

BRIEFLY

ASEAN condemns Khmer Rouge: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Saturday condemned their former ally, the Khmer Rouge guerrillas, for upsetting the peace ASEAN had patiently nurtured in war-torn Cambodia. AFP says from Bangkok.

ASEAN foreign ministers, putting the finishing touches on a communiqué to cap their annual two-day meeting, expressed support for the elected government of Cambodia and concern about instability in that country.

They denounced a recent abortive coup d'état in Phnom Penh as well as a Khmer Rouge decision to set up a provisional government in guerrilla-held territory in northern Cambodia, in the vicinity of Preah Vihear.

Rocket attacks kill 3 in Kabul:

Three people were killed and two were wounded when opponents of President Burhanuddin Rabbani launched fresh rocket attacks on the Afghan capital Kabul, official Kabul Radio said on Friday. Reuter reports from Islamabad.

It blamed forces controlled by Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who seek to topple Rabbani.

Some houses were also damaged by rockets on Thursday night and Friday, said the broadcast, monitored in Islamabad.

4 boys die in Punjab blast: Four children were killed in the Indian state of Punjab when a bomb they recovered from a canal exploded while they were playing with it, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported on Friday. AFP says from New Delhi.

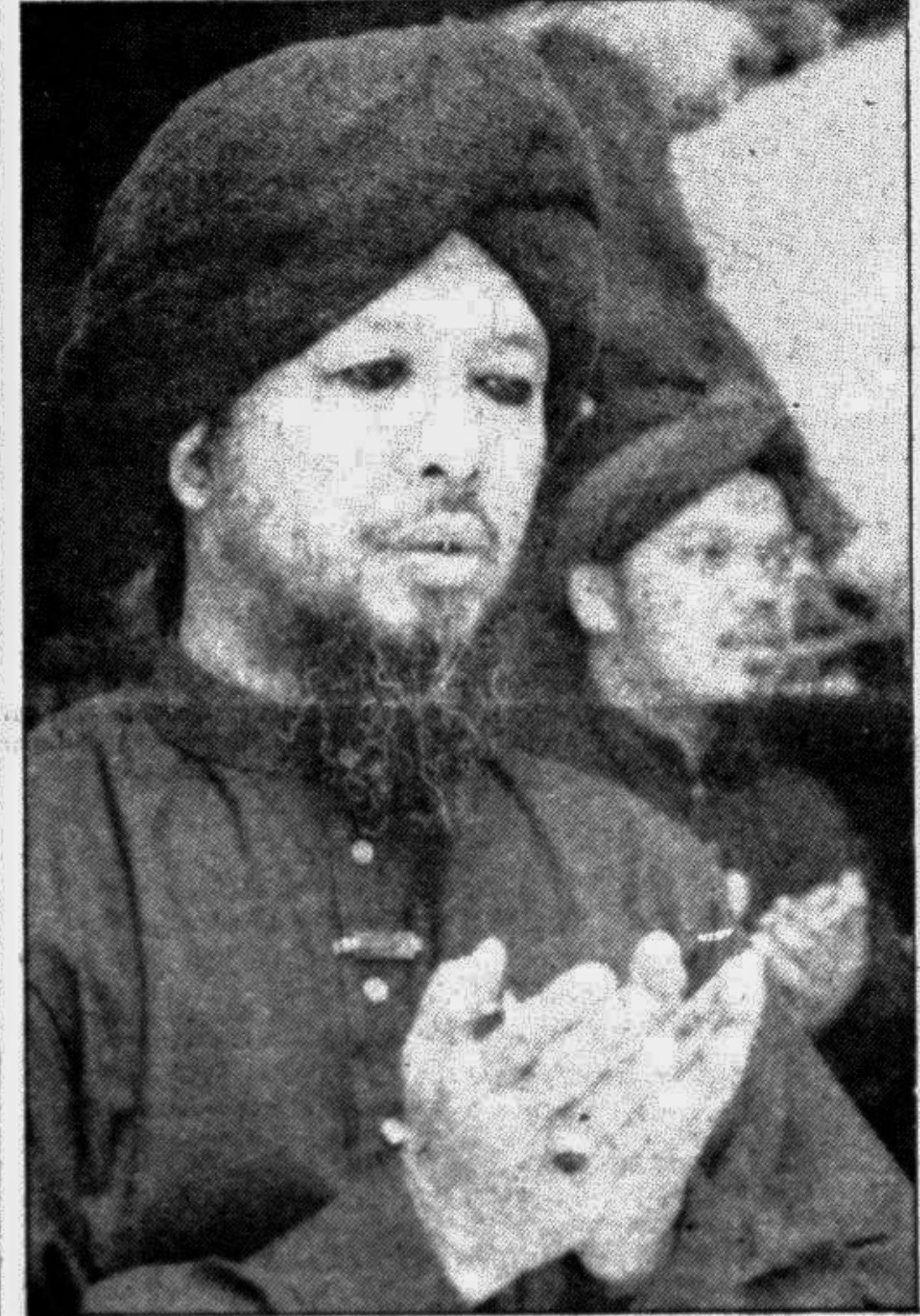
The bomb went off when the boys struck it against a tree on Thursday in Deraura town in the industrial district of Ludhiana, the news agency said. Four other children were injured.

