of civilian rule, the junta says, will have to await the drafting of a new constitution, which is proceeding at a leisurely pace under the junta's close supervision.

The junta knows how popular she is and fears her for it. The guidelines for a draft constitution contain clauses aimed at barring Suu Kyi from holding office, mostly on the basis of her being married to a

foreigner. She was arrested when the junta, which took power in September 1988 after bloody suppressing pro-democracy street demonstrations, said she had tried to inspire hatred of the military.

The detention law then in effect suggested that without trial, Suu Kyi could be held for a maximum of three years, until July 1992.

In 1991, the law was amended to extend the maximum detention period to five years, which would have meant her release this year. But in February, a Myanmar intelligence official explained that Suu Kyi's first year of house arrest had actually been an "arrest period," which would not count toward the maximum detention period specified by law.

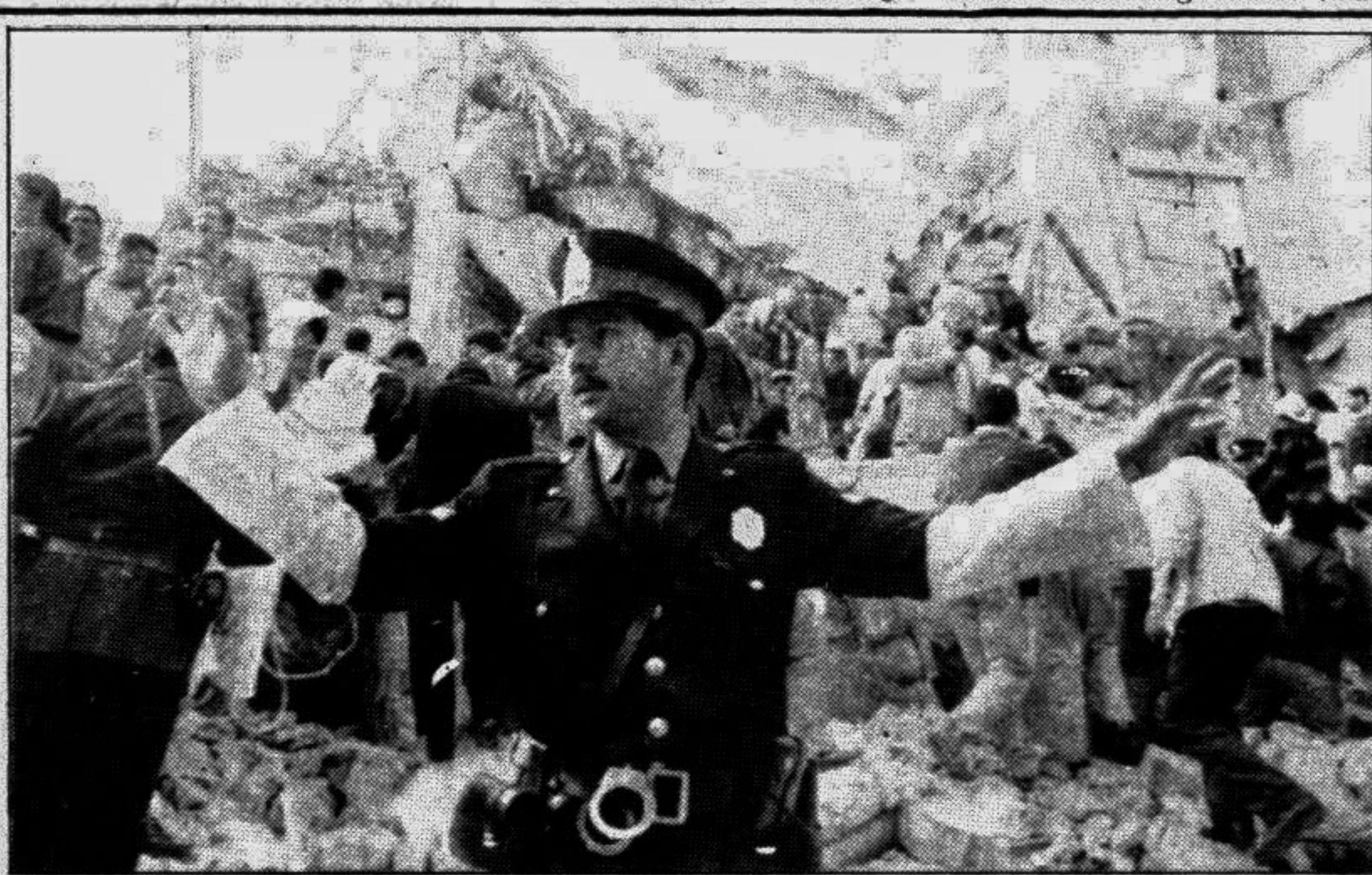
Israel blames Hezbollah for Argentine blast

JERUSALEM, July 19: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Tuesday blamed Islamic militants sponsored by Iran for the Buenos Aires bombing attack and called on the world to join forces "to strike at this viper and crush its skull," reports AP.

