

Kashmiri militants seek Amnesty help

SRINAGAR, July 29: Kashmiri separatists urged Amnesty International and other world human rights bodies on Thursday to help stop alleged atrocities by Indian security forces battling Muslim militants. Reports AFP.

The all-party Kashmir Freedom Conference, an umbrella group of anti-Indian political and militant organisations, said urgent intervention by the London-based Amnesty and other human rights groups was necessary.

The conference accused Indian security forces of committing "unabated atrocities" in Kashmir, where militant Muslims are fighting for an end to Indian rule over the Himalayan territory.

In the wake of growing repression by security forces, it is imperative on our part to

ask the world bodies to intervene," said Moulvi Umer Farooq, chairman of the conference.

Leaders of the group met on Thursday to condemn "state-sponsored terrorism," a day after Kashmiris observed a general strike to protest alleged summary executions carried out by troops.

They did not spell out in what way world human rights groups could intervene. India has refused to allow Amnesty International teams to visit Kashmir.

Four Muslim militants were killed in a gun battle with security forces on Thursday in the district of Badgam, the police said. Residents, however, charged they had been killed in cold blood and staged street protests, witnesses said.

Delhi tightens security around Israeli, 5 west Asian missions

NEW DELHI, July 29: The Israeli diplomatic mission and five other west Asian nations in India's capital New Delhi have come under a tight security umbrella in view of the threat from Muslim fundamentalists opposed to the west Asia peace process, police said here today. reports Xinhua.

Besides Israel, the diplomatic missions of Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Algeria and Morocco have been brought under the tightened security cover.

The security managers of the capital are also reported to have conducted preventive raids on suspected hideouts of Muslim fundamentalists here after receiving specific intelligence inputs.

Israeli embassies and consulates throughout the world are on highest alert for French attack after bombings against Jewish and Israeli targets in London and Buenos Aires. Bombers struck on Wednesday at a Jewish target in London for the second time in 12 hours. The bomb injured five people outside a Jewish fundraising organisation after a similar bomb on Tuesday badly damaged the Israeli Embassy in London.

Reuter reports: British Prime Minister John Major on Thursday condemned bomb attacks on Jewish targets in London and urged the international community to fight "terrorism."

In a speech to the Conservative Middle East

Council, he said the bombings outside the Israeli Embassy on Tuesday and a Jewish fundraising organisation later would not be tolerated.

Major did not link the bombings to any particular country and he emphasised that the attacks should not damage Britain's relations with the Middle East.

"We deeply respect Islam. We do not regard it as a threat. It is completely wrong to equate the extremism of a few in the Middle East with the religion of Islam," he said.

Islamic fundamentalists determined to destroy the Middle East peace process are suspected in the London bombings which followed an attack on a Jewish synagogue

in Buenos Aires that killed nearly 100 people.

"We do not know what lay behind those acts or who perpetrated them," Major said, adding that those responsible must be brought to justice.

"For terrorism is the enemy of us all. Terrorism has been directed at those who seek peace and progress in the Middle East," he said.

"Terrorism is perpetrated by those who refuse to abide by the rule of law and by the principles of a civilised society."

"We must seek out its perpetrators and bring them to justice. It is unacceptable for any state to tolerate, let alone support, terrorism. The international community must unite against it."

Nigeria plunges into chaos

LAGOS, Nigeria, July 29: Nigeria plunged deeper into chaos Friday as a human rights group accused police of killing its leader, a newspaper said. rioters emptied out a prison and the biggest oil company admitted a strike was crippling business, reports AP.

A fifth day of unrest gripped cities and suburbs around Lagos, the largest city and hotbed of opposition to the military dictatorship of Gen. Sani Abacha.

Police used tear gas on thousands of rioters who erected street barricades and made bonfires of old tires in the city of Bariga, a university town outside Lagos.

Protesters in nearby Shagamu late Thursday attacked a prison and freed all 200 inmates, the Lagos

Guardian newspaper said. On Thursday, US politician and civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson led a US delegation on an unsuccessful mission to get Abacha to embrace democracy. Meanwhile, fierce protests erupted in Abuja, the capital, and greater Lagos.

