

11 NLD members jailed for seven years

BANGKOK, Aug 21. At least 11 members of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) have been handed seven-year jail terms by Myanmar's Military authorities, an NLD source said today.

The NLD members, who were detained in May ahead of a key pro-democracy meeting, were jailed along with Win H Tein, a close aide to Aung San Suu Kyi around August 15. The NLD source told AFP by telephone from Yangon.

Five of them including Win H Tein, were sentenced to seven years because they took video tape of fields which were dry and had nothing growing on them, the NLD source said.

Win H Tein had acted as a liaison officer for Aung San Suu Kyi since the pro-democracy leader's release from 1995 of house arrest in July 1995.

Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD have repeatedly accused the Myanmar junta of artificially

boosting production figures for agriculture, and contended conditions in the countryside are not as rosy as portrayed by the authorities.

Agriculture, which accounts for almost half of Myanmar's gross national product (GNP), has been the centrepiece of the country's drive for development.

The NLD source said that those sentenced included Yangon-based NLD members Po Aye and his son Maung Htein Lin, and two farmers from Irrawaddy division outside the capital, Kan Shein and Ko Hla Tun Aung.

The NLD source said the identities of the other six detainees had yet to be determined and that it was not clear on what charges they had been convicted.

He also added that the NLD had heard an as yet unconfirmed report that one more party member was currently facing trial.

BRIEFLY

ROK to raise defence budget by 12 pc:

President Kim Young-sam called Wednesday for a 12 per cent increase in South Korea's defence budget for 1997 the highest in five years, AP reports from Seoul.

Kim's call reflects South Korea's concern over military threats from rival North Korea. Despite its economic problems, the North's communist government is known to spend the bulk of its government budget on the military. Kim's office said the proposed 12 per cent increase, the highest since 1992, will set next year's military spending at 14.26 trillion won (17.6 billion dollars) up from this year's 15.7 billion dollars.

Japanese FM in Egypt:

Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda arrived in Egypt yesterday on the first leg of a regional tour during which he is expected to call for an early resumption of Middle East peace talks, the official news agency Mena said, AFP reports from Cairo.

Ikeda, who will also be visiting Syria, Jordan, Israel and the Gaza Strip, will seek to promote Japan's role in revitalising the peace process, Foreign Ministry officials in Tokyo said.

Gas blast kills 4 in Moscow:

Four people were killed and three injured when a pressurised container of natural gas exploded in a Moscow apartment on Wednesday morning, AP reports from Moscow.

One of the injured remained hospitalised after the blast in eastern Moscow, the Interfax agency reported, citing the Russian Emergency Situation Ministry. No other details were immediately available.

2 Haitian politicians shot dead:

Gunmen killed two conservative politicians in a drive-by shooting, raising fears of open warfare between the country's right and left political parties, AP reports from Port-Au-Prince.

Three men in an all-terrain vehicle shot Antoine Leroy and Jacques Florival outside Florival's Port-au-Prince home Tuesday, Radio Metropole said. Both men belonged to the far-right Mobilisation for National Development party. A warning broadcast Tuesday on Radio Signal FM from a right-wing terrorist leader indicated Haiti could be subjected to fit-for-attack between political parties.

"When the trumpet sounds, stay home. This is a match of big shots against big shots," said Franck Pierre, leader of the Capois La Mort militia.

German tourist held in Manila:

Intelligence agents arrested a German tourist for allegedly sexually molesting Filipino boys after luring them inside a gym he had built in a province north of Manila, investigators said Wednesday, AP reports from Manila.

Konrad Heinrich Jecht, a 63-year-old engineer from Munich, was arrested late Tuesday in Obando town in Bulacan province, said Amante Magpali, chief of the special investigation section of the National Bureau of Investigation. Magpali said police raiders surprised Jecht who was with a nude 17-year-old boy inside a room in the gym.

Dole narrows gap with Clinton:

Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole has narrowed the gap with President Bill Clinton to eleven points in voter intentions, according to a New York Times-CBS poll released Tuesday, AFP reports from Washington.

According to the survey taken after last week's Republican national Convention in San Diego, California, 50 per cent of those polled said they would vote for Clinton against 39 per cent for Dole.