Rabin singled out Hezbollah, an Iranian-sponsored group of Shiite Muslim extremists operating in Lebanon for the bombing that levelled a seven-story building housing two Jewish groups in downtown Buenos Aires on Monday.

Rabin said Israel's intelligence services had received warnings that Hezbollah was seeking revenge for the blows it had suffered by the Israeli army in Lebanon.

But he said that despite the warnings, it was impossible to predict where extremists might strike.



A policeman tries to prevent people from approaching the site of an earlier explosion that destroyed a seven-storey building housing the Jewish Mutual Association of Argentina on Monday. — AFP photo

Kashmir militants threaten to kill Hindu pilgrims

SRINAGAR, July 19: Muslim guerrillas Tuesday threatened to kill Hindu pilgrims if they attempt an annual pilgrimage to a Himalayan shrine in the disputed state of Kashmir, reports AP.

An advertisement in "The Srinagar Times," by Harkat al-Ansar, a pro-Pakistan guerrilla group, also warned Muslim hoteliers and tourist agents not to help the Hindu devotees.

Government officials have refused to make arrangements for the 20,000 pilgrims who come annually, despite assurances of police protection, a senior official said on condition of anonymity.

This was the first time that the guerrillas have threatened the pilgrimage since they began a violent revolt four years ago for independence from India for Jammu-Kashmir, its only Muslim-majority state. More than 9,400 people have been killed.

Chanting "Praise Lord Shiva," Hindu devotees walk

for two days or ride ponies along a precipitous 25-kilometre (15-mile) course from Pahalgam, 80-kilometre (50-mile) south of Srinagar, through mountain valleys to the 4,000-metre-high (13,000-foot-high) Amarnath caves.

A Hindu priest, who was among the first pilgrims to reach Anantnag town on the way to Pahalgam, was killed over the weekend by militants as a warning to pilgrims, local newspapers reported.

Guerrillas also shot and killed a policeman assigned to help Hindu pilgrims. No group claimed responsibility for the killing.

Last week, another group, the Jamiat ul-Mujahideen, claimed responsibility for a bomb blast that killed six Hindus in the city of Jammu, also as a warning to pilgrims.

Last month, guerrillas of Harkat al-Ansar the group kidnapped two British hikers near Pahalgam, but freed them unharmed after 17 days.

An earlier Delhi report said:

Relatives of a top government minister escaped unhurt Monday after suspected Muslim rebels fired a rocket at their house in Jammu-Kashmir state.

No one was hurt when the rocket slammed into the house of Gulam Ahmed Dev in capital Srinagar after midnight. The Dev family was watching the World Cup soccer finals in another room.

Three rooms in the house were damaged, news agencies reported. Dev is the father in law of Ghulam Nabi Azad, the federal government minister of civil aviation.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Details were sketchy.

United News of India said the attack could be viewed as a stepping up of militant activity following Kashmir Gov Krishna Rao's recent announcement that elections might be held in the state in three months.

India's federal government now controls the administration in the state.

Political crisis in Nigeria deepens

LAGOS, July 19: Nigeria's political crisis deepened with the killing of several people in pro-democracy protests and a pledge by oil unions to continue a crippling strike against military rule, reports Reuters.

The campaign for democracy (CD) pressure group said at least 20 people were killed in Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, during protests on Monday to demand that military ruler General Sani Abacha surrender power to detained politician Moshod Abiola.

There was no official confirmation of the deaths.

Independent witnesses said they saw bodies in at least two locations in Lagos, a sprawling city of six million people.

Warlel Agamene, President of the junior oil workers' union Nupeng, which launched the strike three weeks ago, said he personally saw several bodies on the street on Monday.

"It was gruesome and it worsens the chances of settling this crisis," he told Reuters, adding the strike would continue.

Mitterrand well enough to carry out duties

PARIS, July 19: French President Francois Mitterrand was recovering from prostate surgery today and well enough to carry out his presidential duties from his hospital bed, officials said, reports Reuters.

The surgery was a success and there was no need to appoint an interim head of state, the officials said.

Mitterrand, who at 77 is months away from the end of his second seven-year term as France's head of state, had a successful operation to remove a prostate obstruction on Monday at Cochin Hospital in Paris, his personal physician said.

