

# Pakistan offers help to rescue hostages

## Kashmir militant group vows to kill Bal Thackeray

SRINAGAR, India, Aug 7: A separatist group in Kashmir vowed today to kill Indian radical Hindu leader Bal Thackeray in retaliation for a threat against Islamic pilgrims, reports Reuter.

Last month Thackeray, head of the militant Hindu Shiv Sena Party in the western state of Maharashtra, threatened retaliation against Muslim Hajj pilgrims if Hindus embarking on a pilgrimage in Kashmir this month were attacked.

The Lashkar-i-Taiba group issued a statement in Srinagar, summer capital of India's Jammu and Kashmir state, saying they were determined to kill Thackeray, one of the best-known Hindu radicals.

"What greater challenge could there be for Muslims than that the leader of these infidels, Bal Thackeray, has threatened the followers of God to stop their very important pilgrimage to Makkah," said the Lashkar-i-Taiba statement, written in Urdu.

"We accept this challenge and we resolve to finish this undesirable fellow off before the month of Hajj," it said, referring to the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah.

Thackeray had issued his warning through his party's newspaper in Bombay after Harkat-ul-Ansar, a Kashmiri separatist group, threatened pilgrims climbing this week to a mountain cave in Kashmir.

Tens of thousands of Hindu devotees arrived amid tight security today at Kashmir's Pahalgam mountain resort where five western tourists were kidnapped by Muslim militants last month.

The pilgrims were on their way to Amarnath cave where they will worship a 12-foot high ice stalagmite which they believe symbolises the Hindu god Shiva's phallus, representing virility.

Harkat-ul-Ansar says its threat against the pilgrims is in retaliation for the destruction of the 16th century Babri mosque by Hindu zealots in Ayodhya town in December, 1992.

About 3,000 people were killed in Hindu-Muslim riots following the destruction of the mosque.

Harkat-ul-Ansar also has taken responsibility for two bomb blasts which recently killed 18 people in Jammu.

"Hindu pilgrims going to Amarnath are the same people who participated in the demolition of Babri Masjid," Lashkar-i-Taiba said.

"What sin have we committed? Probably the sin is that we believe in one God," it said.

AFP adds: Pakistan has offered to help win the release of five westerners held hostage by a Muslim guerilla group in Indian-controlled Kashmir, a top Foreign Ministry official said today.

"We have been in touch with the embassies of the countries whose nationals are held and we have told them that we would try to do whatever we can," Najmuddin Sheikh told reporters.

AP adds from Islamabad: Pakistan accused the Indian government Monday of orchestrating the kidnapping of five western tourists.

