

## Hindu festival in Kashmir on Aug 7

## Army to protect pilgrims

SRINAGAR, July 21: The Indian army on Wednesday said it will secure routes to a Hindu holy site in Kashmir to prevent Muslim rebels from staging attacks on the tens of thousands of Hindu pilgrims expected to pour into the state next month, reports AFP.

Soldiers were fanning out on roads leading to the holy caves of Amarnath following death threats issued by a Muslim militant group to Hindus planning to take part in the annual pilgrimage.

Brigadier Arjun Singh said reconnaissance teams were scanning routes between the Kashmir town of Pahalgam and Amarnath to strengthen security for the tens of thousands of Hindus who would soon set off on the pilgrimage.

Our presence will ensure

that no harm is caused to the pilgrims, the officer said ahead of the annual Hindu festival, which begins August 7 and draws Hindus from across India to Amarnath.

An estimated 400,000 Hindu pilgrims walked or drove to Amarnath, where a temple to the Hindu God Shiva is located, last year.

Brigadier Singh said troops were already positioned in Pahalgam, the base for the annual pilgrimage to the tiny town of Amarnath, northeast of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

"They (troops) are alert enough to foil any attempt to disrupt the pilgrimage," he added.

Soldiers in battle gear were patrolling the forests of Pahalgam and have set up se-

curity posts in the region, the police said here.

The army, which has a division, or some 60,000 troops, on Kashmir's borders with Pakistan, was called in after a Kashmiri Muslim separatist group placed Amarnath out of bounds to Hindus.

The Harkat-ul-Ansar guerrilla group issued the flat recently to press for the dismantling of security bunkers set up around Kashmir's holiest Islamic shrine, the Hazratbal Mosque in Srinagar.

Other Kashmiri groups backed Harkat's demand saying Muslims have not been able to pray at Hazratbal since October when soldiers lifted a month long siege of the shrine and installed bunkers around the complex.

## Indo-Pak talks on diplomatic code of conduct soon

ISLAMABAD, July 21: Pakistan and India will hold two rounds of talks in the coming days on a bilateral code of conduct for their diplomats, Foreign Office officials said here yesterday, reports AFP.

A similar meeting was scheduled to be held in New Delhi on Thursday between Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner and a joint secretary from the Indian External Affairs Ministry.

A follow-up session will take place in Islamabad next week between the Indian Deputy High Commissioner and a Director General from the Pakistani Foreign Office.

The talks follow tit-for-tat expulsions of four diplomats, two from each side, earlier this month for alleged espionage. In a repetition of similar diplomatic feuds in the past between the two estranged neighbours.

## Yangon proposes Suu Kyi to stay out of country for 5 years

TOKYO, July 21: A top Myanmar military junta leader said Nobel Prize-winning democracy advocate Aung San Suu Kyi would be freed from house arrest if she agrees to leave the country for five years, a Japanese daily reported today, reports AFP.

Li Gen Khin Nyunt, the first Secretary of Myanmar's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), said in an exclusive interview with the Yomiuri newspaper, "we are proposing that she leave the country for five years."

The interview took place as Suu Kyi began her sixth year of house arrest in Myanmar. If she stays out of the country for five years, "I'd be happy to welcome her back if she returned home and worked for the sake of the nation," Khin Nyunt said.

## Opposition ready to share power with Tamils

COLOMBO, July 21: Sri Lanka's main opposition alliance made an election promise Wednesday to share power with minority Tamils in the rebellious north and the east, reports AP.

The People's Alliance, a coalition of seven parties led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, pledged in its election platform to end the 11-year-old ethnic conflict in their election manifesto that was released to the press.

But the Alliance did not elaborate on how they plan to devolve power to the Tamil groups. Several attempts have been made in the past to get the Tamil rebels to agree to partial autonomy, but have failed.



Children watch on Wednesday as missionaries place the bodies of Rwandan refugees who died from cholera and exhaustion in a common grave in Goma. The exodus of nearly two million refugees has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, a French relief worker said on July 20.

## Hitler's birthplace to be made anti-fascism centre

VIENNA, July 21: Austria said on Wednesday it planned to turn the house where Adolf Hitler was born into an anti-fascism centre to deter Neo-Nazis from venerating the building as a shrine, reports Reuters.