Pak police raid Shi'ite Muslim HQs, 2 held

KARACHI, Aug 21: Police raided the headquarters of a Shi'ite Muslim group in this southern port city early Wednesday morning arresting two people and curbing Pakistani militant Shi'ite leadership, reports AP.

The raid followed recent sectarian violence that has left 30 people dead in Karachi and central Punjab province.

"The government is targeting us," said Zafar Naqvi, the vice-president of Tehrik-e-Jafraia or Shi'ite Movement whose headquarters was raided in the early morning hours Wednesday.

Naqvi has called a three days of protest demonstrations to begin on Friday, a potentially explosive call.

The latest round of sectarian violence between militants belonging to Shi'ite and Sunni Muslim groups erupted August 14 after several months of relative calm.

On August 14 gunmen fired on a group of Sunni Muslim worshippers in Karachi preparing

to take out an Independence Day procession. Twelve people were killed and dozens more injured.

The dead all belonged to the militant Sipah-e-Sahaba or Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet. The organisation blamed Naqvi's group and demanded the arrest of their leaders.

Within two days a Shi'ite Muslim funeral prayer in the central Punjab province was attacked by at least six gunmen who killed 15 people. Witnesses said three of the gunmen were wounded.

A previously unknown Sunni group called the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi took responsibility for the killings. The group members are followers of a Sunni leader killed three years ago in Pakistan also in sectarian violence.

Most of Pakistan's 140 million people are Sunni Muslims who get along with the Shi'ite Muslim minority.

The feud has been among the militant wings of both sects

Troops seize huge explosives in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Troops seized 1,470 kilos (3,234 pounds) of explosives in a raid on Muslim rebels in Srinagar, summer capital of the troubled Indian-ruled state of Kashmir, the United News of India said today, reports AFP.

A defence spokesman told UNI in Srinagar that two people had been arrested after the raid late Tuesday on a rebel hide-out near the city's high-security army cantonment.

"It is a major achievement," he said. "There was enough explosive material to make 87 powerful improvised explosive devices which could cause widespread damage to life and property."

Future of N-test ban treaty uncertain

India's political parties back govt stand on CTBT

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Indian political parties threw their support behind the government on Tuesday in firmly repudiating a draft nuclear test ban treaty, reports Reuters.

The parties put up a united front to denounce the pact after India prevented the accord from being adopted by disarmament negotiators in Geneva.

Jaipal Reddy, spokesman for Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's 13-party governing coalition, told Reuters television: "India cannot be privy to this highly discriminating treaty."

In Geneva, Indian ambassador Arundhati Ghose told the conference on disarmament that the draft treaty would not

halt efforts by nuclear weapons powers to perfect their arsenals using non-explosives techniques like computer simulation.

Ghose said the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) did not promote the realisation of "universal disarmament goals."

K L Sharma, spokesman for the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said: "All parties in the country are united on this issue, that our country should not sign the CTBT."

During the 21 and half years of negotiations, India has demanded that the CTBT commit the five declared nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Rus-

sia and the United States — to a disarmament timetable. The nuclear powers have resisted.

Reddy said the treaty represented the views of the five nuclear powers. "They never care to address themselves with the security concerns of India because India is not a nuclear weapon state," he said.

New Delhi was further angered when the draft text demanded that India be among those that signed up to the treaty before it could enter into the force.

India, along with Pakistan and Israel, is one of three nuclear threshold states that have the capability to swiftly build nuclear weapons. New

Delhi exploded a nuclear device in 1974 but has not undertaken any nuclear tests since then.

Ghose said the government's views were "shared across the Indian political spectrum."

In Geneva, U.S. disarmament ambassador Stephen Ledogar said the real reason India had blocked the CTBT was because "New Delhi wants to maintain the Indian nuclear weapon option."

Shortly after taking power in June, Deve Gowda's United Front coalition reiterated it would retain the option to build nuclear weapons until universal disarmament was realised.

The government has clearly said it will not foreclose the nuclear option. It is linked to our security," an official in New Delhi said when asked to comment on Ledogar's views.

But the official, who asked not to be identified, said the main reason India blocked the CTBT was nuclear disarmament has to be total and comprehensive and has to be in a timeframe.

Like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which was indefinitely extended last year, the CTBT is widely viewed in India as a discriminatory agreement that would divide the world into nuclear "haves and have nots."