Nearly two years ago he underwent surgery to remove a prostate cancer.

Monday's operation was planned some time ago and Prime Minister Edouard Balladur was notified last week, officials said.

Son of US Surgeon General convicted of selling drugs

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. July 19: Prosecutors want a minimum 10-year sentence for Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders' son, who was convicted of selling 275 dollars worth of cocaine to an undercover officer, reports AP.

A judge rejected Kevin Elders' entrapment claim Monday. Elders said the informant who set up the drug deal had threatened to expose his drug habit and embarrass his mother during Senate confirmation hearings.

"This is not a case about Dr Elders," Deputy Prosecutor Chris Palmer said at the non-jury trial. "It's a case about her son, who in this case is an admitted drug user and a person who needs some help, and a person who was a dealer in this case."

Suu Kyi told them of her relationship with her jailers: "Whatever they do to me, that's between them and me; I can take it. What's more important is what they are doing to the country."

Off the Record

Phoolan now frequents beauty parlours

NEW DELHI: India's bandit queen, freed after 11 years in jail, has quietly married and slipped into domesticity, a news agency reported Tuesday, says AP.

Phoolan Devi, disclosed her recent marriage to her sister's ex-husband, a real estate financier, in an interview with the United News of India.

The 37-year-old farmer's daughter has moved into a three-bedroom apartment in an upscale New Delhi neighbourhood with her husband, Umer Singh, 32, and several relatives. The apartment was rented by the French publisher of her biography, the agency said.

Devi was jailed without trial on 70 counts of extortion, kidnapping and murder. Her killing of 22 villagers to avenge the death of her lover and her own torture made her a heroine of India's poor. A film based on her life was shown at international film festivals this year.

Freed five months ago, the bandit who rode horses with a rifle slung over her shoulders now frequents beauty parlours to have her hair styled and dresses in feminine pink. United News said.

But she still wants her gun back to defend herself against the relatives of her victims. "There are people who want me dead," she said.

Her police guard was withdrawn this month, the agency said, and now she has applied for a license to carry a weapon. "If they refuse, I shall go to court," she said.

Tune in to see live performances

SINGAPORE: Thousands of Singapore residents have something new to watch on television: they are tuning in to see live performances inside elevators of their apartments, reports AP.

As part of an experiment to deter criminals and vandals, the government has installed closed circuit television in elevators in 21 multistorey apartments. The pictures are fed to hundreds of homes around-the-clock.

The project, launched in 1992 in three blocks, was expanded this month to 18 more buildings in government-built housing estates, the newspaper Straits Times reported Tuesday.

But in a country with one of the lowest crime rates in the world, the candid camera rarely catches mischief in progress. Instead, some residents use it for entertainment, the newspaper said.

"My parents find it funny to watch the neighbours scratching themselves in the lift," it quoted Koh Tak Yan, 12, as saying.

"Sometimes children make faces at the camera," she added.



A December 1992 file photo showing Rosanna Della Corte, 62, who gave birth to a baby boy on Monday after having a donor's fertilised eggs implanted. Della Corte, from the central Italian town of Canino, is described in Italy as the oldest mother in the world. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Chinese, Afghan get Magsaysay: Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong and Afghan doctor Sima Samar have been named the joint winners of the 1994 Ramon Magsaysay Award for community leadership, the Philippines-based award foundation said Tuesday. AFP reports from Manila.

The foundation's decision marked the first time for a Chinese national or an Afghan to receive the award, which is considered Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. The Magsaysay award is named for a popular Philippine president who died in an airplane crash in 1957 and is granted in five categories.

Iran threatens to sue a German: Tehran on Monday threatened to sue a German engineer who said he was beaten during five years imprisonment in Iran to make him confess to being a spy, AP reports from Nicosia.

The Islamic Republic News Agency said the Iranian judiciary issued a statement "refuting the contradictory remarks by" the former prisoner, Helmut Szimkus.

IRNA said that Szimkus, "apparently influenced by the Zionists, has launched some baseless allegations against Iran."

Perry in Sofia: US Defence Secretary William Perry flew into Sofia Monday to discuss the conflict in neighbouring former Yugoslavia and sign a memorandum on bilateral defence cooperation, Reuters reports from Sofia.

The visit is Perry's second stop on a week-long tour of nine states in the Balkans and southern Europe.

His agenda includes meetings with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Stanislav Daskalov, Defence Minister Valentin Alexandrov and President Zhelyu Zhelev.