The Guardian reported that one of two protesters killed in Lagos on Thursday was Deji Giwa, the head of the Campaign for Democracy human rights coalition.

In Abuja, at least five people were killed and 50 were wounded Thursday when police opened fire on a crowd protesting the treason trial of Moshood K O Abiola, the apparent winner of Nigeria's annulled presidential election on June 12, 1993.

BRIEFLY

89 escape Latvian jail:

Latvian police mounted a nation-wide manhunt Friday after 89 prisoners escaped through a hand-dug tunnel in the biggest breakout ever in the Baltic state, AP reports from Estonia.

The prison break occurred Thursday afternoon from the Jelgava Prison, 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the Latvian capital, Riga. By Friday morning, 11 of the escapees had been recaptured, officials said.

Media reports said most of the escaped prisoners were young, first time offenders, but some could be considered dangerous. "This is the biggest escape ever in Latvian history," said Normunds Belspis, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry.

4 policemen shot dead in Karachi:

At least four policemen were shot dead in Karachi early Thursday when their van was attacked by unidentified assailants in the central district, police said, AFP reports from Karachi.

Police, army and paramilitary troops were initially unable to reach the spot of the ambush in the Baldia area because of the intense gunbattle, in which the local police station was also attacked.

Preliminary reports indicate that the police station was surrounded and besieged by gunmen using sophisticated weapons. The ambush occurred about 2 a.m. (2200 GMT).

22 more executed in China:

China, struggling to stamp out a crime wave fuelled by economic reforms, said yesterday it executed 22 people this week for embezzlement, murder, robbery or drug trafficking, Reuter reports from Beijing.

State television and newspapers gave extensive coverage to the executions on Thursday of three businessmen accused of siphoning off funds in southern Fujian and Guangdong provinces, where frenzied economic growth has brought a surge in white-collar crime.

Authorities in Fujian executed Zhang Jianping, 36, for embezzling an estimated 2.95 million dollars from China (Fujian) Foreign Trade Central Group, the People's Daily said.

3 hanged in Malaysia:

A Singaporean man and two Malaysians, including a woman, were executed at dawn yesterday for drug offences, national news agency Bernama reported, Reuter says from Kuala Lumpur.

Chan Roh Lim, a 67-year-old contractor from Singapore, was hanged at the Selangor state central prison in Kajang, 30 km (19 miles) from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur.

Bernama said a court in the northern state of Kedah found Chan guilty of trafficking 1,825.9 grams (64 ounces) of marijuana near the border with Thailand in August 1988.

Turner's paintings stolen:

Two paintings by the English master William Turner and a third by German artist Caspar David Friedrich, together worth 43.5 million dollars were stolen from an art gallery in Frankfurt in an overnight raid, police said on Friday. AFP reports from Frankfurt.

The two works by Turner, "light and colour" and "shade and darkness," were on loan from London's Tate Gallery for an exhibition on the 18th century German writer Goethe, said Helmut Seemann, director of the Schirn Gallery.

"The paintings, insured for 70 million German marks (43.5 million dollars), are unsellable," he said.



A Rwandan child rests his head as he is too weak to stand in line to be vaccinated at the SOS village orphanage in Nadosho near Goma on Thursday. Three thousand Rwandan children are crowded in to the encampment.

— AFP photo



Former Muslim MP M L A Hisbulla (in baseball cap) gives an election leaflet to an elderly voter at Batticaloa in Sri Lanka on July 24. The region is still in mourning following ethnic unrest which has left thousands killed or wounded.

— AFP photo

Myanmar opposition urges UN for mediation

BANGKOK, July 29: Opposition to the government in Yangon called today for United Nations special envoys to mediate the process of dialogue with the ruling junta in Myanmar.

In a statement faxed to AFP today, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) said the international community should clearly spell out the action it would take against Yangon if reforms were not forthcoming.