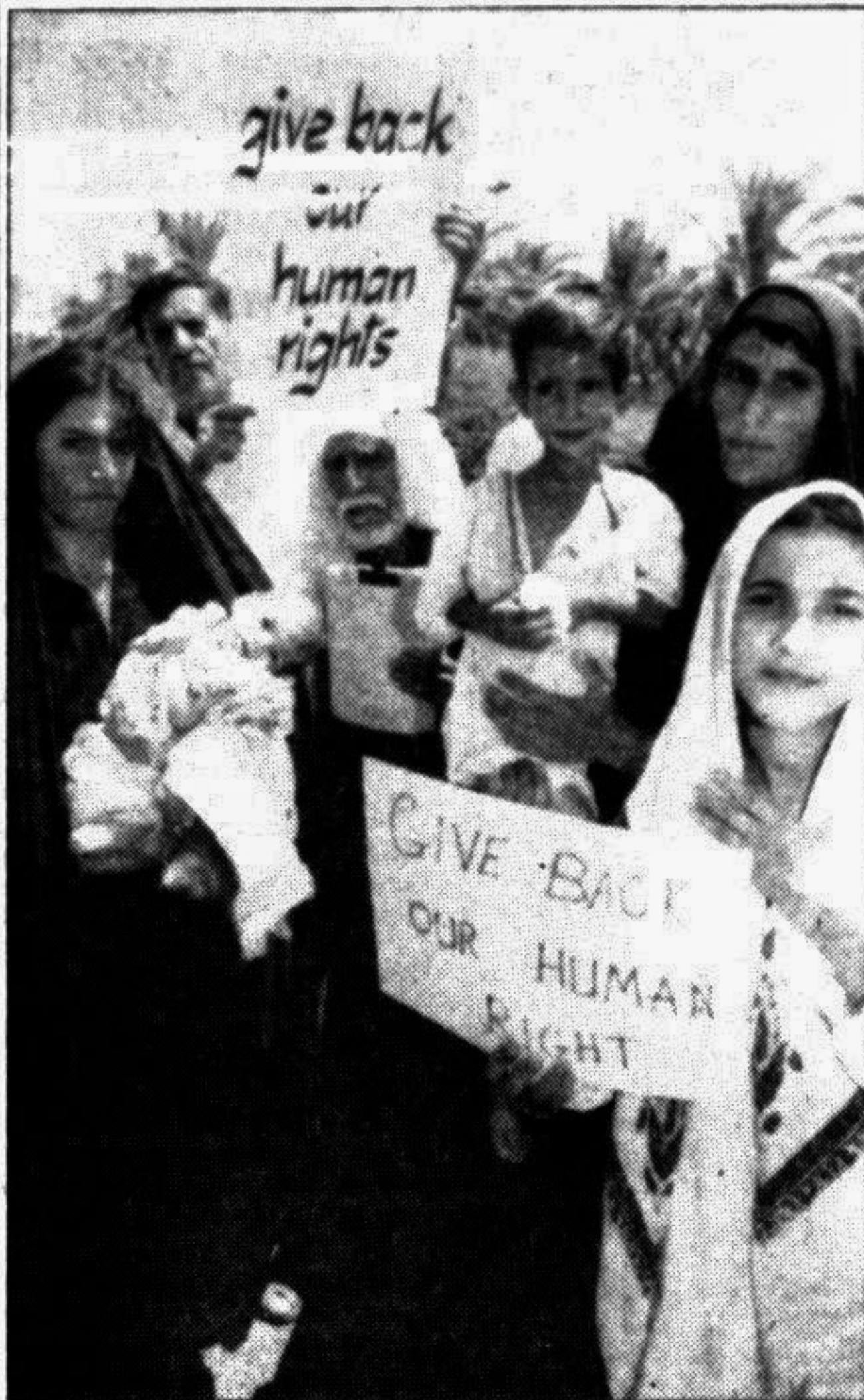
The Al-Faran group is demanding India free 15 jailed guerillas in exchange for the five — an American, two Britons, a German and a Norwegian — captured on July 4.

But Najmuddin Sheikh, the number two person at the Foreign Ministry said Pakistan suspects India masterminded the kidnappings to tarnish the international image of Kashmiri militants and implicate Pakistan.

In an audio tape released on Saturday the group said three of their hostages were critically ill and could die.

"We have no knowledge of this particular group but we have our own suspicions... (that it's) a breakaway group controlled by the Indian intelligence," Sheikh told reporters at a weekly briefing.

# BRIEFLY



About two dozen Iraqi hospital patients protest on Sunday during the visit of the head of the UN Special Commission on disarming Iraq, Rolf Ekus, against UN economic sanctions imposed five years ago in front of the Rashid Hotel in Baghdad. Calling themselves "victims of the sanctions", the hospital patients rallied to obtain much needed medicine, which is exempt from the embargo, but Iraq says it is deprived of the revenue to buy it. Ekus left Iraq on Sunday after a three-day mission. — AFP/UNB photo

**Yeltsin back to Kremlin:** Russian President Boris Yeltsin returned to his Kremlin desk yesterday after almost a month recovering from a mild heart attack, a presidential spokesman said. Reuter reports from Moscow.

The 64-year-old leader was taken to hospital on July 11 after suffering an attack at home. For the past two weeks he has been convalescing in a sanatorium outside Moscow.

**4 slaughtered in the Philippines:** Four men were slain and eight other people were injured when a grenade was tossed at a funeral wake during an argument among drunken mourners in the northern Philippines, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Loog, Philippines.

The grenade-thrower was among those killed in the blast in the village of Bugnay near San Nicolas town late Sunday, police said. All the casualties, which included women and children, were relatives who were taking part in the funeral vigil.