The conversion of the small 16th-century house in the town of Braunau, on the border with Germany, with one of a series of events in Austria next year commemorating the end of World War II. Interior Ministry officials told Reuters.

"We are going to create a centre against fascism, racism and discrimination in Hitler's birthplace... to educate people about the history of national socialism and its results at Mauthausen (concentration camp in Austria)," said Peter Heindl, a senior aide to Interior Minister Franz Loeschnak.

"We also want to hinder Fascists who pay visits, like a pilgrimage to Hitler's birthplace."

Hitler was born in Braunau on April 20, 1889, and the date has become a cherished anniversary for some right-wing extremists.

Street battles between rightists and leftists broke out on the anniversary of Hitler's 90th birthday in 1979 and since then police have stepped up security in the town around the date.

## US, ROK start talks to break deadlock over North's N-plan

SEOUL, July 21: US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gallucci, the chief US negotiator with North Korea, opened talks Thursday with South Korean officials on joint strategy for breaking the stalemate over the North's nuclear programme, reports AP.

The new round of talks bring the long-simmering nuclear dispute, on hold during the Communist state's mourning period for late leader Kim Il Sung, back to the front burner.

North Korea denies developing nuclear weapons, but has refused international inspections for 16 months, courting confrontation with the United States and others.

Gallucci said upon his arrival in Seoul on Wednesday that prospect for resuming high-level US talks with the North were good. That echoed comments by other US officials, who have said a date for resumption could be set by next week.

Gallucci was conferring Thursday with Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo and other officials, but there was no immediate word on the outcome. While in the region, Gallucci was also to consult with Japanese officials.

The United States, in concert with South Korea and Japan, had moved previously to seek sanctions against the North. The sanctions push was put on hold pending the outcome of the US-North Korean talks.

The talks opened in Geneva on July 8, the day of Kim's death, but were quickly suspended.

## Also suspended upon Kim's death Junta to consider release of Abiola

LAGOS, July 21: Nigeria's military junta said on Wednesday it would consider releasing jailed opposition leader Moshood Abiola, reports AP.

The military ruler General Sani Abacha met with leaders of the powerful Nigerian Labour Congress in the capital Abuja.

Afterward, Information Minister Jerry Gana said the Labour Federation had presented a "very good argument" in favour of Abiola's release and that "the government is going to look into the matter."

Gana added "if the request of labour is what is going to move Nigeria forward peacefully, I am sure the government will consider it."

death were plans for what would have been the first inter-Korean presidential summit. South Korea has said a rescheduled summit is a good idea in principle once the political situation in the North has stabilized.

Kim Jong Il, son of the elder Kim, is considered to be in control of the Pyongyang government. Long groomed for his father's job, he had been in charge of day-to-day affairs for several years before the elder Kim's death.

Steady indications since the death have pointed to the son's succession. Reporting on a mass rally on Wednesday commemorating Kim Il Sung, the official Korean Central News Agency urged people to follow the "leadership of the party Central Committee headed by Comrade Kim Jong Il."

But the Korea-language wording of the report did not indicate Kim Jong Il had been formally elected to the position of party chairman. The elder Kim had held that post, along with the presidency.

In the wake of the elder Kim's death, the South has been cracking down on pro-Northern activities.

## Off the Record

## 'Robots to breed like animals'

TOKYO: Robots will be able to "breed" like animals in the near future and may eventually evolve through natural selection, a Japanese researcher said Thursday.

Yoshiaki Ichikawa of the Hitachi Ltd energy research laboratory said he and his team have invented the world's first self-reproducing automation.

It uses micro-chips as 'genetic codes' and block components or pre-assembled parts, as 'cells.'

The centipede-like metal creature assembles itself from block components scattered about the floor to 'grow' to twice its original size, before splitting into two identical and independent units, Ichikawa said.

"As long as there is an endless supply of parts, the robot can multiply exponentially," he added.

The blocks are 20 cm long, 10 cm wide and 10 cm high (8x4x4 inches).

"Our foremost motive behind this invention is that we wanted to dispel the popular notion that machines are unreliable because they break down and cannot regenerate," Ichikawa said.

He said the "genetic codes" could in the near future be programmed to create random "mutants."