Police said the bomb was among 50 reportedly imported from Iraq as scrap. Detectives who combed the area found four bombs buried near a paramilitary camp and recovered the rest from the canal.

Asia-Pacific meet in Dec: Military leaders from Asia-Pacific countries will meet in Tokyo in early December to discuss regional security, a newspaper reported yesterday. AFP says from Tokyo.

The meeting will be the first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region, the Sankei Shinbun said.

Representatives from the United States, Russia, China, South Korea, Australia, Japan and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries will discuss their defence policies and exchange opinions at the meeting the newspaper said.



Ashaari Muhammad, leader of Malaysia's controversial Al Arqam movement, performs prayers on Saturday in a hotel in northern Thailand's Chiangmai. The Islamic leader who has been in self-imposed exile for seven years has called for an independent national referendum to test his popularity against that of Premier Mahathir Mohamad.

— AFP photo

Interpol-Mexico chief held: Two senior police officers, including the head of Interpol-Mexico, were arrested in their offices, the federal attorney general's office said. AP reports from Mexico City.

Friday's two paragraph announcement called the arrests "a disciplinary measure of administrative character" because the officers had ignored instructions from superiors. There was no further explanation.

It was unclear if Federal Police Cmdr. Emilio Islas Rangel, director of Interpol-Mexico, and Cmdr. Juan Jose Valedelmar Escalona would face charges.

Budapest's Matthias church bombed: An explosion destroyed the back entrance of the landmark Matthias Church early Saturday and shattered stained-glass windows in the main sanctum, AP reports from Budapest, Hungary.

The neo-Gothic church, which dates to 1247, was the site of coronation ceremonies for Hungary's monarchs over the centuries.

Floods leave 7 dead on Thai border: Seven people were confirmed dead and almost 30 missing in floods that have inundated the Thai-Myanmar border region in Mae Sot, Thai officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Mae Sot, Thailand.

Thai and Myanmar authorities were continuing searches for more victims and trying to reach isolated communities still cut off by water up to four metres (13 feet) deep in some places.

Prison riot in Sweden

STOCKHOLM, July 23: A decision to place three inmates in solitary confinement set off a 12-hour prison riot by inmates who set fire to several buildings in southwestern Sweden before giving up Saturday morning, reports AP.

No injuries were reported, according to officials, who said a "show of force" and mediation efforts by several inmates helped restore order.

The uprising at Tidaholm Prison, about 320 kilometers (200 miles) southwest of Stockholm, began at evening lock-up time Friday when prisoners refused to return to their cells to protest the decision.

Through close cooperation

with South Korea, the United States and China, we will do our best to try to solve the (nuclear) problem," the Japanese leader said at a news conference held after his summit talks with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam.

Murayama, who took office last month, sought to allay unease in South Korea over his Socialist Party's traditionally strong ties with the Communist North.

He also took steps, although mainly symbolic, to try to soothe lingering bitterness associated with the Japanese colonial period in Korea.

Japan and South Korea agree earlier to push for sanctions against the hard-line state over its refusal to allow full international nuclear inspections, but for 17 months has blocked unfettered inspections that would verify that claim.

Kim said South Korea would help North Korea in building a

International

Gunmen spray bullets on Shi'ite Muslims

6 killed, 28 hurt in Karachi

KARACHI, July 23: At least six people, including a seven-year-old child, were killed and 28 injured here today when unidentified gunmen sprayed bullets and lobbed an explosive on a bus, police said, reports AFP.

The victims were all Shi'ite Muslims who were targeted shortly after leaving an early morning prayer gathering at the city's central district, a police official said.

He said a preliminary investigation showed that the gunmen, apparently waiting in ambush, opened fire on the vehicle and when it stopped they hurled an explosive device, possibly a hand grenade, at the vehicle.

The driver was missing and was believed to have driven the bus away after the attack, the official said.

Hospital sources said all the dead and several of the injured bore shrapnel and bullet wounds.

AP adds: "It was a nightmare," said Ahmed. "I saw three motorcycles pull up beside us. They started shooting. I heard an explosion. Everyone was screaming."