**Cali drug cartel leader held:** The arrest of the reputed boss of the Cali drug cartel is "the beginning of the end of the problem or drug trafficking in Colombia," President Ernesto Samper declared Sunday night. AP reports from Bogota.

Police raided a Cali apartment before dawn on Sunday, catching Miguel Rodriguez Orejuela in his underwear. His ex-wife, a bodyguard, a chauffeur and a maid also were arrested without resistance.

**Housewives confce in Oct:** The Argentine capital will host the first world congress of housewives on October 26-29 with the aim of joining forces to fight for equality, fair prices and advertising that does not exploit women, according to its organisers. Reuter reports from Buenos Aires.

Argentina's Housewives' League said on Sunday it had received acceptances from organisations in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Russia, Poland, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, India and South Africa.

**Blast claims 11 in Algeria:** At least 11 people were killed when a truck bomb exploded on a highway leading into the town of Boufarik south of Algiers, two newspapers reported yesterday. AFP says from Algiers.

The Daily Liberty said 11 people were killed and 33 injured in Sunday's blast while El Watan said 12 were killed and 15 injured, including 11 seriously. The papers said the blast occurred at the eastern entrance of Boufarik, located 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Algiers, and blew away several vehicles.

**AL slates Israeli decision:** The Arab League condemned on Sunday an Israeli decision to allow Jews to enter the area around Al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem as a violation of Israel's peace accord with the Palestinians. Reuter reports from Cairo.

"The League secretariat strongly condemns this Israeli decision and calls on the international community, and the sponsors of the Middle East peace process, to take a clear and firm stand," the 22-member organisation said in a statement.

**Flash flood kills 7 in Thailand:** Seven people were killed in northern Thailand by a landslide triggered by a flash flood which swept through their houses. Radio Thailand reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Five of the dead, three of them children were members of one Hmong hill tribe family. They died in Ho, Thoeng district of Chiangrai province, 850 km (520 miles) north of Bangkok on Sunday.

### Castro keeps up tough line on US

MEXICO CITY, Aug 7: President Fidel Castro and his top aides gave a spirited defence of socialism to a conference of international supporters, while lashing out at their old foe the United States, reports AP.

The Cuban leader has presided over market-style economic reforms meant to stave off economic crisis on the socialist island, but the minister of economy and planning, Jose Luis Rodriguez, told the some 1,000 delegates that some monetary measures might be reversed.

Rodriguez said policies such as permitting free circulation of foreign currency in Cuba are not permanent.

## Lime, a popular fruit, cures all summer diseases

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: Jaundice, heat — stroke, stomachache, dysentery, indigestion — name any summer disease and the remedy lies in the popular Indian summer fruit — lime, reports PTI.

It is a good aperient, astringent, antipyretic and sedative.

Lime provides Vitamin C, minerals and alkaline salts. The lime juice is extensively used for making cocktail and lime oil used in foods and drinks for flavour.

Lime is used for flavouring jams, jellies, marmalades, carbonated and non-carbonated beverages and alcoholic drinks. Lime cordial, dried or de-

### Violence claims 13 more in Karachi

KARACHI, Aug 7: Continuing violence here has claimed 13 lives in the past 24 hours while police have arrested a key suspect in the ongoing crackdown against militants, officials said today, reports AFP.

One person was shot dead early today after 12 were killed the previous day, including a police employee and two political workers, police said.

Half of the victims were kidnapped and their bullet-ridden bodies found later in different parts of the city, while the rest were shot dead by snipers.

Police official said Fahim Farooqi alias Fahim Commando described as a most wanted "terrorist" was arrested Sunday, along with three accomplices, during a raid on a house where the four had been hiding.

### India won't accept int'l mediation over Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Aug 7: India said today it will not accept any international mediation over Kashmir, but wants the United States to pressure Pakistan to stop backing Muslim separatists, reports AFP.

"India firmly believes that there can be no role of any sort for any third party on the Kashmir issue, and no country is pressuring India for the same," Minister of State for External Affairs Salman Khurshid said.

