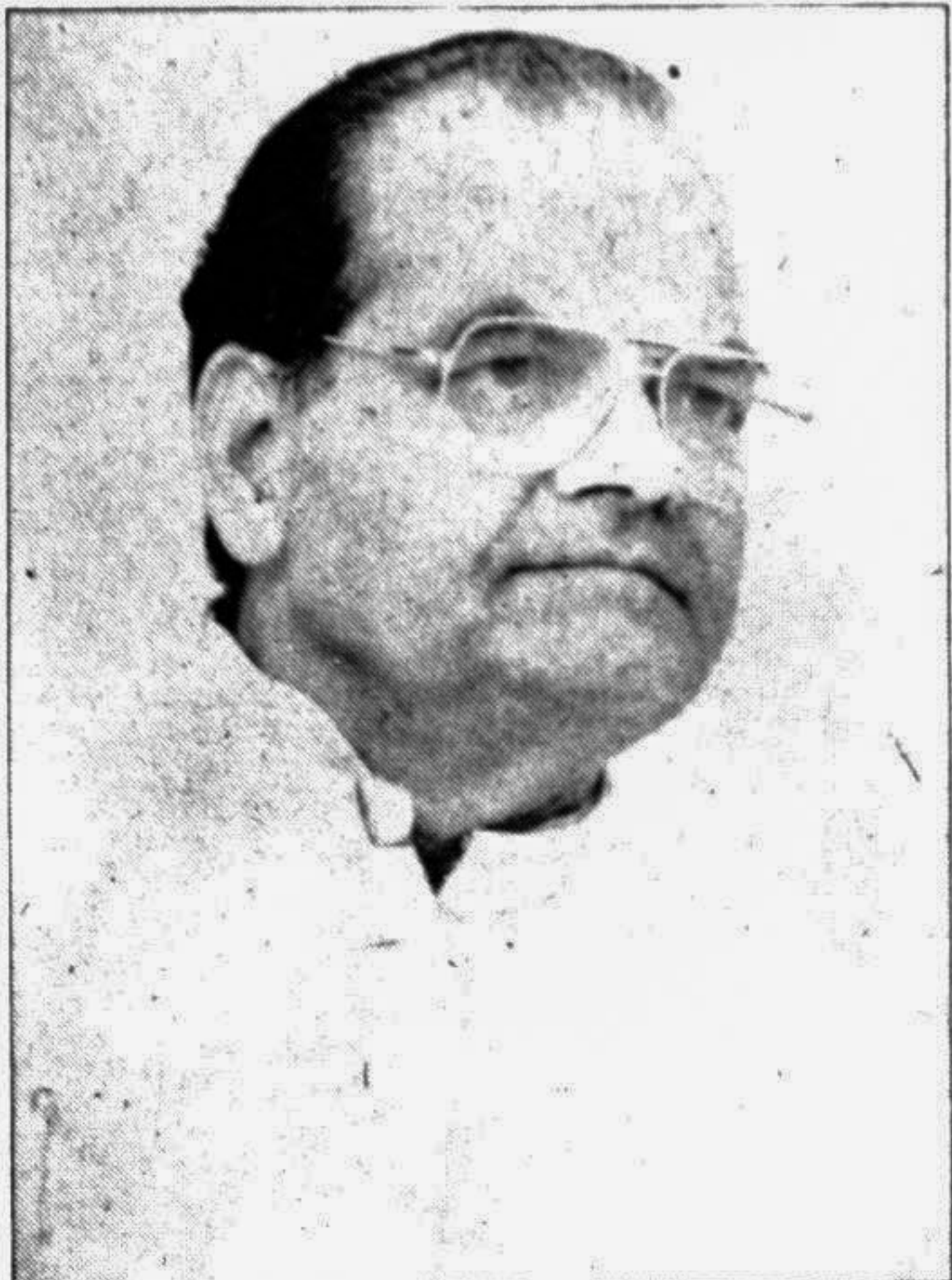


BRIEFLY



Latest undated file picture of former Indian telecommunications minister Sukh Ram, who was accused of corruption after detectives seized huge amounts of cash from his two houses. Ram, an MP is presently abroad for medical treatment. He is to be interrogated on his return.

— AFP/UNB photo

Rajiv Smriti Purashkar for Suu Kyi

The Myanmar Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was Monday awarded the Rajiv Smriti Purashkar for 1996. PTI reports from New Delhi.

