

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.

BRIEFLY

89 escape Latvian jail: Latvian police moved 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. Reuters 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. Reuters says from Kuala Lumpur.

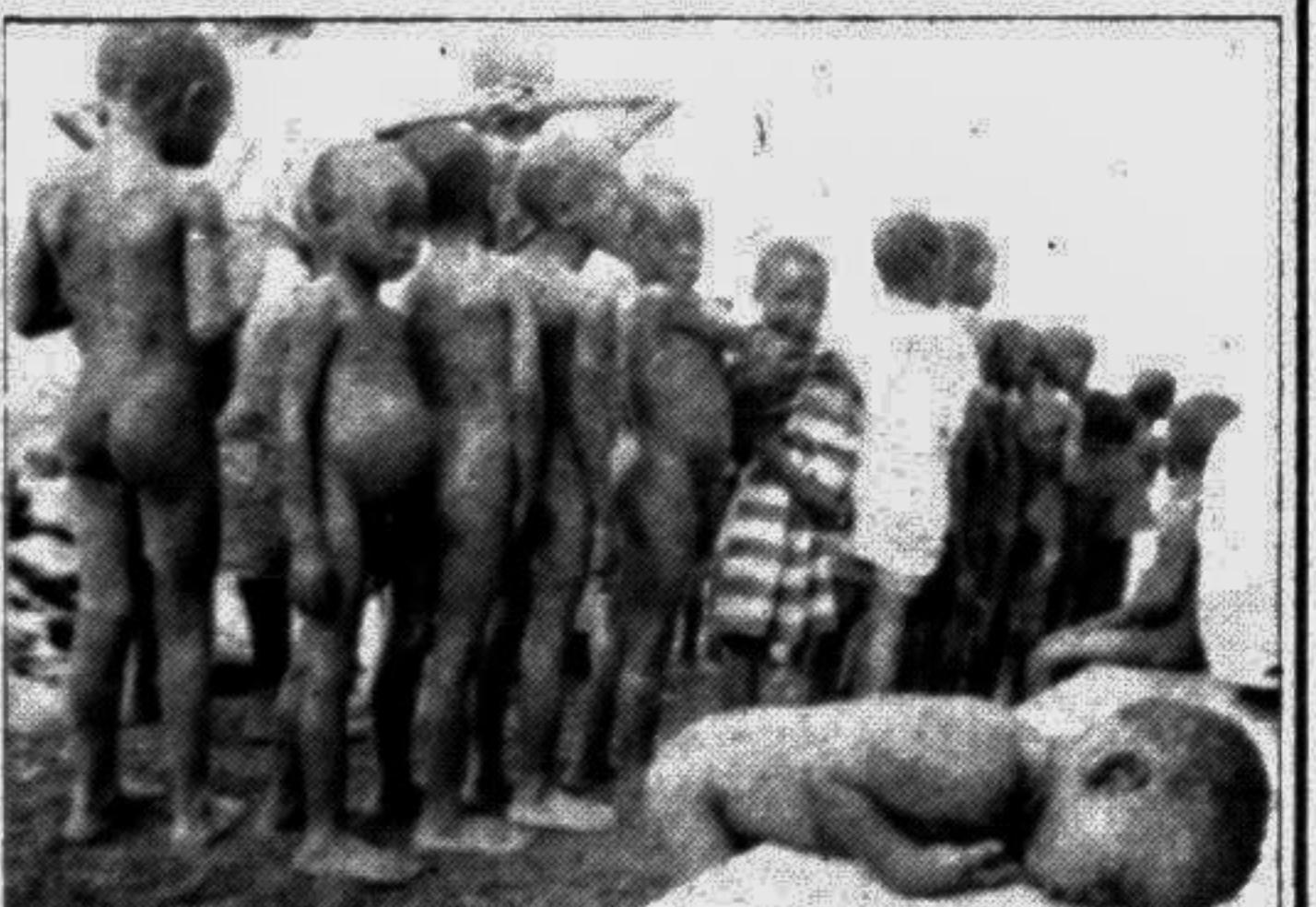
Chan Roh Lim, a 67-year-old contractor from Singapore, was hanged at the Selangor state central prison in Kajang, 30 km (19 miles) from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur.

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 Nadoro near Goma on Thursday. Three thousand Rwandan children are crowded in the encampment.

— AFP photo

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.

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 Reuters.

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.

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

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 multilateralism 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

Nigeria plunges into chaos

LAGOS, Nigeria, July 29: Nigerian 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.

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 Shuwei, 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 entity only ended in 1987.

Taiwanese and Chinese representatives have met four

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 Reuters.

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 Manjing, 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.

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.