

## International

# Police arrest 300 Sunni Muslims in Lahore

LAHORE, Jan 13: Police swept through Sunni Muslim mosques, offices and religious schools, arresting hundreds of people in connection with the weekend massacre of 28 Shi'ite Muslims, police said Tuesday.

They said the decision was made at a Cabinet meeting convened by King Fahd on Monday night.

The cabinet has decided that foreigners who want to marry Saudis must produce a medical certificate proving they do not carry any genetic, infectious or other serious diseases or the HIV Virus," the Arab News said.

Saudi Arabian nationals are only allowed to marry fellow Muslims under the strict Sharia laws applied in the kingdom.

Saudi women need government permission to marry foreigners, apart from fellow Gulf Arabs.

## Dozens of Hamas members held

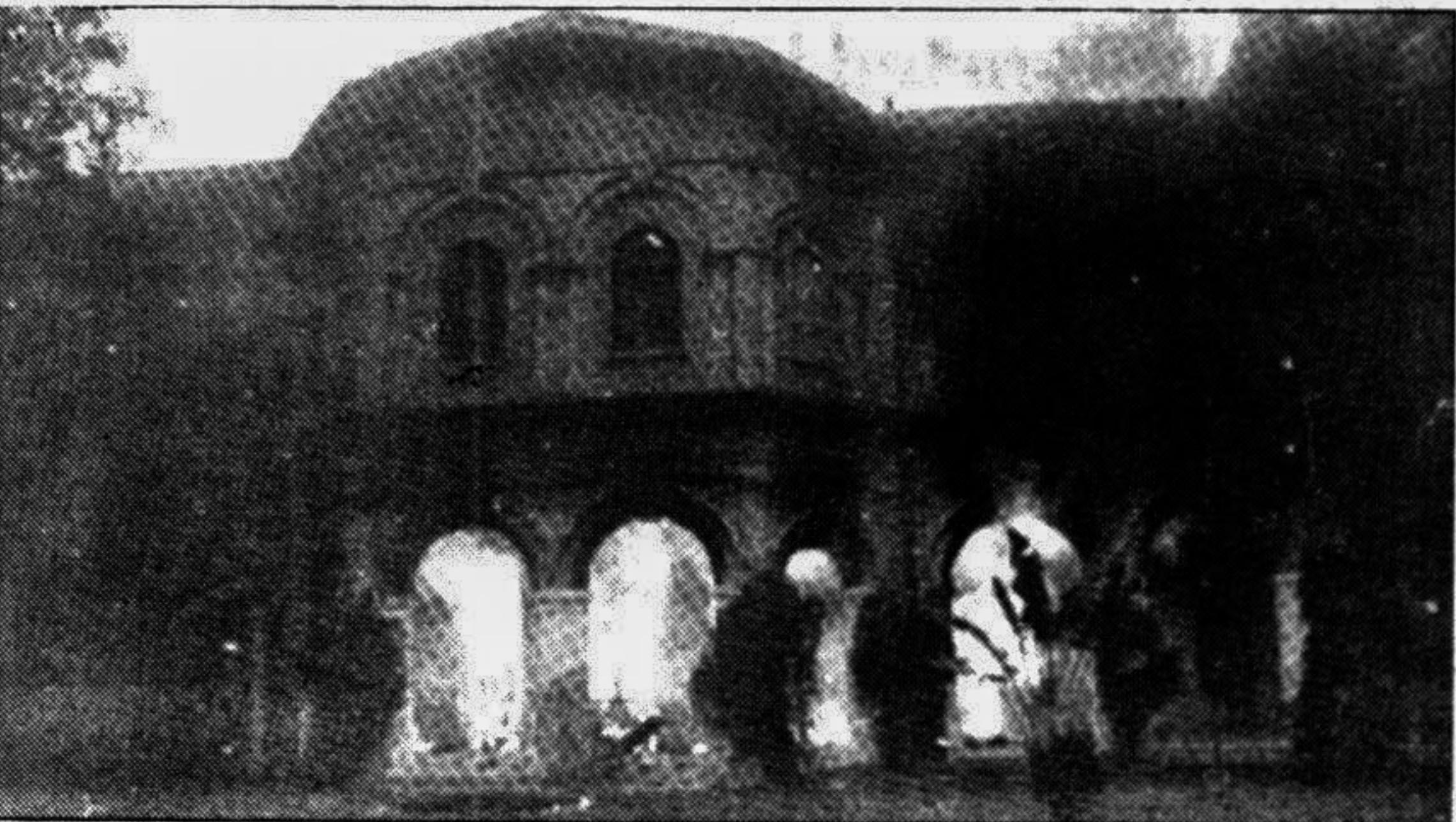
JERUSALEM, Jan 13: Israeli and Palestinian security forces have arrested dozens of Hamas members who planned anti-Israeli attacks in the West Bank and Israel, and Israeli army spokesman said today, reports AFP.