Khurshid told the lower house of parliament here that India was committed "to resolve bilateral differences (with Pakistan), including the Kashmir issue, peacefully."

### Diabetes — an 'epidemic' in Australia

CANBERRA, Aug 7: Diabetes experts said that diabetes has become 'epidemic' in Australia, costing the country up to 4 billion Australian dollars (2.94 billion US dollars) a year, reports Xinhua.

Up to 700,000 people are suffering from diabetes in Australia whose population is only 17 million people, with half of them not yet diagnosed.

These figures were disclosed in an article written by Executive Director of the International Diabetes Institute Paul Zimmet and Medical Services Director Matthew Cohes in the Medical Journal of Australia.

But the figures conflict those given by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

### Karadzic's survival in doubt

## Politicians-military rift widens

BELGRADE, Aug 7: A rift between Bosnian Serb politicians and military has widened after the generals warned they will be punished if they continue backing replaced army commander General Ratko Mladic, reports Reuter.

"Each abuse of the chain of command and orders must be sanctioned in keeping with the law," Bosnian Serb "Parliament" Speaker Momcilo Krajisnik said on Sunday evening.

He was speaking to reporters after a parliament session which "wholeheartedly supported" a decision by Bosnian Serb "President", Radovan Karadzic to reshuffle the military command.

"Minister of Information" Miroslav Todorovic warned that a "state of war excludes any

possibility of rejecting orders."

The rift, which began when Mladic accused political leaders and parliament members of war profiteering to the detriment of the war effort, peaked on Friday when Karadzic announced a reshuffle of the military command.

Karadzic said he was assuming command of the army and shunted Mladic to a non-existent post of liaison officer between the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) and Croatian Serb troops fleeing a Croatian offensive in the neighbouring Krajina enclave.

Mladic rejected the decision, which he called illegal, and was backed on Sunday by 18 top generals who refused to accept orders from the political leadership.

The generals signed a

statement in the north Bosnian town of Banja Luka saying they would obey only Mladic.

Karadzic's own survival is now in doubt after three years as "president" of the Bosnian Serb republic he proclaimed to fight Bosnia's Muslim and Croat-led independence.

Mladic, the most successful general of the conflict in Croatia and Bosnia since former Yugoslavia fell apart, waved away his dismissal, saying he would stay "as long as the fighters and the people express support for me."

The declaration of loyalty said: "The BSA generals decided (Karadzic's) decision is wrong (and) would have unforeseeable consequences for our people, struggle and the army."

## Settlers pitch camp on hilltops to protest PLO-Israeli deal

ARTIS HILL, West Bank, Aug 7: Jewish settlers pitched camp on two hilltops Monday, resuming a campaign of protests against an emerging Israel-PLO deal on expanding Palestinian self-rule, reports AP.

Settlers brought a generator to the site near Nebi Samuel, reputed burial place of the biblical prophet Samuel, about 10 kilometres (six miles) north of Jerusalem.

Dozens more returned to an unauthorised encampment on Artis Hill, adjacent to the Beit El settlement, 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Jerusalem. The move was in defiance of Israeli troops who last week dragged hundreds of settlers off hilltops where they set up makeshift neighborhoods.

The army and police made no immediate attempts to remove the settlers from the two hilltops on Monday.

The settlers briefly halted their protests over the weekend following an appeal from president Ezer Weizmann. On Friday, settler leaders met with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and expressed their concern that turning over West Bank towns and villages to Palestinian control would put them in danger.