AP add: India's formal rejection of a global nuclear test ban treaty has left its future uncertain at the end of 2 and half years of international negotiations.

Diplomats worked Tuesday to salvage the pact despite the failure to achieve vitally needed consensus, preparing plans to present the accord for signing by world leaders in September.

But India's balking endangered the prospect of a binding worldwide moratorium on nuclear tests. Negotiators fear India's refusal to approve the treaty could keep two of its neighbours China and Pakistan from ratifying the accord after its signing.



India's representative at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Arundhati Ghose, speaks Tuesday as she formally vetoes a draft treaty banning nuclear testing, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, in a move that threatens to torpedo 31 months of arduous talks aimed at halting the development of nuclear weapons. — AFP/UNB photo

Terror grips Grozny in face of Russian threat

GROZNY, Russia, Aug 21: Terror has gripped Grozny in the face of a threatened Russian bombardment to drive out rebels who humiliated Moscow by seizing the Chechen capital, reports Reuters.

Russian security supremo Alexander Lebed, instructed to restore order in the city overrun by rebels after a raid on August 6, planned to visit the region on Wednesday in an apparent last-ditch attempt to avert further bloodshed.

With President Boris Yeltsin holidaying hundreds of km (miles) northwest of Moscow in the Valdai Lakeland, Lebed's policy-making security council fuelled speculation on who was running Russia by expressing doubt that the President was directly involved in finalising his

last order on Chechnya.

But Yeltsin's office, already busy denying a new rash of rumours about Yeltsin's health focused on his heart problems, also insisted that the order was fully in line with the President's wishes.

Tens of thousands of people have fled Grozny to beat the August 22 deadline, when Russian commander Konstantin Pulikovskiy says he will use warplanes and heavy artillery to clear rebels from the capital of the mostly-Muslim southern region.

Russian forces have been trying to stop the separatists, independence bid since December 1994 in fighting which has killed more than 30,000 people mostly civilians.

Liberals have called on

Yeltsin to avert the threatened attack, which Yelena Bonner, widow of former Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, said would be a "crime against humanity."

About half Grozny's population of 400,000 is estimated to have either fled or died since Yeltsin sent his forces in.

Much of the city was destroyed at the start of 1995 as federal forces bombed the rebels out of Grozny.

Another Reuters report from Washington adds: The United States on Tuesday condemned a threat by a Russian General to use aircraft and heavy artillery to drive separatist forces from the Chechen capital Grozny, and said force could not solve the problem.



US President Bill Clinton (Centre) Holds four-year-old Charles Duval on his lap while Vice President Al Gore (R) speaks with workers after signing into law a bill to increase the minimum wage during ceremonies on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington Tuesday. The bill will boost the wage, paid typically to unskilled workers, by 50 cents to 4.75 USD on October 1, 1996 and by 40 cents to 5.15 USD on September 1, 1997. — AFP/UNB photo

35 die by drinking poisoned liquor in China

BEIJING, Aug 21: Thirty-five people died and 192 were poisoned in southwestern China after drinking liquor spiked with industrial alcohol, the official China Youth Daily reported Wednesday, reports AP.

Li Rongping, resident of Huize County, found in mid-May he could make more money selling a mixture of drinkable methyl alcohol and poisonous methyl alcohol, which sells for about a third of the price.

After he tested a batch of, booze on a worker without obvious harmful effects, Li used 1,300 liters (340 gallons) of methyl alcohol and mixed it with 1,600 (420 gallons) liters of methyl alcohol to make 7 tons of liquor, the newspaper said.

Sensing that there might be trouble, Li and his wife, Jiang Hongmei, skipped town for a trip just as the first bottles went on sale in the county, China Youth Daily said.

Beijing sinking by 10mm to 20 mm a year

BEIJING, Aug 21: China's capital, Beijing, is sinking by 10 mm to 20 mm (0.39 in to 0.79 in) a year because of excessive groundwater use, the Xinhua News Agency said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Over the past 40 years, the ground has sunk by more than 700 mm (27.6 in) in the city's eastern suburbs and by 600 mm (23.6 in) in the northeastern suburbs, damaging buildings and underground pipelines, Xinhua said. The rate at which it is sinking has increased since 1987, the agency said.

