

IJG threatens to kill Mubarak, 3 ministers

CAIRO, Nov 21: An Islamic group which claimed the bombing of Egypt's embassy in Pakistan threatened today to murder President Hosni Mubarak and three senior ministers, reports AFP.

In a two-page typed fax to an international news agency, the International Justice Group (IJG) condemned "the Pharaohs of Egypt" — Mubarak, Interior Minister Hassan Al-Ali, Foreign Minister Amr Mussa, and Information Minister Safwat Al-Sharif.

It said "death sentences have been passed against them, even if they hang from the curtains of the Kaaba."

Egypt has focused on the IJG as the most likely of three groups which claimed Sunday's suicide bombing of Egypt's embassy in Islam-

abad, which killed 16 and injured more than 60.

The government has vowed to track down exiled Muslim militants, prompting the group to say it was "amused by what we heard through the Egyptian press from Egypt's Pharaohs following the bombing of the Egyptian embassy."

"We accept the challenge," it said. "Don't worry, we will shorten the way for you. We will ease the burden of travelling for you because you are too cowardly to do it. We will come to you, God willing."

"We will come to relieve you from the world and relieve all mankind from you and your filth, you cowards and traitors," it said.

The Jamaa Islamiyya and Al-Jihad, which have spearheaded militant violence in Egypt, also claimed the attack.

Tigers massing fighters to prevent fall of Jaffna

COLOMBO, Nov 21: Tamil Tiger guerrillas are massing thousands of fighters in Jaffna to prevent the fall of their stronghold to advancing Sri Lankan troops, Tamil sources said today, reports AFP.

The sources quoted travellers from the island's embattled north as saying that thousands of guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had moved to Jaffna Peninsula from the mainland in recent days.

"Not less than 2,000 Tigers have moved north to Jaffna in the past week," a Tamil source quoted travellers as saying. A large number of Tamils have come to Colombo from the LTTE-held zone in the north.

The sources said it was clear that the LTTE was beefing up its strength in Jaffna for a last-ditch battle to prevent the army from capturing the now ghost town, the traditional symbol of Tamil militancy.

The sources, who have extensive links with Tamils in Sri Lanka's war-torn north-east, quoted a traveller from Kilinochchi, south of Jaffna, as saying that the largest movement of LTTE fighters to Jaffna took place a week ago.

The LTTE guerrillas were reportedly moving from Mannar in the island's northwest and the thickly-forested Wannu region in the north to Jaffna, further

north, by road and later in boats past the Jaffna lagoon.

"It is clear that the LTTE is interested in giving a last ditch battle in Jaffna Town", a Tamil source said. "There are going to be many casualties on both sides."

Sri Lankan troops on Monday stormed into Jaffna Town, for the first time since 1990, breaking the LTTE defences at Nallur, on the eastern edge of Jaffna, one month after mounting the country's biggest military offensive.

Meanwhile, Tamil Tiger guerrillas attacked police in eastern Sri Lanka today, killing two constables and wounding 15 as the army stormed the rebel bastion of Jaffna in the island's north,

defence sources here said.

Dozens of gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched the pre-dawn assault to overrun the Lahugalla police facility, but security personnel resisted the attack, the sources said.

The police complex houses ordinary constables as well as a unit of the elite Special Task Force (STF) commandos who have been carrying out anti-LTTE operations in eastern jungles, the sources said.

"Two constables were killed and about 15 STF men wounded. There should be casualties among the Tigers, but we have no details yet," a defence official here said.

Off the Record



The Princess of Wales arrives at Bridgewater House, Monday evening for a Gala Evening in aid of the European Organisation for the Research and Treatment of Cancer. BBC TV on Monday night screens an exclusive interview with the princess on its current affairs programme, Panorama. — AFP/UNB photo

... rather than executing

MANILA: A Philippine congressman Tuesday filed a bill to punish rapists by amputating their penis rather than executing them, saying such a punishment would be "worse than death itself," reports AFP.

Congressman Leopoldo San Buenaventura filed the bill which would amend the capital punishment law with regards to rapists, arguing it had failed to reduce the incidence of rape.

"To the Filipino male, nothing can be more debasing or degrading than to have his sexual organ amputated," the opposition legislator said.

"Considering the chauvinistic attitude of most Filipino males, having one's male sexual organ cut off is worse than death itself," he added.

Capital punishment was restored last year for "heinous crimes" such as rape, drug dealing, ransom kidnapping, murder and massive graft and corruption.