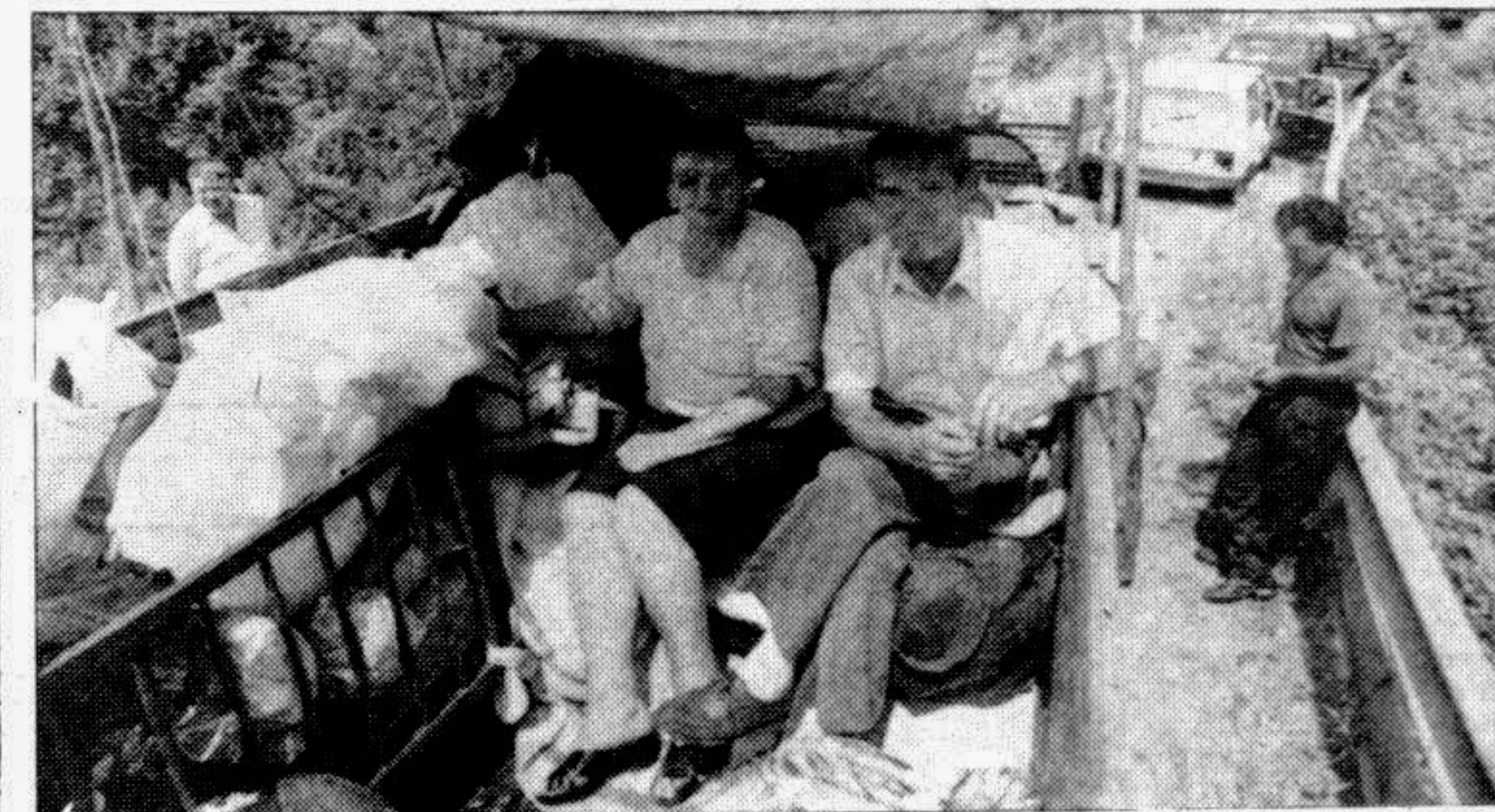
Settler spokesman Aharon Domb said they resumed the hilltop protests because the government did not suspend talks with the PLO.

Talks were scheduled to resume Monday evening with

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO chief Yasser Arafat in the Egyptian Red Sea resort Tabaa.

Both sides said the top-level meeting was needed to bridge the gaps on disputed issues such as Israeli troop withdrawal and Palestinian elections. Talks on water sharing, prisoner releases and electricity also have deadlocked.

The daily newspaper Haaretz said the Israelis would propose delaying resolution of some issues so an agreement could be signed by mid-September. But top Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qureia said the Palestinians want a comprehensive agreement.



Croat Serb refugees from Krajina sit on the top of a truck waiting to cross the Bosnian-Yugoslavian border, near the eastern Bosnian border town of Raca, some 130 kilometres (80 miles) west of Belgrade on Sunday. — AFP/UNB photo

# Off the Record

## She is aware of the legacy

DOTHAN, Alabama: Heather Whitestone is well aware of the legacy she will carry with her after passing on Miss America's crown next month, reports AP.