The NCGUB suggested a UN-sponsored international seminar on Myanmar to define "benchmarks" to be met by Yangon, followed by the formation of a contact group of influential democratic countries, including several ASEAN

members, to advise the UN Secretary General.

It said the contact group should "set the mandate of UN special envoys or special representatives of the UN Secretary General to mediate in the process of dialogue and oversee the transition to democracy and peace in Myanmar."

The statement warned against underestimating the State Law and Order Reconstruction Council (SLORC), the junta's official name, saying it would "continue to do whatever it can to prolong its dictatorial rule."

The NCGUB, based near the Thai-Myanmar border, went to great lengths to highlight what

it saw as positive aspects of the just-ended ASEAN meetings with international powers in Bangkok, welcoming the "Greater interest" they demonstrated in Myanmar.

It made no mention of the shift in the position of several Western powers away from diplomatic isolation of Yangon and towards ASEAN's policy of constructive engagement with Myanmar.

It also made no direct reference to the presence of Myanmar Foreign Minister Ohn Gya at ASEAN last week or his subsequent meetings with some western officials, except to say his "recent promises" of talks with the UN were an attempt to "mislead the world."

Britain opposes lifting of arms embargo against Serbs

LONDON, July 29: Britain remains opposed to lifting an arms embargo against Bosnia's Serbs but would not stand in the way of any international consensus to end the ban, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said today, reports Reuter.

As pressure mounts on the world's major powers to punish the Serbs for effectively rejecting their latest peace plan, Rifkind said letting arms flow freely to the Bosnian Muslims would prolong the civil war rather than end it.

But he told British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

radio, "It is possible that there might be an international consensus in that direction."

"If it happened, I don't think the United Kingdom would change its view as to its desirability, but if the rest of the international community wanted to lift the arms embargo, then so be it."

Echoing reservations voiced on Thursday by French Defence Minister Francois Leotard, Rifkind said ending the arms embargo would make it impossible for United Nations peacekeepers in Bosnia to remain impartial. They would have to be withdrawn.

"You cannot have a United Nations force being non-partisan in such a country at the same time as arms are being supplied to one of the combatants. That would be impossible," he said.

Rifkind said Wednesday's attack by Bosnian Serbs on a UN convoy outside Sarajevo showed the danger of UN troops being sucked into the conflict.

"If the United Nations are being seen as potential targets, then that would make the position totally different and unacceptable," Rifkind said.

North Korean DPM dies

TOKYO, July 29: North Korean Deputy Prime Minister Kang Hui-Won died aged 73 on Thursday after a long illness, the country's state run radio reported today, says Reuter.

Radio Pyongyang, monitored by Radiopress in Tokyo said, the funeral of Kang, a member of the alternate Politburo, would be held on Saturday and treated as a state funeral.

Kang Hui-Won was one of 10 Deputy Prime Ministers. The radio said Prime Minister Kang Song-San would be among the members of the funeral committee.

Radiopress said this indicated that Kang Song-San was politically sure despite the defection to South Korea of Yang Myong Do.

The defector claimed at a news conference in Seoul on Wednesday to be the prime minister's son-in-law and said his country had developed five nuclear warheads.

Pyongyang has rejected Kang Young-Do's claims and the United States government said it was seeking more information from South Korea on the defector's reliability.

Italian premier's brother surrenders to court

MILAN, July 29: The brother of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi today gave himself up to anti-corruption magistrates who had issued a warrant for his arrest, Rai state radio said, reports Reuter.

It said Paolo Berlusconi had arrived at Milan's Palace of Justice at around 8:30 am (0630 GMT) to turn himself in to the city's "clean hands," corruption magistrates who had sought his arrest on suspicion of corruption.

His lawyer, Vittorio Virca, confirmed that his client had turned himself in but did not elaborate.

Paolo, who runs the family's building businesses, had been sought in connection with an investigation into alleged bribes paid to the city's police by businessmen in return for easy treatment during investigations.

Army general, 2 others killed in Madrid blast

MADRID, July 29: A car bomb rocked central Madrid at the peak of the morning rush hour Friday, killing an army general and two others in what police suspected was an attack by the Basque separatist group ETA, reports AP.