The subsidence is mainly caused by excessive groundwater use," Xinhua quoted Hong Libo, Chief Engineer of the Beijing Institute of Surveying and Map Design Research, as saying.

Hong attributed the increased groundwater use to rising industrial extraction and water consumption caused by the city's growing population, the agency said.

Major hunt in northern Sri Lanka

Security forces round up 600 Tamil men, women

COLOMBO, Aug 21: Security forces rounded up some 600 Tamil men and women in a major search operation in northern Sri Lanka where Tamil Tiger infiltrators had staged hit-and-run attacks, officials said today, reports AFP.

The eight-hour cordon-and-search operation was conducted Tuesday in the town of Kokuvil in the Jaffna peninsula, despite sporadic attacks on army checkpoints by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), officials said.

Only one person had been detained and all the others have been released after establishing their identities, a military spokesman here said. Tigers fired at roadblocks during the search and one child and two men were wounded.

Security forces captured the Jaffna peninsula from the Tigers after a series of military operations begun in October. The army says it suspects the

Tigers still have between 200 to 300 cadres hiding in the region. A Tiger suicide bomber staged an attack against a minister visiting Jaffna last month. Housing Minister Nimal Siripala De Silva escaped with minor injuries but 37 others were killed in the attack.

In the northeast of the country, the Tigers shot dead a police constable in the district of Trincomalee Wednesday and carried out a mortar bomb attack against a police post, wounding three constables, officials said.

Meanwhile, about 200,000 civilians who fled fighting between Tamil rebels and Sri Lankan forces desperately need food, water and shelter, a relief agency said Wednesday.

Gordon Molitor, CARE's director in Sri Lanka, praised the army and the separatists for allowing some food to be delivered to displaced people in the north's war zone.

Police question 3,500 students Kim declares war on campus activists

SEOUL, Aug 21: South Korean President Kim Young-Sam declared war on radical campus activists today, accusing them of being pro-Pyongyang, as police questioned some 3,500 students detained for violent protests, reports AFP.

"I will not tolerate pro-North Korean and violent student groups advocating communism," Kim told a meeting of college deans and university presidents.

It was the strongest warning issued by Kim, a former dissident who took office in early 1993, toward South Korean radical students affiliated with the Federation of Student Councils.

Kim branded the federation "anti-unification, anti-democratic and anti-state."

"Their line is identical with North Korea," he said. "Their action is not considered pure campus activism but must be condemned as a violent revolutionary pro-North Korean guerrilla operation. Such pro-North

Korean violence will be sternly punished.

The tough warning came one day after riot police, backed by helicopters and an anti-terrorist squad, detained some 3,500 student activists in a raid into campus buildings of Seoul's prestigious Yonsei University.

The raid ended a violent nine-day stand-off which left hundreds of police and students injured.

Tuesday's arrest brought to 5,600 the number rounded up since the stand-off started last Monday, the highest number ever arrested over a single incident in South Korea's turbulent history.

Today prosecutors pledged heavy punishment against some of the students detained in Seoul's 30 police stations.

This students called for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea and the repeal of the nation security law, a draconian legislation, banning contacts with the North.

Off the Record

An over conscious bird lover

SYDNEY: Australia: A bird lover has filed a 250,000 dollar (192,000 US dollars) lawsuit against a veterinarian for ruining the sex life of his favourite parrot, reports AP.

Roger Schulp told the New South Wales District Court that he took his blue and gold South American macaw named Nelson to veterinarian Ross Perry with a broken right leg in 1994.

He alleges that Perry somehow broke the bird's other leg during treatment and then failed to fix either properly.

Schulp claims strong legs are essential for the macaws' intricate mating ritual and he now has no chance of breeding and selling offspring.

Bionic 'ear' for deaf people

WASHINGTON: A bionic 'ear' that could allow millions of deaf people to hear has won the approval of the US food drug administration, its maker announced on Tuesday, reports AFP. Advanced Bionics Corp, says the "clarion" is an implant device that combines computer technology and electronic circuitry to transmit electrical signals to the auditory nerve, which are then interpreted as speech by the brain.



