

International

Egypt, Algeria for jt move to provide asylum to Islamic activists

TUNIS, Jan 5: Egypt and Algeria called here Sunday for "joint action" by Arab nations to put pressure on countries providing asylum to Islamic activists, reports AFP.

The call was made in speeches by Egyptian Interior Minister Habib el-Adili and by his Algerian counterpart Mustapha ben Mansour, to a meeting of Arab ministers on terrorism and security.

"We are hoping for a joint Arab action in the direction of countries harbouring terrorist leaders to persuade them to co-operate seriously and efficiently in the extradition of these rebel elements," Adili said, according to a copy of his speech distributed to the press.

He emphasised the need for Arabs to adopt "a firm and decisive" position to thwart the actions of "the forces of evil and of terrorism."

"What can our police forces and security systems do in the

face of groups who conspire from a far and enjoy safe havens and obvious protection in countries which grant them asylum and freedom?" Adili said.

"Whatever efforts Arab countries make to eradicate terrorism they will be vain if the phenomenon continues to come from the outside," he said.

Cairo bitterly criticised the asylum granted by some western countries, in particular Britain, to Egyptian Islamic activists, particularly after the attack which left 62 dead including 58 tourists on November 17 at Luxor in upper Egypt.

The meeting grouped interior ministers from 21 Arab member countries of the Arab League and the Palestinian Authority and is to adopt a common accord on anti-terrorist measures.

The meeting, the 15th of its kind, is due to last three days.

Migrants to Australia creating thousands of jobs, bringing dollars into local economy

SYDNEY, Jan 5: Business people migrating to Australia are creating thousands of jobs and bringing more than half a million Australian dollars each into the local economy, the government said today, reports AFP.

According to a government survey, almost four of every five people classified as business skills migrants had established businesses in Australia within three years of their arrival.

On average, each of the businesses started by the largely Asian migrants created six new jobs for a total of 3,600 new jobs, said immigration minister Philip Ruddock.

Ruddock said that disproved claims that immigrants hurt Australia and that the survey proved immigrants provided a great benefit to the economy.

You can see that it has a very

positive spin-off for people who are interested in employment outcomes for people who are interested in seeing our economy grow, for people who are interested in seeing us being more export oriented," he said.

Australia's image has suffered in Asia recently, largely because of the loud anti-Asian stance of independent MP Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. Hanson, a former fish and chips shop owner from the state of Queensland, has called for an end to immigration.

Australia is also conscious of its image in the region. Over the weekend, media reports that many Asians saw Australians as lazy and uncouth drew a quick rebuke from the government which pointed to rising Asian migration and tourism figures to counter the claims.

2nd trial of Bosnian war crimes suspects begins today

THE HAGUE Jan 5: The UN tribunal judging war crimes suspects from the Bosnian conflict begins its second trial this week when a former officer of the Bosnian Croat HVO militia comes before the court on Tuesday, reports AP.

Zlatko Aleksovski, 37, is accused of mistreating Muslim prisoners held at a detention camp in central Bosnia in 1993 during Muslim Croat fighting at the height of the three and a half year war.

He is the first member of the HVO to face the UN criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia set up in 1993 to try those accused of crimes against humanity and genocide in Bosnia.

The first trial at The Hague was of Dusan Tadic, a Bosnian Serb soldier found guilty of atrocities in northern Bosnia and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Another soldier in the Bosnian Serb army Drazen Erdemovic was given a 10 year sentence after admitting being in an execution squad that killed dozens of Muslim in 1995.

Aleksovski was extradited to The Hague in July after being arrested by Croatian police earlier in the year.

He pleaded not guilty to charges that he mistreated prisoners held in the Lasva Valley during 1993 when HVO forces expelled thousands of Muslims from their homes in a bloody blitz on villages and towns in the area that saw hundreds killed.

BRIEFLY

Iran slates Jordanian plan: Iran condemned as "unacceptable" Sunday Jordanian plans to take part as an observer in a joint exercise between Israel, Turkey and the United States planned for later this week, AFP says from Tehran.

"Participation of Jordan as an observer to the war game which has brought about opposition of all Muslim nations is an unwelcome measure to the world of Islam," foreign ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi told the official news agency IRNA. "From the viewpoint of the Islamic Republic of Iran it is unacceptable," he said.