In an attempt to flee from the gunmen, the bus driver sped through the streets of Karachi, said Ahmed. He said the terrifying ride ended at a Shi'ite-run hospital in central Karachi.

He saved so many lives because he just stepped on the gas and kept driving," said Ahmed.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the

shooting, but witnesses blamed militant Sunni Muslims. Most of Pakistan's 120 million people are Sunni Muslims.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has accused her political opponents of inciting sectarian violence in an attempt to destabilise her government.

Her conservative opposition has denied the charge.

Hasan Tarabi, a spokesman for the militant Shi'ite group, the Movement for the

Enforcement of Shi'ite Law, vowed to avenge the killings.

"We will not sit quietly and let this happen," Tarabi said in a prepared statement.

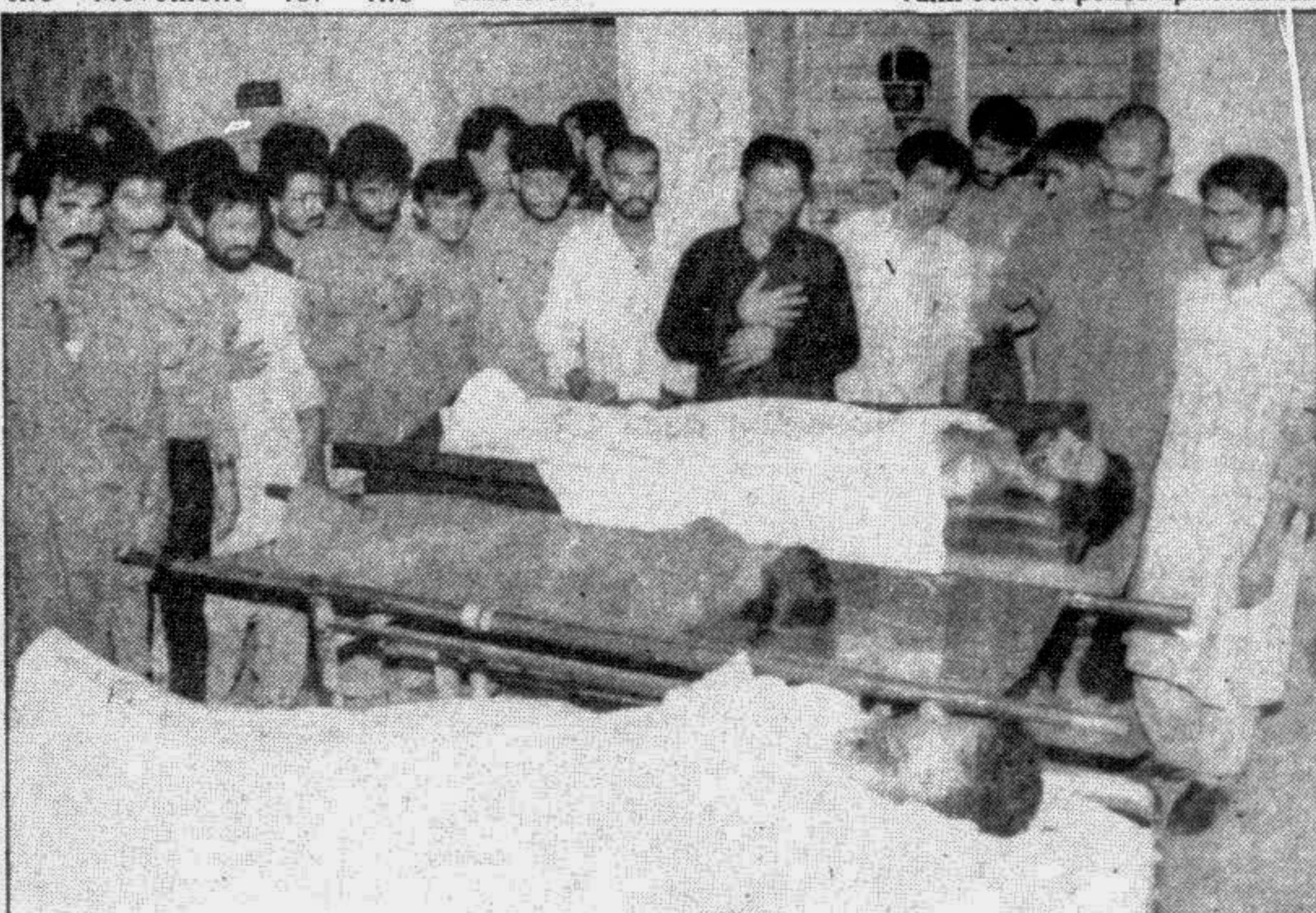
He said Benazir's government was helpless to stop the killings.

"Scores of Shias have been massacred in the country. They government has failed to protect us," he said. "We have to do something to protect ourselves."

