

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 six years 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 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 tit-for-tat attacks 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 Heirich 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, AP 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 capturing Pakistan's 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-Jafra 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 prepar-

ing 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 feuding 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."

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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 \$4 million, dirs former FDN leader and government informant Oscar Blandon 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-

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 Reuter.

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 from 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, Russia 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

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