## Mother becomes refugee to save daughter's genitals

TORONTO: Canada has granted refugee status to a Somali woman to protect her 10-year-old daughter from undergoing ritual genital mutilation in Somalia, reports AP.

"I couldn't believe my ears," said Khadra Hassan Farah. "I was prepared to leave my daughter here for adoption if my case was rejected. I couldn't take her back. It's torture."

Many Somali women are forced to undergo a brutal procedure that involves cutting away the external female sexual organs and sewing shut the opening, except for a small hole for urination, she said.

"They did it to me and I didn't want my daughter to go through the same thing, the pain, the infections, the scars," Farah, 30, said in a recent telephone interview from her Ottawa home.

The Immigration and Refugee Board heard Farah's case May 10 in Toronto, said her lawyer, Andrew Rafuse. The board granted Farah verbal approval and sent written confirmation of her successful claim last month, he said.

## Witch doctor's medicine kills two boys

MOSCOW: Two sick children in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan died after a witch doctor prescribed insecticide to treat them, Itar-Tass news agency said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

A woman, whose three sons were suffering from the skin disease scabies, took them the witch doctor because she had no medicine at home.

The witch doctor recommended she put chemical used as an insecticide, on their wounds and they were poisoned, Tass said.

Doctors in the local hospital were able to save only one of the boys.

Police had started criminal proceedings after the incident.

## Rape charge against Congressman's son

ATLANTA: The 24-year-old son of Rep. Kweisi Mfume of Maryland has been charged with raping a woman after a date, reports AP.

Michael Mfume, whose father is chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, was arrested July 14 and jailed until Monday, when he was freed on \$5,000 dollars bail.

The Baltimore resident was in Atlanta on business. He and the woman were out with friends for a late-night breakfast, then returned to her apartment, where he allegedly raped her, said Barry Batson, Fulton County police spokesman.

"She said it was forced, and he denies that," District Attorney Lewis Slaton said.

The elder Mfume, a Democrat, said in a statement that he and his ex-wife were confident their son would be found innocent.

"No parent ever wants to get the dreaded call that their son or daughter has been charged with violating the law," the elder Mfume said. "Michael, like anyone, is innocent until proven guilty."

Alvin Kendal, the younger Mfume's lawyer, did not immediately return phone calls Wednesday.

## Thousands welcome Murtaza in Punjab

LAHORE, July 21: Thousands of people turned out to welcome Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's estranged brother Murtaza to the politically key province of Punjab on Wednesday, reports AP.

Witnesses said about 10,000 supporters flocked to the airport, chanting "Jevay (long live) Murtaza" as he made his first trip to Punjab, which analysts consider crucial to his political ambitions.

Murtaza is widely seen to be aspiring to top post in the possibility of a split in the party followed by their father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the last 1960s.

Bhutto became effective head of the party after a 1977 military coup toppled the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was executed two years

later on a murder conspiracy charge.

In her first public attack on her brother's political role, Benazir Bhutto earlier this month said Murtaza had always engaged in activities damaging to the party.

As Murtaza began his visit here, a PPP spokesman, quoted by the official Associated Press of Pakistan, criticised him saying he was not a member of PPP and had never "bothered" to abide by the party discipline.

The spokesman urged Begum Nusrat, Benazir and Murtaza's mother, to "prevent her son from consorting with anti-people forces."

Nusrat was removed from co-chairmanship of PPP in December by the party's Central Executive Committee.

## Greek Cypriots demonstrate in London: 4 held

LONDON, July 21: An angry crowd of 4,000 Greek Cypriots living in London staged a noisy demonstration outside the Turkish Embassy Wednesday night against Turkey's Cyprus invasion 20 years ago, reports AP.

British police arrested four of the demonstrators when sections of the crowd began throwing objects. The demonstration continued peacefully after the arrests. Scotland Yard said.

The demonstration began Wednesday afternoon with about 150 people but numbers later swelled. The crowd chanted "Turkish troops out of Cyprus" and waved flags and placards.

## Moscow largely ignorant of Solzhenitsyn's writings

MOSCOW, July 21: The saleswoman was bewildered. "Solzhenitsyn? We don't keep his writings. Who would want to read them anyway?" she wondered, standing in front of a display of detective stories, thrillers, romance novels and science fictions, reports AP.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 75, a former exile and one of Russia's greatest living writers, is arriving in Moscow on Thursday — the final stop in his 56-day return journey across the vast expanses of Russia.