Whitestone became the first deaf Miss America when she was crowned in September 1994.

"I'm sure that I will have that until I die and there is nothing wrong with that," she said Saturday.

She said she's "thrilled" about relinquishing her crown. Traveling to a different city every 36 hours — logging about 32,000 kilometres (20,000 miles) — has taken its toll.

"I hate hotels. I used to love airplanes but now I hate airplanes," she said.

Miss Whitestone was in her hometown to speak to a state convention of volunteer fire departments. She plans to finish her accounting degree at Jacksonville State University, but has no plans after that.

## Sky is the limit for 'Waterworld'

LOS ANGELES, Aug 7: Kevin Costner's futuristic thriller "Waterworld" dominated North American box offices for a second week with an estimated draw of 12.8 million dollar, industry sources said, reports AP.

"Waterworld" remained No. 1 despite competition from three new films, including Julia Roberts' romantic comedy "Something to Talk About", which came in second with 11.1 million dollar take, sources said Sunday.

"Babe," which chronicles the adventures of young pig, debuted in third with 9 million dollar, followed by Denzel Washington's high-tech thriller " Virtuosity," which earned 8.3 million dollar in its first weekend.

"Waterworld" in which Costner plays a gilled loner in a water-covered world, is the most expensive movie ever made, costing from 175 million dollars to 200 million dollars.

The second-week receipts buoyed spirits at Universal Studios, the film's distributor. A spokesman said, however, that it was still too early to judge whether the movie would turn a profit.

"Everybody had pretty much written off the movie before it was completed. This was very solid business and 'Waterworld' will rank among the top grossing pictures domestically and should have a really good overseas release," said Alan Sutton, University's vice president for national publicity.

## More attention to girls than politics

LONDON: Gerry Adams admits negotiating with Protestants as a teen-ager. But his goals were different back then, reports AP.

The leader of Sinn Fein, the party closely allied with the Irish Republican Army, says that like most youths growing up in Northern Ireland, he paid more attention to girls than politics.

"When I was in Ballymurphy as a teenager and we began to discover there was such a thing as sex and there was the opposite sex. Our first fumbling explorations were — with Protestant young women — simply because they were just across the road from where we were," he said.

Adams, 46, spoke in a television interview taped Saturday. He has been in peace talks with British officials since last year, when the IRA declared a ceasefire in the 25-year Northern Ireland troubles.

## Kashmiris fed up with militants: Rao

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 7: Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was quoted today as saying people in troubled Kashmir were fed up with separatist militants and wanted democracy, reports Reuter.

The Business Times newspaper quoted Rao as saying that Kashmir was dealing with "exported terrorism" and "terrorists" were thwarting the electoral process.

"We have to a large extent controlled (militancy) but there are still incidents that are calculated to browbeat the people and stop the process," Rao said.

"But what I can say is that the people are fed up with terrorists. They want the democratic process. They feel that only under the de-

## Christopher denies bid to contain China

WASHINGTON, Aug 7: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher denied on Sunday that normalising relations with Vietnam was part of an effort to neutralise growing diplomatic strains with China, reports Reuter.

"It was not directed against any country," Christopher said in an interview from Hanoi on ABC's "this week with David Brinkley" television show.

"We normalised ties with Vietnam because the President concluded it served our best interests," he told an interviewer who asked if he was trying to contain Chinese ambitions through dealings

with one of Beijing's regional rivals.

But Christopher said his visit to Vietnam, marking renewed relations with the communist state, was an indication of US engagement in the Pacific.

Relations with China took a turn for the worse over Chinese anger at Washington's decision to allow Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui to make a private visit to the United States in June.

### Kenneth Kaunda arrested

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 7: Former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda was arrested on Sunday and charged with addressing a recent rally without an official permit, Zambian radio said, reports Reuter.

It said Kaunda, president of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), was picked up at Lusaka Airport where he had gone to meet his wife off a plane from Britain.

According to his press assistant, he was charged by Lusaka police with addressing a recent public rally without a permit in Ndola, 170 miles north of Lusaka.