Acting on a tip from Israeli intelligence, army and police, Palestinian police recently uncovered a large amount of explosive material at a Hamas bomb-making factory in the West Bank town of Nablus and arrested several activists there, the army spokesman said.

The dozens of Palestinians arrested in Israeli and Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank are members of several different cells of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, he added.

Members of the cells confessed to carrying out a recent shooting attack in the Nablus area that wounded two Israeli border police, as well as other shootings, the army said.

The militants may have been connected to Hamas movements abroad, it added.



A district court building in Lahore is set on fire Monday, mourners protesting against mass killing of Shi'ite Muslims on Sunday. Mourners burned tires, pelted police with stones and shots were fired in the air. A militant Sunni Muslim group has claimed responsibility for Sunday's massacre. — AP/UNB photo

## Bosnian Serb parliament fails to elect PM

BIJEL JINA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jan 13: Despite international warnings to stop stalled, the polarised Bosnian Serb parliament failed Monday to elect a new premier and government, reports AP.

The assembly did make one small step forward. It re-elected Dragana Kalinic, an ally of war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic, as parliament speaker, and chose his deputies. That allowed the parliament to formally establish itself.

Deputies loyal to Karadzic blamed technicalities for preventing them from electing 39-year-old economist Mladen Ivanic to the premiership. Ivanic has been nominated by President Biljana Plavsic and is supported by the international community.

### China quake

## HK launches fund drive to help victims

HONG KONG, Jan 13: Hong Kong has launched a fund drive to help the victims of a severe earthquake in northern China which killed 47 people and left tens of thousands homeless, charity groups said today, reports AFP.

Charity groups in Hong Kong have appealed for donations from the public in addition to requesting more than 17 million Hong Kong dollars (2.19 million US) from the government's disaster relief fund for those in need in Hebei province.

Meanwhile, a government spokesman said applications for the funds would be processed as soon as possible.

A 12-member medical team from the Red Cross is to be despatched to the disaster scene, a spokesman for Red Cross said.

## Lankan forces move to capture key highway

COLOMBO, Jan 13: Sri Lankan forces today began the ninth month of a bloody campaign to capture an important northern highway in the hope that its seizure will soon bring victory against their Tamil Tiger foes, reports AFP.

The Defence Ministry said troops had advanced further north on Sunday to take control of Kanakarayankulam town. It lies on the highway linking the government held town of Vavuniya with Killinochchi, further north.

Military officials said the chances of capturing the entire stretch quickly were remote and that more attacks by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) could be expected.

"We expect fresh attacks further up the road," one senior military official told Reuters.

In the latest incident, an

## US links GIA with massacre in Algeria

WASHINGTON, Jan 13: The United States said Monday that "the great majority" of the horrific attacks against civilians in Algeria are the work of Islamic hardliners in the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), reports AFP.

But the US State Department conceded that the situation was "complex" and that local government self-defence groups also might be involved in the violence, Rubin said.

Department spokesman James Rubin said the United States favours fact-finding efforts by a special UN rapporteur as well as non-governmental organisations and the media "to make sure that the basic facts in this area are as well known as they can be."

In the latest incident, an

## Diana's car was travelling at only 60 mph?

LONDON, Jan 13: The Mercedes in which Princess Diana was killed was travelling at 60 mph (96 kph), a leading British accident investigator says in a programme to be broadcast Tuesday night, reports AP.

Dozens of militant Muslims belonging to both Islamic sects have been jailed, although few people have been convicted in court.

Lawyers in Pakistan say judges and lawyers routinely receive death threats from militant Muslims and as a result are afraid to convict them.

Judge Arif Bhatti, the man who acquitted two Christians accused of blasphemy, was shot and killed. No one was ever arrested but police and the legal community blamed militant Muslims who had been sending Bhatti death threats.