Police feared Saturday's attack in the southern port city of Karachi was in retaliation for the Lahore killings.

Police and paramilitary troops were deployed outside the hospital where the passengers had been taken and around the mosque in the northern suburb of Karachi.

Residents of the area have refused to talk to police because they fear retaliation, said Alim Jafri, a police spokesman.



Mourners gather around the bodies of victims killed in an attack on a bus in Karachi yesterday. — AFP photo

Malaysia plans to deport 20 aliens

KUALA LUMPUR, July 23: A group of at least 20 illegal immigrants, most of them from China, doused themselves with kerosene on Friday and threatened to set themselves on fire over Malaysia's attempts to deport them, police said, reports Reuter.

Police were negotiating with the group, who have been sitting in a police bus on a football field near the international airport for several hours, police and witnesses said.

Two officials from the Chinese Embassy have joined the negotiations, a police spokesman at Kuala Lumpur's International Airport said.

Akihitos to visit France, Spain

TOKYO, July 23: Japan's Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko will go on a 13-day tour of France and Spain during October, business Daily Nihon Keizai Shim bun reported today, says Reuter.

It said they will stay overnight in Frankfurt on October 2 prior to start of the visit, before going to Paris for an official reception with President Francois Mitterrand.

The Bodos may be attacking villages where Muslims are in majority so that the villages turn into tribal majority again," said Khondakar Shamsul Alam, a 72-year-old leader of the village of Barpeta.

The Bodos, most of whom are animists who believe in witchcraft, want to preserve their ancient culture and heritage which they say is threatened by the Muslim immigration.

The current spate of attacks on Muslim settlers started on Wednesday after a Bodo woman was killed, apparently by a

Muslim settler. Bodos raided Muslim settlements, killing 11 Muslim settlers, by official count. Witnesses put the death toll at 25.

The state government deployed 2,000 paramilitary troops in the area.

By Saturday, 12,000 refugees were registered in 10 relief camps near this public park and tiger reserve on the Bhutan border, about 140 kilometers (87 miles) north of Gauhati, capital of Assam state.

"My two brothers were killed and there is no trace of my mother. I am helpless," said Rup Bano, a 36-year-old Muslim, clutching her 18-month-old son.

Some of the refugees piled baggage onto bullock-drawn carts, but others fled with nothing.

Wednesday's riot was the fourth deadly clash in nine months between Bodos and the Muslims. In the worst incident last October, at least 40 Muslim settlers were killed.

The Bodos also are fighting the Indian government to demand and autonomous Bodo region. At least 1,000 people have been killed in the last six years of insurrection.



Iranian supporters of Maryam Rajavi for president of Iran shout as they demonstrate on Friday during a rally at Lafayette Park across the street from the White House in Washington. Hundreds attended the march and rally for democracy in Iran that was sponsored in part by the National Council of Resistance in Iran. — AFP photo

Those talks began July 8 and were suspended due to the death of longtime North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung. They have been rescheduled for August 5.

Japan's backing would be crucial if any sanctions were applied, as millions of dollars in remittances sent by North Koreans in Japan make up a huge chunk of North Korea's cash flow.

North Korea says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, but for 17 months has blocked unfettered inspections that would verify that claim.

Japan and South Korea agreed to step up joint efforts to "induce the North to begin pursuing openness and reform," Kim said at the news conference.

Kim said South Korea would help North Korea in building a light-water reactor if North Korea takes steps to prove it is not building nuclear weapons. A light-water reactor is safer, and would also make it more difficult for North Korea to convert spent fuel to plutonium, a main ingredient in making nuclear weapons.

Murayama and Kim also exchanged views on more general policy towards the North in the wake of Kim Il-Sung's death and the emerging new hierarchy in the secretive state.

Japan and South Korea agreed to step up joint efforts to "induce the North to begin pursuing openness and reform," Kim said at the news conference.

He also expressed "heartfelt apologies" to tens of thousands of women who had been forced to serve in frontline brothels for the Japanese army, but said there were no definite plans to compensate them.

Myanmar refugees fear going home

BANGKOK, July 23: Thousands of Myanmar refugees who fled to Thailand after a Myanmar army raid on their settlement remain camped out without shelter on Thai soil, too afraid to return, a relief committee said.

"They are afraid to go back because the Myanmar soldiers can come back at any time. They want to stay in safety on the Thai side," Shwe Thein, told Reuters in a telephone interview from the western Thai border province of Kanchanaburi.

The refugees had sufficient supplies of rice but were without shelter and being drenched by monsoon showers, he said.

Myanmar troops had withdrawn from the area but the refugees, most of them women and children, were refusing to go back, said Shwe Thein, chairman of the Mon relief committee.

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