Dr Tint Swe, the representative of Myanmar's National League of Democracy, received the award, on behalf of Suu Kyi, which presented by the Welfare Minister, B S Ramoowalia at a solemn function here.

Accepting the award, instituted by the art and cultural foundation in 1992 in memory of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Tint Swe said it had given a boost to the league's fight for democracy in Myanmar.

Thai PM faces no-confidence

Thailand's opposition parties submitted yesterday a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa accusing him of damaging the country through mismanagement and inefficiency. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Prime Minister Banharn is inefficient and shows a lack of leadership... he has abused his duty and turned a blind eye to rampant corruption... all of which has caused damage to the country...

2 Israeli soldiers killed in Lebanon

Two Israeli soldiers were killed in South Lebanon Tuesday when two squads laying in ambush for guerrillas opened fire on each other, security sources said. AP reports from Tyre, Lebanon.

The gunfire erupted at 5 a.m. (0200 GMT) on the edge of the western sector of an Israeli occupied border enclave in the south, said Lebanese sources on condition of anonymity. They said there was no guerrilla activity in the region at the time.

Pak cabinet okays accord with Egypt

The Pakistani cabinet approved on Monday a security cooperation agreement with Egypt to combat terrorism and organised crime, a government minister said. Reuter reports from Islamabad.

"It binds the two countries to exchange information about the activities and crimes of groups involved in terrorism" information and Broadcasting Minister Khalid Ahmad Kharal said of the agreement, which was signed when Interior Minister Nasserullah Babar visited Cairo in March.

Kurds kill 3 in Turkey

Kurdish guerrillas stopped private vehicles in central Turkey and sprayed the passengers with automatic weapons fire, killing a two-year old child and two women, the Anatolia news agency reported Tuesday. AP reports from Sivas, Turkey.

Chopper crash kills 1 in Kuwait

One US marine died and three others were wounded on Monday when their helicopter crashed while making an emergency landing north of Kuwait City, a United States Navy spokesman said. AFP reports from Kuwait City.

24 snake charmers held in India

Tipped off by animal rights activists, Indian authorities arrested two dozen snake charmers ahead of a Hindu festival celebrating serpents, United News of India (UNI) said on Monday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

Federal prosecutor killed in Mexico

Gunmen killed one of the first federal prosecutors to interrogate the man who assassinated Mexico's leading presidential candidate in 1994, raising more questions about the still-unresolved case, AP reports from Tijuana.

Taiwan to sever ties with Niger

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said it has decided to sever ties with Niger after the West African state renewed diplomatic relations on Monday with China, Reuter reports from Taipei.

Ex-Australian tycoon jailed

Former Australian tycoon Alan Bond was jailed for three years yesterday after being convicted on four art fraud charges, AFP reports from Perth.

Ex-Australian tycoon jailed

The sentence on English-born former multi-millionaire Bond, 58, the man who guided Australia to the America's cup yachting crown in 1983, was imposed Tuesday by judge Antonette Kennedy in the western Australian district court.

Lebed urged to prevent troops from all-out offensive Russian commander vows to oust Chechens from Grozny

MOSCOW, Aug 20: Russia's acting commander in Chechnya, General Konstantin Pulikovskiy, vowed today to oust Chechen rebels from the capital Grozny, reports Reuter.

"Grozny will without fail be cleared of rebel fighters," Pulikovskiy told Interfax news agency.

The commander was speaking after warning the people of Grozny they should leave by Thursday or risk being caught up in an all-out Russian air and ground assault against rebel positions in the city.

His remarks contrasted with the position of Kremlin security supremo Alexander Lebed, who has promoted talks with separatist representatives and opposed the use of aircraft. Rebel fighters occupied much of Grozny on August 6.

"We do not intend to put up with the brazen and barbaric actions of illegal groups who are continuing to shoot down our helicopters, carry out bold acts of sabotage and surround Russian servicemen," Pulikovskiy said.

"I see only methods of force as a way out of the situation in Grozny," he said, adding that both aircraft and heavy artillery would be used. He believed it could take at least a month to overcome the rebels in the city.

Earlier report says: Russia's military commander in Chechnya gave the people of Grozny 48 hours to flee before he unleashes an all-out bombardment against rebels in the city.