Most of Pakistan's 140 million people are Sunni Muslims who get along with their Shi'ite brethren. But extremist groups belonging to both sects have emerged in recent years and they routinely clash.

MacKay said in the Channel 4 TV programme "Crash" that his conclusions were drawn from the French police investigation, as well as a visit to the tunnel.

The programme included a computer simulation of the August 31 accident that killed Diana, her companion Dodi Fayed and driver Henri Paul.

Newspapers have talked of speeds of 120 mph (192 kph).

"This was a severe but survivable accident and what we now need to consider is why three people died. If the Mercedes has hit the post at 120 mph (192 kph), the whole of the passenger compartment would have been destroyed," he said.

The princess had the best chance of survival because she was sitting in the rear right seat which would have suffered the least force when the car hit the pillar and spun, MacKay said.

## 69 students feared drowned in India

NEW DELHI, Jan 13: At least 69 teenagers were feared drowned Tuesday after their bus skidded in fog and plunged into a river in India's West Bengal state, Press Trust of India news agency said, reports AP.

The bus was bringing 86 10th and 11th grade students back from a picnic in Murshidabad district, 190 kilometres (120 miles) north of Calcutta. Rescuers saved 17 students, PTI quoted police as saying. Other details were not immediately available.



Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party President, Lal Krishna Advani, second from left, watches prime ministerial candidate, AB Vaipayee's face appear on the screen, as BJP launched a website in New Delhi Monday. This is the first ever website to be launched by any political party ahead of the general elections next month. The party spokesman Pramod Mhajan is seen on Advani's right. — AP/UNB photo

## Cong urges Sonia, Priyanka to contest upcoming polls

NEW DELHI, Jan 13: The widow of former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi has been urged by the Congress Party to contest upcoming elections from her ex-husband's constituency, newspapers reported here today, says AFP.

The once-dominant Congress passed a resolution late Monday in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, requesting the Italian-born Sonia Gandhi and her daughter Priyanka stand as candidates.

The Uttar Pradesh chapter of the Congress said it had passed on the recommendation to the party's national leadership for approval, the Asian Age newspaper said.

The 51-year-old widow made her political debut at the weekend after agreeing to campaign

for the Congress in the February-March polls, she has not, however, announced herself as an election candidate.

The Congress said Sonia, who married into the Nehru-Gandhi family in 1968, should contest from Uttar Pradesh's Amethi constituency, once represented by Rajiv Gandhi.

It also asked Priyanka, 25, to stand from the adjoining constituency of Rae Bareilly. Priyanka stands as candidates.

The party, in decline after ruling India for almost four decades following independence in 1947, is hoping to exploit the aura of the Gandhi name during the campaign.

Priyanka, who is not in politics, accompanied Sonia Gandhi for her inaugural address on Sunday in the southern Indian town of Sripuramudur, where Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991.

Sonia Gandhi, who has become an Indian citizen, appealed in her speech to Indians to vote the Congress back to power. She indicated she would not contest the elections.

The Congress was led by the Nehru-Gandhi family for most of India's 50 years since independence in 1947.

Newspapers say Sonia Gandhi is expected to play a major role for the party in the coming hustings. Analysts, however, predict a hung parliament with the country's Hindu nationalists topping the polls as the country's largest party.

## Blast in passenger bus hurts 14 in Kashmir

JAMMU, Jan 13: An explosion ripped apart a bus just after its passengers got off in Kashmir, Tuesday, injuring at least 14 people, police said, reports AP.

No group claimed responsibility for the blast, but police blamed it on Kashmiri militants fighting to secede from India. The same stop was the target of a blast that killed 16 people last March in Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state.

Gurbachan Jagat, the director-general of Jammu-Kashmir police, said 14 people were injured Tuesday, four seriously. He said the bus had been headed to Srinagar, the state's summer capital and heart of the insurgency, but was forced to return to Jammu because a landslide had blocked the road.

The blast occurred moments

after the last passenger disembarked in Jammu.

Jagat had warned of possible explosions before a Hindu religious festival on Tuesday and India's Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

Jagat said some of the militants arrested recently had told police about attempts by Pakistan to disrupt celebrations in the state.

India accuses Pakistan of training and arming Muslim militants fighting an insurgency in Kashmir that has killed more than 15,000 people since 1989. Pakistan denies the charges, saying it lends only moral support.