At least 14 people were injured, police said.

The explosion at Plaza Ramales came in an area frequented by tourists visiting the royal palace and the picturesque sites of the capital's historic district.

King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, who use the palace only for ceremonial purposes, were out of Madrid on vacation.

The general's driver, whose name was not released, also was killed.

Sino-Taiwan talks today

TAIPEI, July 29: Taiwanese officials expressed confidence Friday that semi-official talks with China would help lead to a peace treaty between the two former enemies, reports AP.

The talks beginning Saturday are the first since China-Taiwan relations plunged to a new low after 24 Taiwanese tourists were killed on a boat in east China in March.

China originally claimed the tourists were killed when the boat caught fire, but authorities later executed three men for murder after Taiwanese cries of a cover-up.

The talks will be followed by the visit of next week of Tang Shubel, who will be the first senior Chinese official to come to Taiwan since 1949, when the ruling Nationalists fled to the island after losing a civil war to China's Communists.

Tang is the vice chairman of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, the semi-official body that handles links with Taiwan's semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation.

Taiwan and China do not recognise each other, so the two sides negotiate through these semi-official bodies. Taiwan and China's state of enmity only ended in 1987.

Taiwanese and Chinese representatives have met four

times for working-level talks since April last year.

At each meeting, the two sides agreed on the need to tackle problems of common concern, including repatriating illegal immigrants and hijackers, but disagreed over issues of sovereignty and legal jurisdiction.

China views Taiwan as a renegade province and it refuses to recognise the jurisdiction of Taiwanese courts.

But at a news conference Friday, Huang Kun-huei, chairman of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, expressed confidence that the talks would "pave the way for the future signing of a treaty to end belatedness between the two sides."

Huang did not give a timetable for signing a treaty, which he said would have to be discussed directly by China and Taiwan. He also said the two sides first must give priority to settling civilian problems that divide them.

The four-day talks starting Saturday are again expected to discuss repatriating hijackers and illegal immigrants as well as fishing disputes.

Sixteen mainland Chinese have hijacked planes to Taiwan in 12 hijackings since April last year. Fifteen hijackers received jail terms ranging from six to 13 years, while the last hijacker awaits trial.

Off the Record

... after watching Schindler's List

LONDON: A Jewish woman whose family died in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II committed suicide after watching Steven Spielberg's film Schindler's List, a psychiatrist told an inquest on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Ruzena Stanley, 75, a retired lecturer who was born in Czechoslovakia, was found dead on May 27 at her home in Oxford, southern England. She had left several suicide notes before taking pills and placing a plastic bag over her head.

She became clinically depressed over the loss of her entire family in the second World War, psychiatrist Dr Julian Hughes said in a statement read at the inquest.

Her husband committed suicide 10 years ago. Her lowness of mood was perpetuated by her husband's death and more recently by watching the film Schindler's List, he added.

Hughes had been treating Stanley for depression and to help her overcome feelings of guilt about her family.

Stanley escaped from Prague after the German occupation but her family was captured by the Nazis and died in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Schindler's List the harrowing tale of a German industrialist who saved Jews from the Holocaust won seven Oscars and was acclaimed internationally.

The Oxford coroner recorded a verdict of suicide.

Black baby of white parents

BEIJING: A stunned Chinese couple has given birth to a "black baby" intriguing doctors who described the case as exceedingly rare, a local newspaper report seen here Thursday said, says AFP.

The baby boy was born on July 7 in Nanjing, the provincial capital of eastern Jiangsu province, the Yangtze Evening Post said.

According to doctors, the baby's body was completely black — apart from the feet and right hand side of the face.

The skin discolouration was caused by thousands of tiny black moles, the doctors said, adding that only 21 such cases had ever been reported in the world.

Last year, a baby boy in the southeastern province of Jiangxi confounded medical experts when his skin pigment changed from normal to completely black a month after he was born.

"In this world of yellow people, it goes without saying that this 'black child' will meet pressures and obstacles," a newspaper observed at the time.