But it was not clear what political backing he had in Moscow. Just hours before general Konstantin Pulikovskiy made his threat on Monday, President Boris Yeltsin's personal envoy to Chechnya, Alexander Lebed, poured scorn on the idea of bombing.

And Lebed's deputy was meeting separatist Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov south of Grozny as Russian helicopters flew over the city to drop leaflets containing Pulikovskiy's warning.

In his statement, quoted by Russian news agencies, the general accused the guerrillas, who seized the Chechen capital two weeks ago, of abusing a ceasefire to dig in and maintain an offensive to try to win the 20-month war by force of arms.

"On expiry of this deadline, I maintain my right to use all the forces and means available, including bombers and ground-attack aircraft, and also multiple rocket launchers and artillery to strike at the guerrilla positions," he said.

Pulikovskiy, who met Maskhadov twice last week to arrange the shaky ceasefire that has broadly held for the past few days, said he was sure of the backing of the country's leaders. He was acting, he added, purely in the interests of the state.

There was no word from Moscow, however, presidential officials could not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile Chechen rebel Chief of Staff Aslan Maskhadov appealed today to Russian security supremo Alexander Lebed to prevent federal troops from using force to clear separatist fighters from the capital Grozny.

Interfax news agency quoted Maskhadov as saying that Lebed, president Boris Yeltsin's special envoy in Chechnya, should "use all of his influence to stop the approaching madness."

Syria has tested Scud missiles able to hit targets in Israel

JERUSALEM, Aug 20: Syria has tested a long-range Scud missile able to hit targets in Israeli cities, a television report said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Israel's channel two television, which gave no source for the report, said the Scud-C was tested several weeks ago with the aim of "verifying the Syrian army's ability to perform an operation launch."

An Israeli military spokeswoman said she had no knowledge about any Syrian missile tests.

During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq fired dozens of the Russian-designed Scud missiles at Israel and the Israeli army has warned for years that Syrian Scuds posed a potential danger to military bases and cities throughout the Jewish state.

Channel Two's information coincided with reports in the Israeli media of an impending test launch of the Arrow 2, a US funded Israeli missile designed to intercept and destroy incoming missiles.

The television said Syria's upgraded Scud-C missile has a range of 600 km (373 miles) and could reach targets in Israel's most heavily populated areas.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency, quoting unnamed military sources said last month that North Korea has shipped Scud-C missiles to Syria, Iran and Libya since 1991.

AP adds: In his toughest words for Syria since he was elected Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that any escalation of hostilities in Lebanon will spark "very painful" retaliation.

AFP adds: The Israeli government is prepared to launch an attack on Syria, a Syrian government newspaper claimed today.

"An Israeli attack on Syria cannot be ruled out," said the daily Ath-Thawra, adding that the Israeli government is "ready for such an attack with only the date yet to be fixed."

Janata Dal leader shot dead in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Aug 20: Muslim separatists shot dead a politician Tuesday in Kashmir as the electoral process of the first state assembly polls in nine years to be held next month gained momentum in the Himalayan valley, reports AFP.

Officials identified the slain politician as Mohammad Shafi Khan and said he was a regional leader of the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party), the dominant component in India's coalition United Front government.

Unidentified gunmen pumped bullets into Khan in Kashmir's southern district of Anantnag, the officials said.

The victim was one of Janata Dal's candidates for the elections to the 87-seat Kashmir legislature.

Junta imposes 7-yr prison terms to Suu Kyi's PA

YANGON, Aug 20: Myanmar military government has imposed a seven-year prison sentence on a personal assistant to democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and two other party members, National League for Democracy (NLD) sources said today.

"U win Htsein and two other NLD members were sentenced on August 16 to seven years imprisonment each," an NLD source told Reuters. They were charged for taking part in a video conspiracy fabricating the poor situation of the farmers.

US expels Cuban diplomat in retaliation

WASHINGTON, Aug 20: The United States said on Monday it was kicking out a Cuban diplomat in retaliation for the expulsion of a US diplomat from Cuba who had specialised in promoting human rights, reports Reuter.

The State Department disclosed that Cuba revoked the visa last week of Robin Meyer, accusing her of activities "incompatible with her diplomatic status — diplomatic parlance for spying. We categorically reject that assertion and protest in the strongest terms the Cuban government's action in requiring her to leave," the department said in a statement.