First century Jewish city discovered

MODIIM, Israel: Israeli archaeologists uncovered a well-preserved Jewish city dating from the first century in the Modiim region east of Tel Aviv, Professor Yitzhak Magen said Monday, reports AFP.

A large building, apparently serving as a synagogue, was discovered. The city was well laid out, with residential buildings on one side and workshops and stables on the other, Magen told Israeli radio.

Also, 200 pieces of gold and silver dating from the same period were found in a hiding place in one of the buildings.

According to the professor, the city dates from the same period as the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in the year 70.

On the same site last week, Jewish burial vaults were discovered.

DPRK receives oil shipment from US EU wants to join KEDO to help convert N-programme

BRUSSELS, Nov 21: European Union foreign ministers agreed on Monday that they want to join the United States, Japan and South Korea in helping North Korea convert its nuclear programme to peaceful purposes diplomats said, reports Reuter.

But they failed to decide how much the 15 nation EU will contribute to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO) set up in March to further the task.

European Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan has proposed contributing a 15 million European currency units (ECUs) (20 million dollar).

But diplomats said the EU only had 19 million ECUS

(25 million dollar) left for such purposes this year and most would be needed for reconstruction in Bosnia in the event of peace.

They said a more likely contribution would be 3.5 million ECUS (4.5 million dollar) but the figure would not be decided before the next EU foreign ministers meeting on December 4.

The KEDO, comprises of the United States, Japan and South Korea, and Britain, does not want the EU to be left out.

Meanwhile, North Korea said today it had received shipments of oil from the United States under last year's landmark nuclear pact and that it would abide by its part of the agreement.

Plot to kill PM Half-brother of Sihanouk held

PHNOM PENH, Nov 21: Cambodian authorities today detained King Norodom Sihanouk's half-brother Prince Norodom Srivudh, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Cambodia's Parliament earlier stripped Srivudh, secretary general of the Royalist Funcinpec Party and a former foreign minister, of immunity from prosecution, paving the way for him to be charged over his alleged involvement in a plot to kill Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The Chief Judge of Phnom Penh Municipal Court, Om Sarith, and government prosecutor Yet Chakriya escorted the prince from his home under armed guard, the witnesses said.

Aristide opens confce to solve Haitian crisis

PORT AU PRINCE, Nov 21: Outgoing President Jean Bertrand Aristide opened a national conference on Monday aimed at finding solutions to Haiti's problems just one week after the poor Caribbean nation was plunged into violence, reports Reuter.

Aristide kicked off the three day event of a peace ceremony on Monday afternoon.

The President's concern was that the country has major problems and we would like to resolve them by dialogue not violence, said a government official.

Round table meetings were expected to include politicians, business and religious leaders and the heads of grass roots organisations. They will look at thorny issues such as privatisation, agrarian reform and disarmament.

Indian scholar made prof for CR Das Chair

CALCUTTA, Nov 21: Noted scholar, Prof Asit Bandyopadhyay, has been appointed as the Bengali professor for the Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das Chair created at the Arizona State University, USA.

The General Secretary of the Asiatic Society, Dr Chandan Roy Chaudhury, told PTI that the chair was created by the Asiatic Society to promote Bengali studies at the university.

The Bengali studies programme to be centred in the faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at ASU, will offer direct and inter-disciplinary courses such as Bengali language, literature and history, art and music, philosophical thoughts and spiritual movements of Bengal and Bangladesh and the socio-cultural development of Bengal.



Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres (L) and Spanish Foreign Minister and chairman of the EU General Affairs Council Javier Solana (R) exchange documents after the signing of an association agreement between Israel and the EU in Brussels on Monday. — AFP/UNB photo

Taliban capture 2 key govt positions east of Kabul

KABUL, Nov 21: Afghan government troops lost two key positions east of Kabul to the Taliban militia early today as fierce fighting for control of the area entered its sixth day, the Defence Ministry said here, reports AFP.

"We made a tactical retreat from Chakari and Khurd Kabul, but are still maintaining other important posts in the area, a spokesman said.

The villages of Chakari and Khurd Kabul, 25 kilometers (15 miles) south-east of the Afghan capital — were originally seized by the Taliban in a major attack on the area late Thursday, but the rebels were pushed out of most of the captured zone in a government counter-offensive on Saturday.

Intense battles have continued for control of hills and military posts overlooking the villages ever since, culminating in today's state withdrawal from the two hamlets.