But will Moscow notice Solzhenitsyn's return?

He comes to a capital largely ignorant of his writings, its people busily making money discussing the heatwave, trying to survive on meager pensions and salaries, shopping, and watching TV.

In a public opinion poll last month, 44 per cent of those questioned said they had never read any of Solzhenitsyn's books, and 11 per cent said they had but could not remember exactly what.

"I thought I was returning to a Russian which had read me. It has turned that Russia has not read me," Solzhenitsyn noted bitterly during his trip, which began last month in Vladivostok.

However, the poll by the Mneine (Opinion) service found that 36 per cent of respondents did read his "Gulag Archipelago," a lengthy historic account of Soviet prison camps and political repressions.

"Whole layers of history are returning to native soil. I'm pleased with the return of Alexander Isayevich," President Boris Yeltsin said

Wednesday. No red carpets or official ceremonies are planned at the Yaroslavl train station. Still, it probably has been the most widely publicised train trip since another former exile, Vladimir Lenin, arrived in Russia in a sealed car from Germany in 1917.

What Solzhenitsyn considers to be his life's work, the multi-volume saga of Russia before and after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution titled "The Red Wheel," has remained largely unread.

Many avid readers have found it boring. Solzhenitsyn's often conservative and sometimes nationalistic views have alienated many others, both those longing for the old Soviet Union and those building capitalism.

The 1970 Nobel laureate, who spent 20 years in forced

exile in the West — most recently in the rural northeastern US state of Vermont — acknowledges that he overestimated his influence.

"My work," how should we rebuild Russia, "was printed in 27 million copies, but it had no impact whatsoever," he said in Perm, a central Russian town.

The journey of 5,000 miles (8,000 kilometers) across the Russian Far East, Siberia, the Ural Mountains and the Volga River region indeed was a learning experience for the bearded author, who cuts an imposing and surprisingly energetic figure in his customary semi-military jacket.

He travelled in a special railroad car, accompanied by his family and a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television crew with

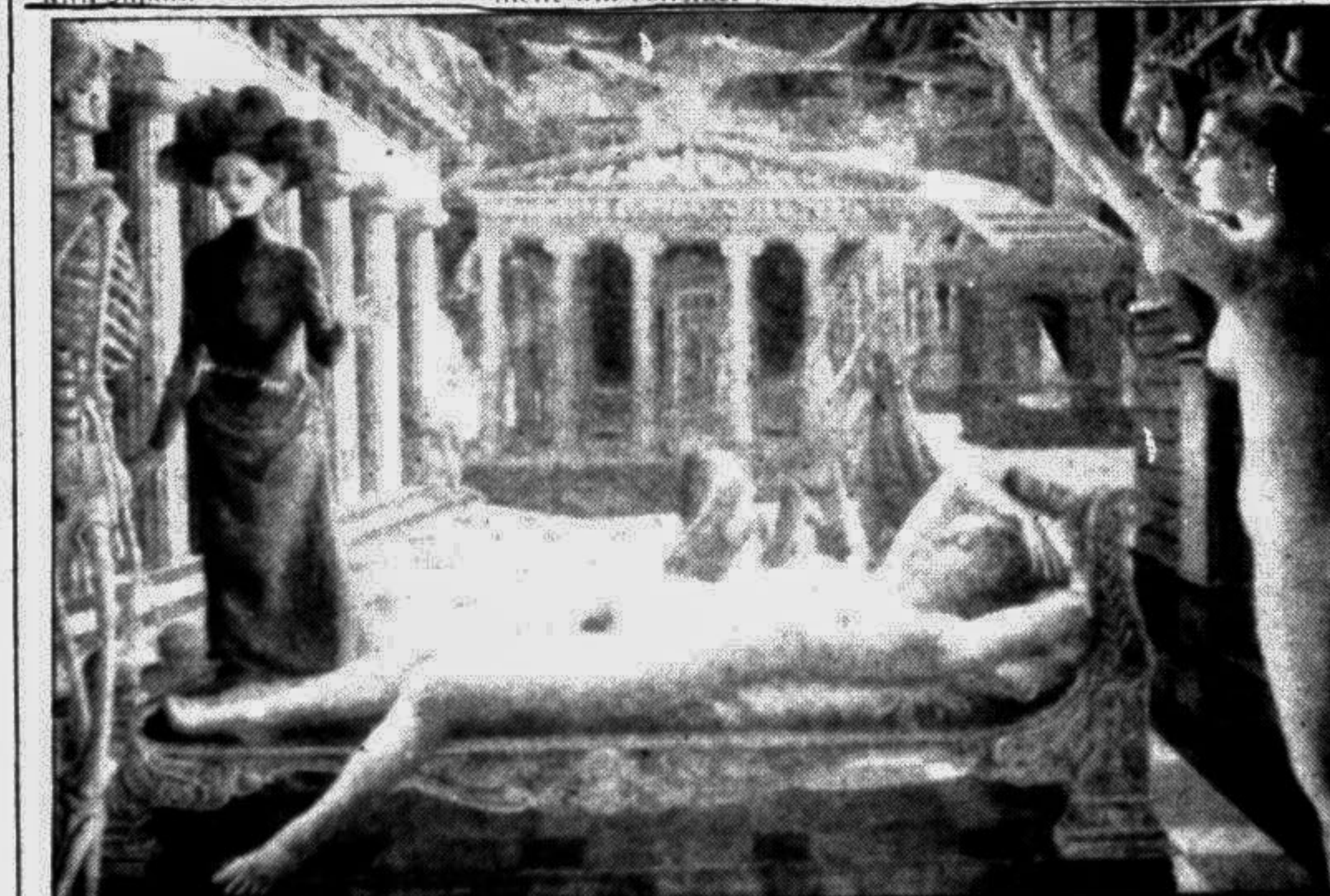
exclusive rights to film the journey, meeting people from different walks of life and giving numerous speeches.