Militants in Kashmir, India's only predominantly Muslim state, want independence or to join officially Muslim Pakistan.

## Closer military ties with US to help improve trust, hopes China

BEIJING, Jan 13: China hopes that closer military ties with the United States will help improve trust between the two nations, Defence Minister Chi Haotian says, reports AP.

Chi, in a meeting with former US Secretary of Defense William Perry, said that exchanges of high-ranking military officials and other contacts were helping smooth sometimes tense relations with the United States, the newspaper China Daily reported Tuesday.

Gen. Fu Quanyou, chief of the general staff of China's People's Liberation Army, told Perry that Beijing was hoping for even border contacts.

The general improvement in relations between China and the United States over the past year has allowed a resumption of high-level contacts disrupted by months of tension over Taiwan and other issues.

As part of the effort to increase cooperation, US Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers was expected to visit Beijing on Thursday to discuss the Asian financial crisis.

Summers, dispatched by President Bill Clinton on an Asian tour aimed at promoting financial stability, has travelled to Indonesia and Singapore and also planned to visit Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand.

## Non-Proliferation efforts of Clinton admin inadquate

WASHINGTON, Jan 13: China is the world's leading supplier of weapons technology, according to a US Senate report that contends the United States inadvertently participates in weapons proliferation because of "liberalised" export policies, reports AP.

The Republican-drafted report accuses the US government of being too reluctant to impose economic sanctions in response to clear violations of anti-proliferation laws.

"The Clinton administration's non-proliferation efforts have been inadequate," says the report, directed by Sen. Thad Cochran, chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs International Security Subcommittee.

State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Monday the Clinton administration has made proliferation issues a top priority, pointing to the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) banning nuclear testing, the permanent extension of the

Non-Proliferation Treaty, Russia's recent willingness to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and China's recent assurances to take across the board steps to prevent weapons proliferation.

Because none of the Democrats on Cochran's subcommittee signed the study, it was issued as a "Majority report" of the panel.

— Despite several instances of documented proliferation, including sale of nuclear technology and ballistic missiles to Pakistan and chemical and biological equipment, missile technology and nuclear reactors to Iran, the Clinton administration has imposed only limited sanctions on specific firms rather than take on the Chinese government.

— The administration approach to Russia has been to make appeals to Russian government leaders rather than impose penalties. The report said Russia is continuing its missile commerce with Iran.

## Iraq threatens to block US-led UN inspection team again

BAGHDAD, Jan 13: Iraq declared Monday it would block arms inspections by an American-led UN team, renewing Iraqi claims that Americans were slanting the inspections. The challenge threatened a new confrontation with the United Nations, reports AP.

The official Iraqi News Agency made the announcement, quoting an official spokesman who said the presence of too many American inspectors was prolonging the inspection programme and delaying removal of UN sanctions on Iraq.

The agency's statement came after American Scott Ritter and a team of UN inspectors reportedly visited a hospital and a prison in Baghdad.

Apparently the team was not blocked, since the agency's report said the ban on Ritter would begin Tuesday.

Iraq has repeatedly criticised Ritter, accusing him of

spying for the CIA. Ritter, a former Marine major who has been an inspector for six years and served in the 1991 Gulf War, has dismissed the charge as "absolutely untrue."

Ritter was heavily involved in the inspections of sensitive sites that led to last October's standoff between Iraq and the weapons inspectors.

The government spokesman said Monday that Ritter's team included too many Americans and Britons. He said it would not be allowed to continue until it was reformed in a balanced manner.

The official, who was not identified by the agency, said the team included nine Americans, five Britons, Russians and an Australian.

"This shows striking evidence of the imbalance in the composition of the team and its methods of action in Iraq," the spokesman said.

"Iraq has insisted that the work of the Special Commis-

sion, especially on the inspection side, should be more balanced in composition," Hamdoon said. "Therefore, Iraq is not going to accept this heavily influenced team by the American and British nationals."

The other UN inspection teams in Iraq would be allowed to continue their work, Hamdoon said.

The UN ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, reminded reporters that the Security Council meets Tuesday.

"Iraq is up to its old tricks," Richardson said in Florida. "We tell the Security Council should make a strong response."

The White House issued a similar reaction. Spokesman Mike McCurry said the world had heard "provocative statements from the government of Iraq on the constitution of UN inspection teams over and over again. They have been met with the same resolved response of the international community."

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