The retreat was the second setback for government in two days.

On Monday, the Islamic rebels overran a strategically important military post near Chakari which had been seized in heavy fighting on Saturday by state troopers.

But despite the latest battlefield reversal, the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani is confident its troops have not lost the fight for the eastern flank of the besieged city.

The Taliban victory has not brought them signifi-

cantly closer to Kabul and does not undermine in any major way our imminent plans to drive them back", a Defence Ministry source said.

This may be a tactical victory, but strategically the Taliban have still failed in their goal of capturing the eastern defence lines of Kabul, the aim of their offensive last week, he added.

The government and the Taliban continued to trade heavy missile artillery and rocket fire southeast of Kabul today although analysts here said both sides were probably exhausted following five and half days of solid fighting.

Other military sources meanwhile said the government was already preparing another counter-attack to recapture the ground last today.



A delighted Beatles fan shows off her freshly purchased copies of the first new Beatles album in 25 years at London's Oxford Street branch of HMV just after midnight Tuesday. The first twenty copies of the double album, called Anthology and includes a new song with John Lennon's voice on it, were sold at 1963 levels, meaning the 20 pound album cost only 1 pound and 54 pence. — AFP-UNB photo

BRIEFLY

OIC condemns Islamabad blast:

The 51 member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on Monday condemned Sunday's bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in which 15 people were killed and 60 were wounded, Reuter reports from Dubai.

OIC Secretary-General Hamid Al-Gabid in a statement reported by the Saudi Press Agency said the organisation "condemns all acts of terrorism which are contrary to the teachings of Islam." Gabid also expressed to Egyptian and Pakistani governments "deep sorrow and regret for the loss of many innocent lives in this barbaric attack," the agency said.

China expelled 15,000 foreigners:

China expelled 15,000 foreigners between 1990 and 1995 for breaking the country's laws, the China news service said yesterday, Reuter reports from Beijing.

Over the last 10 years, some foreign and Chinese criminal gangs have conspired to abuse the normal entry and exit procedures to harm China's sovereignty, security and interests and damage China's political stability and social order, it quoted an official of the public security ministry as saying.

Japan ratifies int'l treaty:

Japan's parliament ratified an international treaty outlawing racial discrimination yesterday becoming the last industrialised country to approve the treaty adopted by United Nations 30 years ago, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The justice and foreign ministers had been reluctant to ratify the treaty, arguing that it violated Japan's constitutional right of freedom of expression by stipulating that racism be punishable by law, officials said.

Anti-govt rally in Mexico:

Thousands of demonstrators held a huge rally in downtown Mexico City Monday denouncing the government's measures for dealing with the country's economic crisis and demanding social and political freedom, AFP reports from Mexico City.

Demonstrators from a diverse set of organisations converged at El Zocalo, the city's main public plaza to support workers from a defunct state owned company and rebels in the poor southeastern state of Chiapas.

US plane crash kills 3:

Three people were killed on Monday when a small plane crashed into an apartment building as the pilot was trying to land in heavy fog at an airport near Los Angeles, officials said, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

Sylvia Palmer, a fire department spokeswoman, said one of those killed in the crash in suburban Fullerton was the pilot.

6 burnt to death in Hanoi:

A family of six burnt to death at their petrol stand in southern Vietnam after a electrical short-circuit ignited stores of fuel, a news paper report said yesterday, AFP reports from Hanoi.

Fire consumed the house that doubled as a petrol station in less than 10 minutes following an electrical fault and the entire household died in the blaze, the Lao Dong newspaper said.

Ex-Nazi captain to face trial:

Former Nazi SS captain Erich Priebke arrived in Italy under police escort yesterday to face trial for his alleged role in the World War Two massacre of 335 men and boys at the Ardeatine caves outside Rome, the ANSA news agency reported, Reuter reports from Rome.

Road mishap kills 8 in ROK:

Eight people were killed and 17 injured when a truck smashed headlong into an oncoming express bus on a highway in southern South Cholla province, reports said yesterday, AFP reports from Seoul.

Yonhap news agency said the accident occurred when the truck shot over the median strip at its driver tried to avoid an elderly pedestrian who had wandered onto the expressway Monday afternoon.

Floods claim 8 in Turkey:

Flooding triggered by torrential rains killed eight people over the weekend in the southern Turkish province of Antalya, the Anatolia News Agency reported Monday, AFP reports from Istanbul.