2 Sikhs killed in Kashmir: Indian police killed two Sikh militants they suspected of setting off a bomb in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir that killed six people, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported on Monday, Reuters says from New Delhi.

A Muslim Kashmiri group was earlier reported to have claimed responsibility for Saturday's bomb, which exploded in Jammu, the predominantly Hindu winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

PTI quoted senior policeman A K Suri as saying Santokh and Manvir Singh were killed trying to escape early Monday after police surrounded their hide-out in Jammu following a tip.

Somalis free 11 peacekeepers:

Eleven UN peacekeepers kidnapped in an ambush in Mogadishu have been released and the bodies of two other personnel have been handed over to UN authorities, a spokesman said Monday, Reuters reports from United Nations.

The UN spokesman confirmed in a statement that a three-vehicle reconnaissance party of peacekeepers had been ambushed in the Somali capital earlier Monday.

Two Malaysians were killed and two Malaysians wounded, one critically, during the incident, the statement said. The ambushed party was composed of three Italians, nine Malaysians and one New Zealander, it added.

India to set up geostatics centre: India will set up a geostatics centre in Hyderabad, the capital of south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh with fresh assistance and technical know-how, the French ambassador to India Philippe Petit said, Xinhua reports from New Delhi.

Inaugurating a workshop on geostatics in Hyderabad on Monday the ambassador said that France would share its technological expertise in the mining sector to boost bilateral ties.

New Ukrainian president sworn in

KIEV, July 19: Leonid Kuchma, with one hand on the Bible and the other on the constitution, took the oath of office in parliament today to become the second president of post-Soviet Ukraine, reports Reuters.

Kuchma, 55, won a decisive victory over incumbent Leonid Kravchuk on a platform stressing economic reforms and closer ties with Russia.

Kuchma left the parliament building for the nearby presidential palace for a military parade. He was then to proceed to Kravchuk's residence to complete the first constitutional transfer of power.

Intissar al-Wazir is 'mama' and First Lady of Palestinians

GAZA CITY, July 19: They call her the First Lady of Palestine. They also call her 'mama,' reports AP.

When she walks into a room, crowds give her such a tumultuous welcome that even Yasser Arafat has to stop speaking until the applause dies down.

Intissar al-Wazir, the only woman in the Palestinian Cabinet and widow of a PLO military chief assassinated by Israel in 1988, wants to use her popularity to take on this male-dominated society and push for equal rights legislation.

"Now that there's a Palestinian government, I will work hard to make sure that women get equal rights and justice," she said in a recent interview at her Gaza City home.

"We will regulate these Islamic laws in a way that will protect women," Arafat, the PLO chairman, has promised to create a government department for women's affairs, said al-Wazir, who is better known as Umm Jihad, or "mother of the holy war."

Al-Wazir serves as Minister of Social Affairs in the Palestinian National Authority, the 20-member autonomy gov-

ernment. So far, she has been visiting hospitals, humanitarian organisations, orphanages and centres for the handicapped to see how services can be improved.

She plans to incorporate into the ministry an organisation she founded in 1966 to help the families of victims of the armed struggle against Israel.

Her most immediate problem is lack of funds. She said she needs 5.5 million dollars a month just for her organisation, which serves thousands of families. Al-Wazir said she will seek financial guarantees for divorced women, who usu-

ally are simply cast away by their husbands, and for women whose husbands take more than one wife. She also will propose a ban on early marriages, another measure to protect Palestinian women.

Her proposals are almost revolutionary in the patriarchal society of Gaza, where men demand complete obedience from women and where social workers say wife-beating is common.

In many low-income areas of Gaza and in refugee camps, girls are undereducated and are usually married off in their early teens.

A short, plump woman with

an engaging smile, the 53-year-old al-Wazir started her political life in 1959 when she became the first woman to join Arafat's mainstream Fatah guerrilla group, the largest faction in the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

In 1962, she married her cousin, Khalil al-Wazir, and moved with him from Gaza to Kuwait. With five children, she also lived in Algeria, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Tunisia. Throughout, she remained an active member of Fatah.

Khalil al-Wazir, a PLO military chief, was assassinated by Israeli commandos in 1988.

12 Tamils killed in fightings

COLOMBO, July 19: At least 12 Tamil rebels were killed in fighting between the government forces and the armed members of the Liberation

Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the northeast during the last two days, according to military sources, reports Xinhua.

The Tamil rebels suffered their worst setback in the northern island of Mannar when an aircraft of the Sri Lankan air force on routine patrol on Sunday destroyed a vehicle carrying a group of Tamil Tigers and at least 10 Tigers were killed, the sources said.

Security forces also shot dead one rebels.