Taliban rockets kill 4 in Kabul

ISLAMABAD, Aug 20: The rebel Taliban Islamic militia fired several rockets at the Afghan capital Kabul overnight and on Monday, killing four people and wounding 19, the official Kabul radio said, reports Reuter.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, said the rockets hit residential areas.

The Taliban has frequently fired rockets and artillery on Kabul since it began a siege of the city in October in its drive to topple President Burhanuddin



US President Bill Clinton attaches a piece of drywall Monday to the Salem Baptist Church in Fruitland, Tennessee. The church, founded in 1872 and destroyed by suspected arson December 30 1995, is being rebuilt by the community. — AFP/UNB photo

Delhi won't stop ongoing missile programme India blasts China for forging military ties with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: India on Monday criticised China for forging military partnerships with Pakistan and vowed not to cap its ongoing programme to build an arsenal of guided missiles, reports AFP.

The Defence Ministry also said a decision last year by the United States Senate to resume supplies of military hardware worth 386 million dollars to Pakistan left India no option but to tone up its own military muscle.

"India has no option left since the passage of the Brown Amendment by the US Congress facilitates the supply of arms, ammunition and spare parts to Pakistan," the ministry said in India's annual defence report, released Monday.

It accused Pakistan of waging a "proxy-war" in Kashmir and said its military support to Muslim guerrillas in the Himalayan state amounted to Islamabad's "encouragement to subversive activities abroad."

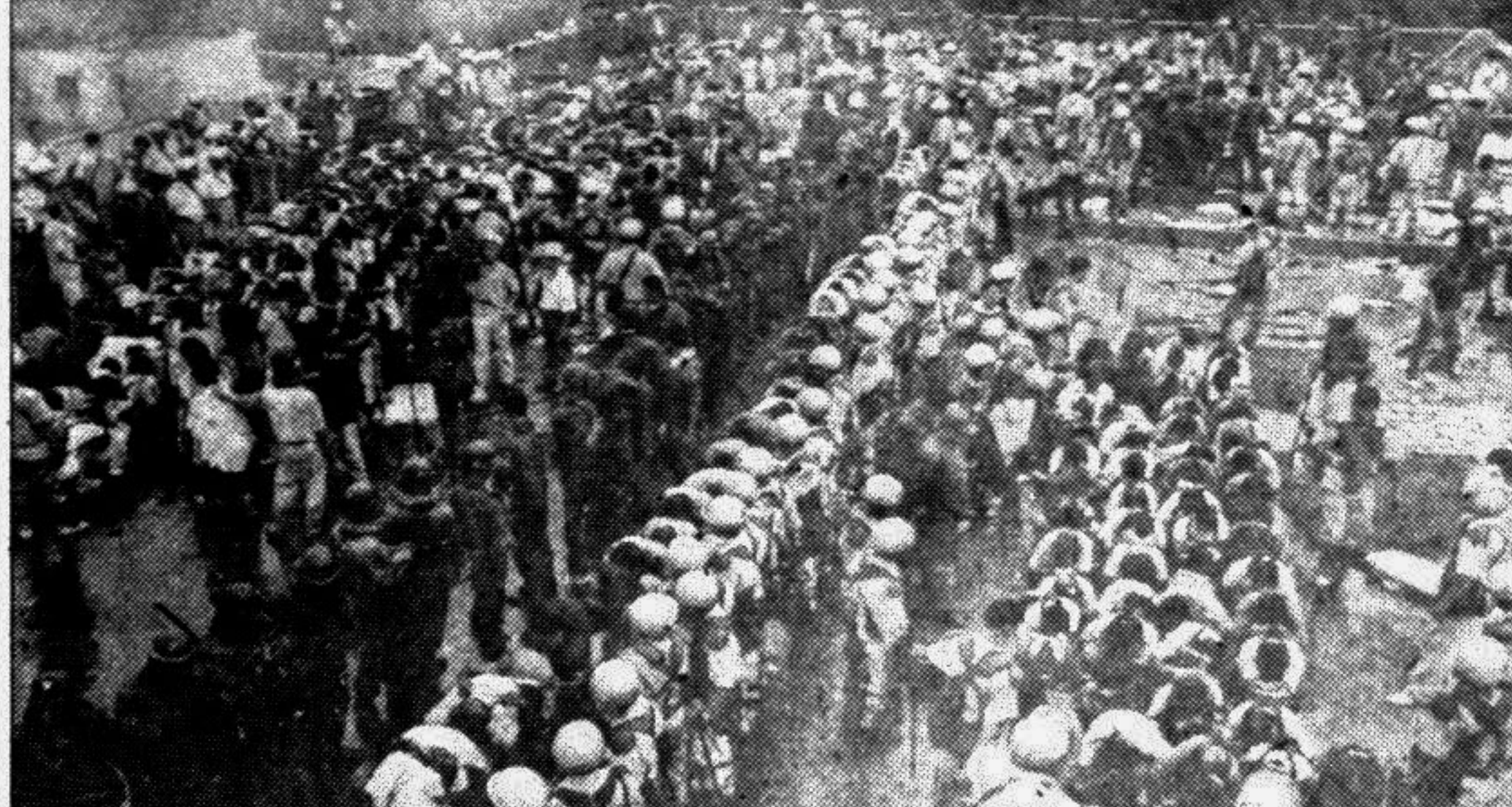
"Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence is directly involved in operational planning and coordination of terrorist activities in the Kashmir valley through foreign mercenaries," the report said.