3 killed in Peru violence: Three people including the widow and daughter for a former Peruvian legislator died early Sunday when attackers sprayed their car with automatic weapons, police said. AFP reports from Lima.

The ambush in one of capital's exclusive residential neighbourhoods also left one policeman dead and injured the daughter of another legislator, they said. Witnesses said four heavily armed people opened fire, instantly killing 10-year-old Melissa Paredes, her mother Nora Ruiz De Paredes was taken to a nearby clinic and pronounced dead there.

Italian film director dead: Italian film director Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia who was noted for his comedies and epic costume dramas died Sunday, aged 103, his family said, AFP reports from Rome.

Bragaglia had been taken into hospital nearly three weeks ago for an operation on his leg after a fall. He began his career in the 1930s making more than 60 films before retiring in the 1960s. Hannibal, his 1959 film with Edgar George Ulmer, was considered one of his best.

5 die as ferry sinks in HK: Five people died and another 20 are missing presumed dead, after a ferry carrying guests home from a wedding banquet sank in a river in southeast China's Fujian province, reports said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Authorities are seeking the boat owner who fled following the sinking of the ferry in Minjiang river on Saturday. The Tin Daily news said. The ferry was believed to be unregistered and with capacity for only 15 passengers.

4 killed in Tajik train mishap: Four people were killed and 15 were wounded Monday when a passenger train went off its rails in Tajikistan, officials said, AP says from Moscow.

The accident in northern Tajikistan — a former Soviet republic in Central Asia — involved a train traveling between the towns of Andizhan and Urgench, the Tajik Emergency Situations Committee reported, according to the Interfax news agency.

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan sign deals: The Presidents of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed a series of cooperation agreements on Sunday as part of a one-day visit to Tashkent by Tajik leader Emomali Rakhmanov. Interfax reported, AP says from Moscow.

The accords covered joint action in the fields of health, culture, humanitarian assistance, science, technology and information. Rakhmanov and his host Islam Karimov also signed an inter-governmental accord on mutual debt settlement Interfax said.

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Laloo to lead new 5-party alliance 'Secular Front' to be set up to stop BJP's victory

A new alliance of centrist Indian political parties is to be set up here in a bid to stop Hindu nationalists from winning upcoming elections, a party official said, reports AFP.

Five parties, whose influence is limited to the country's north, east and west, will announce a "Secular Front" and field joint candidates in the February-March polls, said spokesman Ranjan Yadav.

The front will be the fourth significant bloc in the ballot, which analysts expect to produce a hung parliament.

Although badly fragmented among themselves, the three blocs challenging the BJP are bitterly opposed to the nationalist agenda, which they say is sectarian.

beginning February 16 an ending March 7.

They are already being challenged by the once-dominant Congress, the country's oldest party, and the outgoing centre-left United Front coalition government, made up of more than a dozen disparate parties.

Ranjan Yadav told AFP the new alliance — which is likely to be in the running for around 150 of India's 545 parliamentary seats — would look to forge links with the Congress, which like the BJP is looking for pre-poll alliances nationwide.

Although badly fragmented among themselves, the three blocs challenging the BJP are bitterly opposed to the nationalist agenda, which they say is sectarian.

The main leaders of the proposed "Secular Front" will be Laloo Prasad Yadav, a popular but corruption-tainted politician who broke away from Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's United Front last year, and Kashi Ram, who heads a party of Hindu "untouchables."

The alliance also includes Chandra Shekhar, India's prime minister from November 1990 to June 1991, and a breakaway faction of Hindu nationalists.

"We are coming together to prevent Hindu communal forces from coming to power," Ranjan Yadav said. "Our number one enemy is BJP."

"We consider the Congress as a secular party, and naturally our sympathies lie with that

party. We will try our best to forge an electoral understanding with the Congress."

Some recent opinion polls have predicted a clear victory for the BJP and its growing allies.

Yadav, however, ridiculed the

BJP myth as a creation of a section of the media.

"This is the usual propaganda tactic the BJP employs during every election."

In 1996, the BJP claimed 162 seats and won the support of around 30 allies, still leaving it well short of the 273 members needed for an majority. The Congress won around 140 seats, while the United Front commanded 180.

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