The agency said the victims were heading home Saturday after a party, when floodwaters engulfed and overturned their van as they were crossing a bridge.

Pak forces kill 2 tribesmen in Baluchistan

QUETTA, Pakistan, Nov 21: Pakistani forces deployed at a natural gas field in the southwestern province of Balochistan shot dead two tribesmen, one of them a tribal chief's grandson, and wounded four, a government official said today, reports Reuter.

He said men of the paramilitary frontier corp had fired on a pick-up truck carrying the tribesmen on Monday when its driver failed to halt at a check-point near the Sui Gas installations.

Extra paramilitary troops were deployed to protect Pakistan's biggest gas field after bloody clashes erupted,

Leading nations have failed to pay membership dues to UN

BERKELEY, Nov 21: Despite their rhetorical support for the United Nations, which turned 50 last month, the world's leading nations have failed to pay their basic membership dues, reports IPS.

The United States alone owes the Nations least 1.4 billion dollars, nearly half of the organisation's 3.2 billion dollar debt.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has warned delinquent members that if they don't pay up soon, the world body will be forced to shut down many of its most basic functions — impeding peacekeepers, denying funding for essential health, development and refugee efforts, and shutting down landmark war crimes tribunals recently launched in

Bosnia and Rwanda. How could an institution that just a few years ago won the Nobel Peace Prize for its remarkable successes in war-wracked regions like Cambodia and El Salvador so soon plummet into penury?

A large part of the answer lies in a sudden shift in the domestic politics of the UN's most powerful member nation, the United States.

The republican majority in the US Congress sharply departs from a longstanding consensus among US policy-makers of both parties that, for all its flaws, the United Nations remains a vital instrument of national and global security.

The dust-bowl Republicans who now hold the high ground of US politics are not so much isolationists as uni-

lateralists, suspicious of cooperation with other nations and determined to go it alone, intervening (preferably with overwhelming force) only when and where they see a narrowly defined advantage for their own political or commercial interests.

Long-term beneficiaries of federal funds for arms manufacture and military bases, they are institutionally inclined to support far larger budgets for war-making than for peacekeeping.

Suspicion of the United Nations runs even deeper among adherents of the politically powerful Christian right and the bizarre but burgeoning militia movement, whose followers are believed to have blown up the Oklahoma City Federal Building last spring. The paranoid fears of these

groups would be laughable (especially given the UN's chronic weakness) if it did not reflect in extremist the views of those who now run the US Congress.

Still, the US public as a whole supports the United Nations by consistent 2-to-1 margins and believes the United States should pay its dues in full. Echoing this majority sentiment, President Bill Clinton recently warned of a growing "isolationist backlash" in the United States.

"Unilateralism in the world that we live in is not a viable option," Clinton said. Facing congressional resistance to his longstanding pledge to supply 25,000 US troops to help enforce a fragile peace in Bosnia, he warned that there, "as else-

where, if the United States does not lead, the job will not be done."

Even the United States' closest allies are beginning the break out of their customary reluctance to criticize their senior partner. Inverting a favoured slogan of the US revolution, Britain's foreign secretary recently called the US failure to pay its dues "representation without taxation."

Other go still further, challenging the right of the United States to vote in the UN General Assembly and Security Council when it doesn't pay its assessed dues.

While the United States has complained long and hard of UN bureaucratic bloat, the UN peacekeeping budget amounts to less than one-half of one per cent of

what the world spends on its armed forces. The entire far-flung UN system — including the World Bank, IMF, World Health Organisation and UNICEF — runs on less than four per cent of what it takes to run the US military.

US policies toward the United Nations would be of less consequence to the organisation's future if the United States were not the world's sole remaining superpower and still the UN's largest single donor.

While Clinton argues against withdrawing support from the world capital in its defence, and he has sought to accommodate conservatives by sharply curtailing the conditions under which the United States will participate in future peacekeeping operations.

Mulroney sues Canadian, govt

MONTREAL, Nov 21: Former prime minister Brian Mulroney filed a 50 million Canadian dollar (37 million US) libel suit against the Canadian government on Monday saying he had been falsely accused of influence peddling in a huge Canadian purchase of European aircraft in 1988, reports Reuter.

Mulroney did not appear in person when the first ever law suit by a former prime minister against a Canadian government was filed in Quebec Superior Court. It names the Attorney General of Canada and the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well as a senior lawyer of the Department of Justice and a staff member of the countries