Blacks are regarded by many Chinese as inferior and violent clashes between African exchange students and Chinese have occurred many times.

Chinese employee sues US embassy

BEIJING, July 29: A former Chinese employee of the US embassy in Beijing, who was accused of stealing 1,000 dollars, said today she had filed a lawsuit against the mission, demanding 600,000 dollars for damage allegedly inflicted to her reputation, reports AFP.

In a letter sent to news agencies, Yang Huiming, 28, said she had filed a suit Wednesday with the Beijing higher people's court, citing the embassy's commercial section, where she used to work as a secretary, and the counsellor for commercial affairs, Steven Hendry.

A US embassy spokesman confirmed that Yang's employment had been terminated, but refused to provide a reason.

US military self-deterrence discourages use of forces abroad

WASHINGTON, July 29: The United States has entered a period of military self-deterrence where lack of visible threats and fear of casualties discourage any use of American forces abroad, according to a report prepared for Congress, says AP.

Retinence of the world's only remaining superpower to commit troops to foreign conflicts could have serious long-term repercussions, writes Stanley Sloan, senior specialist in international security policy for the Congressional Research Service.

Iraq, North Korea and other countries could be emboldened by the perceived lack of threat of US retaliation. "Over time, the result could be an increasingly chaotic interna-

tional system in which countries have little or no faith in the will of the United States to honour its international commitments," Sloan said.

Since the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the country has become increasingly gun-shy, as witnessed by the strong opposition to American military presence in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti or Rwanda, the report says.

A key factor, it says, is the absence of any real and present dangers following the end of the Cold War. The report also concludes that "most Americans in the early 1990s appeared to be suffering from leadership fatigue." It singled out former President Bush as an exception.

There's also the emphasis on domestic issues, the nation's reduced tolerance to casualties of war, diminished trust in the United Nations and other multilateral peace-keeping efforts, a military establishment leery of taking on missions only marginal to US vital interests and a cautious Congress.

"We certainly are in an insular mood," said Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, ranking Republican on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations. He said this was partly the fault of President Clinton, saying Clinton is consumed by his domestic agenda and has shown "no sense of conviction" in foreign policy initiatives.

Sloan cited two events last October that helped cloud Bush's vision of a "new world order" with the United States in the lead. First was the killing of 18 American soldiers by Somali warlord gunmen on the streets of Mogadishu. Then came the retreat of a US troopship confronted by an angry mob when it tried to dock in Haiti.

Clinton subsequently announced that all US troops would be out of Somalia by March 31 this year. And in May, he issued a directive that put tough restrictions on US participation in future UN peace operations.

"The administration had gone from UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright's advocacy of a US policy of 'assertive mul-

tilateralism' in June 1993 to... (the directive's) policy of stringent conditionality," Sloan said.

The effects of this policy are already evident in Bosnia, he said, where US willingness to put its military forces in harm's way in Bosnia produced questioning in Europe and around the world about the future US ability to lead the international community.

Clinton has promised US peacekeepers if peace ever comes to that divided country but has stressed that no Americans will join the current international force trying to keep warring factions at bay.

In Rwanda, Sloan said, critics have charged that the administration's reluctance to acknowledge that genocide

was taking place and fulfil its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention contributed to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

Sen. Paul Simon, speaking at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Rwanda, noted there are more New York cab drivers killed in a year than American troops who died in Somalia and that Chicago police know the risks but don't retreat when confronted with gangs.

As the world leader, America can't always stand to the side and let others do the hard work, he said. "I don't think the United States can endlessly say, 'We're going to put up the money. You supply the troops.'"

Landslide claims 14 in China

BEIJING, July 29: A landslide in a remote area of southern China killed 14 people, but news of the disaster did not reach the nearest town for two days because of flooding, according to an official report seen in Beijing on Friday, reports AP.

The landslide in a mountain village in Guangdong province occurred July 23, but it was two days before the next town, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) away, heard about it, the Yangtze Evening News reported Thursday.

The report did not say what caused the landslide but said flooding washed out the simple road that linked the village to the nearest town.