Solzhenitsyn says the eight-week trip has confirmed many of his pessimistic expectations. But, on his last stop in the Volga River city of Yaroslavl, he said that seeing Russians "who were full of life, sane and searching for things to do has considerably changed my attitude."

The author did not spare criticism for things he disliked. Solzhenitsyn blasted corruption and crime, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and market reforms, which he said were mindless.

"The freeing of prices is a robbery of the people. Privatisation should be checked by prosecutors and investigators," he said.

And he offered immediate



Undated file picture shows the 1944 painting "La Venus enorme (The Sleeping Venus)" by famous Belgian surrealist Paul Delvaux, who died on Wednesday at the age of 96.

## China against regional, global hegemony

ISLAMABAD, July 21: Chinese Defence Minister General Chi Hao Tian ended his five-day visit to Pakistan today, reiterating that his country would continue to oppose regional and global hegemony, reports AP.

The Defence Minister, who headed a military delegation, was seen off by senior officials at the Karachi Airport.

The minister, who flew here Sunday after a visit to Moscow, met his Pakistani counterpart, Aftab Shaban Mirani, and senior army and navy officials.

During the visit, which coincided with the Chinese Foreign Minister's trip to neighbouring India, the Chinese general also met Pakistani Foreign Minister Asif Ahmed Ali, who briefed him on the situation in the region.

Officials here said Ali explained Pakistan's efforts to bring about peace in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. He also called upon the world community to take serious notice of alleged human rights violations in Indian-held Kashmir and resolve the problem on the basis of the United Nations resolutions, the sources said.

General Chi Hao Tian, describing Pakistan-China friendship as "deep rooted, all weather and multi-dimensional," expressed China's firm opposition to hegemony and power politics at global and regional levels, they said.

Beijing has been an important source of arms for Islamabad. It is also building a 300-megawatt nuclear power station at Chashma in Punjab province.

## UN to reduce force in Somalia

UNITED NATIONS, July 21: The United Nations plans to scale back its force in Somalia since the troops are unable to sufficiently ensure security in the African state, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said on Wednesday, reports AP.

In a report to the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali noted a "significant deterioration in the security situation," especially in the capital Mogadishu, with inter-clan fighting and banditry on the rise.

"Responsibility for this state of affairs rests squarely with the Somali leaders," the report said.

Boutros-Ghali said, "the national reconciliation process is advancing at a pace so slow that there is little or no reason to believe it can be completed by March 1995," when the UN mission was expected to end.