Pakistan denies arming and training Muslim rebels in Kashmir, where more than 12,000 people have died since 1989 in the secessionist drive, but extends moral and diplomatic support to the guerrillas in the frontier province.

China's continued defence collaboration with Pakistan and its association with Islamabad's nuclear programme, and the acquisition of sophisticated weapon system... has a direct bearing on India's security environment.

India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, has accused Pakistan of trying to build the bomb through a clandestine weapons-oriented nuclear programme.

The ministry report, however, said India's relations with China has marked a "steady and substantial" improvement in recent years.



South Korean riot police arrest student protesters at the roof of a building on Seoul's Yonsei University campus Tuesday morning. South Korean police sent the commandos to arrest the student protesters into one of the buildings yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

Jordanians cite poverty for protests, not politics

AMMAN, Jordan, Aug 20: While Jordan's King Hussein blames Iraq for igniting violent protests over the doubling of bread prices, many of his impoverished subjects say the source of their frustration is empty pocketbooks, not politics, reports AP.

Relations between one-time allies Jordan and Iraq have been spiraling downward for the past year, and Hussein cast Iraq as the villain when angry demonstrations erupted in several southern towns four days ago, then spread to Amman, the capital.

At least 40 people have been injured. Cars, banks and government buildings have been set afire in the worst unrest in the normally peaceful kingdom since disturbances in 1989, also sparked by increases in food prices.

"Certainly, a lot of these elements have connections with Iraq in one way or form," Hussein said during a television

interview. But for Nadia Hussein, 38, a widow trying to feed her large family on about 100 dollars a month, the issue is economic.

"We lived only on bread and tea and now I have no money to even feed bread to my nine children," she said in the southern town of Kerak, site of the worst violence.

The trouble began last week when the pro-Western country more than doubled the price of bread as part of an economic plan supervised by the International Monetary Fund.

A kilogram (two pounds) of bread — a food central to most every meal in Jordan — jumped from the equivalent of 12 US cents to 26 cents.

the budget in many households in a country where the annual per capita income is 1,100 dollars.

"We love and respect the king, but we hope he will heed our demands and reverse the rise in bread prices and dismiss the government," said Mohamed Dmour, a resident of Kerak, 150 kilometres (90 miles) south of Amman. In Kerak's New Bakery, owner Ali Kassarbeh said his sales have fallen 50 per cent in the past week.

"I used to eat three loaves of pita bread, but now I eat only one a day to allow my two sisters and brother to have their share," said 13-year-old Aqeel Mahadeen.

Jordanian officials have offered no proof of direct Iraqi involvement in the protests, though thousands of Iraqi exiles live in the kingdom. They are believed to include agents of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The king has become an increasingly harsh critic of Saddam in the past year, welcoming high ranking Iraqi defectors, raising the prospect of dividing Iraq into a federation and even calling for a change of leadership in Baghdad.

Jordan is much smaller than its neighbour, but it has considerable leverage over Iraq, a country crippled by UN sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The Iraqi-Jordanian border post remains open and is the main gateway for Iraq's imports and exports.

A member of Parliament representing the Jordanian offshoot of Iraq's ruling Baath Party denied any link to the riots.

"Had the government allowed opposition parties to express their views in peaceful protests, these parties would have controlled their elements and the homeland would not have incurred any damages," Khalil Haddadin said.