A Lebanese villager carries an Israeli unexploded bomb which fell in his tobacco plantation in the village of Zibqine on Tuesday. — AFP/UNB photo

Newspaper alleges CIA's link with drug-traffickers

SAN JOSE, California, Aug 21: Throughout the 1980s, a San Francisco Bay area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to Los Angeles street gangs and funneled the profits to some of the CIA-run Contra in Nicaragua, a newspaper reported, reports AP.

Repeated attempts to prosecute the ring's kingpin were thwarted by the CIA, possibly to cover up ties between the traffickers and Contra leaders, the San Jose Mercury News reported in a series of articles after a year-long investigation.

The newspaper report, based on recently declassified federal reports, court testimony and interviews, also alleges that the drug network was partially responsible for the ongoing "crack" problem in Los Angeles. The money pipeline was created after the CIA combined

several armies to create the 5,000-member anti-communist FDN Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense (Nicaraguan Democratic Force) in mid-1981, the newspaper reported.

The same year, the drug ring sold almost a ton of cocaine to the Crips and Bloods, notorious Los Angeles gangs, for 54 million dollars former FDN leader and government informant Oscar Danilo Blandon Reyes said.

"There is a saying that the ends justify the means," Blandon testified in 1994. "So we started raising money for the Contra revolution."

The Mercury News identified the primary buyer as Ricky Donnell Ross, or "Freeway Rick," a notorious South-Central Los Angeles dealer who bought powder cocaine, turned it into crack and sold it whole-

sale throughout the city and the United States.

Blandon spent 28 months in U.S. prison for dealing drugs, the Mercury News said. He was released from prison in 1994 to become a full-time informant for the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, a job which has since paid him more than 166,000 dollars.

How much of the drug ring's profits went to the FDN before it disbanded in 1988 still is unclear. But in his testimony, Blandon said, "whatever we were running in L.A., the profit was going to the Contra revolution."

Blandon's boss, Juan Norwin Meneses Cantarero, was a major drug dealer and smuggler who ran the FDN operation out of his homes in Northern California, the paper reported.

Although records show that the US government was aware of Meneses' dealings since 1974, the Mercury News reported that he has never been in a U.S. prison. Meneses currently is serving time in Nicaragua after being arrested in connection with a 750-kilo shipment of cocaine.

Federal prosecutors blame the CIA and other federal departments for Meneses, relatively sweet treatment in the U.S., the Mercury News said.

"The Justice Department flipped out to prevent us from getting access to people, records — anything that would help us find out about it," said Jack Blum, former chief counsel to the Senate subcommittee that investigated alleged cocaine trafficking to the Contras. "It was one of the most frustrating

exercises that I can ever recall."

Agents from four other agencies, including the DEA, U.S. Customs the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement also have complained that the CIA hampered investigations, the Mercury News reported.

The reason might well be Meneses' own connections to the CIA, the Mercury News said. One piece of evidence — a picture taken in June 1984 — shows Meneses with Adolfo Calero, a longtime CIA operative and FDN political boss.

But efforts to trace the government's knowledge of the drug ring have similarly been thwarted, the newspaper reported. Freedom of Information Act

requests that reporters filed with the CIA and DEA have been denied on national security and privacy grounds. A FOIA request filed with the FBI has so far been ignored, the Mercury News reported.

While Blandon has never said he was selling cocaine for the CIA, his lawyer, Los Angeles defense attorney Bradley Brunon, said he has drawn his own conclusions from the CIA's clandestine behaviour.

"Was (Blandon) involved with the CIA? Probably. Was he involved with drugs? Most definitely," Brunon said. "Were those two things involved with each other? They've never said that, obviously. They've never admitted that. But I don't know where these guys get these big aircraft."

Court won't issue non-bailable warrant to Phoolan

KANPUR, Aug 21: The special judge for anti-dacoity cases, S K Srivastava here today refused to issue non-bailable warrants to the Samajwadi Party MP, Phoolan Devi in connection with the Behmai massacre case, reports PTI.

The judge observed that Phoolan Devi had filed a petition in the Allahabad High Court which is still pending for disposal before the court. Therefore no order could be passed in the case.

The judge, however, issued non-bailable warrants against 5 other persons in the case. Twenty people belonging to a particular community were massacred in 1982 by the Phoolan Devi gang in Behmai.