Off the Record

On the verge of losing title

CARACAS, Miss Universe 1996, Venezuela's Alicia Machado, has snatched her way to within an inch of losing her crown, she admitted to reporters this weekend, reports AFP.

Something akin to treason in this beauty-contest-crazed country, Machado said contest organisers had threatened to strip her for her title if she did not swiftly shed 12 newly acquired kilos (25 pounds).

One of her assistants indiscreetly told the press she just could not say no to pasta sweets and ice cream.

In a cruel, spike-heeled world, first runner up Miss Aruba Taryn Mansell, is waiting in the wings.



CIA's 'too secret' gift for Clinton

FRUITLAND, Tennessee: The usually sober CIA couldn't resist pulling a birthday gag on President Clinton, reports AP.

The agency put together a fictitious national intelligence summary Monday in honour of Clinton's 50th birthday.

The summary, stamped "Too Secret" rather than "Top Secret," included a list of world leaders and their ages and an account of the Kremlin going on alert after officials in Moscow detected "an unusual heat source" in midtown Manhattan, said White House spokesman Mike McCurry.

"They dropped their alert when they realised it was a huge birthday cake with candles," McCurry said. The president "really enjoyed it."

Clinton, here to help rebuild a church that was destroyed by fire, celebrated his birthday Sunday night in New York's Radio City Music Hall. He and his daughter blew out candles on a large birthday cake.

Holy beatings beat her to death

BANGKOK: An exorcist beat a mother of two to death after she refused to pay a bill for ritualistic beatings, The Nation newspaper reported Sunday, reports AP.

Sommai Chaipanya, 38, died from ritualistic beatings to her head and genitals with a dried stingray tail, the paper said.

Sommai had at first agreed to the beatings, which her family had suggested as a way to get rid of evil spirits. But she later fled them and refused to pay a 160 dollars fee.

The female shaman they allegedly, abducted her and continued the ritual until Sommai died.

Police arrested Tip Dongsaengkawee, 57, and charged her with murder.

The killing took place in Udorn Thani, 470 kilometres (292 miles) from Bangkok in the poor, underdeveloped northeastern part of the country.

Police raid ends bloody campus protests in ROK

SEOUL, South Korea, Aug 20: Hurling tear gas and swinging batons, thousands of police stormed a campus stronghold of militant students Tuesday, smashing through burning barricades and ending nine days of bloody protest over South Korea's unification policies, reports AP.

Within two hours of the dawn raid, riot police had taken control of the Yonsei University building and hauled away an estimated 1,800 students. Most of the youngsters were exhausted after withstanding four days of siege with little sleep, food or water.

Another 2,000 students held up at the university's nearby science building took advantage of the melee and slipped away while the raid was going on. Police caught up with and arrested about 1,000 of them, Yonhap TV reported.

Those who were captured or fled were the last of some 7,000 students who began the confrontation with police on August 12, when they gathered at the university for an outlawed rally branded by the government as pro-North Korean.

Yonhap TV, quoting police officials, said about two dozen students and police were injured in the raid. One police officer was in serious condition with head injuries, it said.

The raid came hours after students had rejected a government appeal for surrender in exchange for leniency. Students vowed to keep fighting until their safe return home was guaranteed.

Delay in paying \$ 1.5b to UN US damaging its own interests: Experts

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 20: Washington's delay in paying 1.5 billion dollars it owes the United Nations is harming U.S. interests and can undermine efforts to reform the world body, an independent US task force said in a report released Monday, reports AP.

The report, sponsored by the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, was prepared by a group of experts from across the US political spectrum.

"We are damaging our own interests," said George Soros, the billionaire financier who chaired the study.

The United Nations serves US interests and the UN is in crisis to a considerable extent because of the animosity toward the UN, and the non-payment of the dues by the United States.

Republicans in Congress have been harshly critical of the United Nations and the report is an examination of the organisation's usefulness to Washington.

"The United Nations has served US interests well when US presidents had a clear and firm position," the report said.

But "when the United States had unrealistic objectives or sought to hide its indecision by turning the problem over to the United Nations, the results were often disastrous," the report said.

For example, the Security Council imposed sanctions against Iraq after Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and later backed the US-led Gulf War.

In contrast when member states, including the United States, sought to hide their own indecision about what to do in the former Yugoslavia, the results were unacceptable.