

## Three killed as Maoist rebels storm Indian police station

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Three Maoist guerrillas were shot dead when the rebels tried to seize a police station in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, the Press Trust of India said Sunday, reports AFP.

The news agency said the police and the guerrillas exchanged fire when some 50 heavily-armed Maoists attacked the station late Saturday in the state's Churia village with plans to rob the armoury.

The raid is the first of its kind in Madhya Pradesh by the leftwing insurgents, who are mainly active in three eastern and one southern Indian state.

The Maoists have been campaigning for decades against the exploitation of poor landless farmers by feudal landlords.

## Pinochet may face prosecution in Britain

LONDON, Aug 8: Former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet could face prosecution in Britain if Spain drops its request to extradite him, the British Crown Prosecution Service said today, reports AFP.

Amid speculation that Spain may abandon its bid to extradite him to face allegations of torture and murder, British prosecution officials confirmed Pinochet, 83, could face charges in Britain.

The human rights group Amnesty International has lodged a formal complaint against the retired general with the London Metropolitan Police chief Paul Condon, and there are also outstanding extradition requests from France and Switzerland.

A spokeswoman for the CPS said: "As with any investigation the police would have to look into the complaint and present us with a file."

"We would then have to decide whether there was sufficient evidence for a prosecution."

The spokeswoman said the UN Convention against Torture meant Pinochet could face charges in Britain for alleged crimes committed abroad.

Pinochet, 83, was arrested in London last October on a warrant from Spanish investigating magistrate Baltasar Garçon, who wants him extradited to Spain to face charges of human rights abuses during his 1973-1990 dictatorship in the South American country.

Last month Chilean government sought an "amicable arrangement" with the Madrid government to annul the Spanish extradition application request.

## 18 die in Cape Verde air crash

PRAIA, Aug 8: Eighteen people were killed Saturday when their airplane crashed on Sao Vicente island in the Cape Verde archipelago off Senegal, officials sources said, reports AFP.

It was the worst air disaster in the country's history.

Dead were two Austrian tourists and 16 Cape Verde citizens, including two crew members. Three of the dead were children, but identities were not immediately available.

The Dornier aircraft, operated by Cape Verde's coast guard, crashed in mountainous terrain as it tried to land after failing to touch down on neighbouring Santo Antao island.

Airport sources blamed the disaster on bad weather at Santo Antao, forcing the pilots to change course.

Initial reports had given the number of dead as 19, and identified Santo Antao as the crash site.

The coast-guard Dornier was being flown in place of a civilian passenger aircraft that was taken out of service for repairs.

A search party was set out to reach the wreckage, which came down in particularly inaccessible terrain.

## Kabbah appeals for aid to hostage captors

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, Aug 8: President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, explaining that his country has been hobbled by a recently-ended civil war, urged international groups to meet the demands of rebel-allied soldiers now holding about 30 hostages, reports AP.

Kabbah told journalists that foreign relief organisations should review policies of refusing assistance to armed groups "in this exceptional case."

The rebels holding the hostages are not party to a July 7 peace agreement that formally ended eight years of civil war which killed tens of thousands and maimed many more, according to UN officials.

Kabbah on Saturday said Sierra Leone doesn't have the resources to help the rebels or their allies — the soldiers who remain loyal to Sierra Leone's ousted military junta.

"This incident is a clear reflection of the need for international assistance to Sierra Leone... since the reason stated for the abduction is the inability of the government to provide food and other relief materials," Kabbah said.

But an official with a major aid agency insisted that donors were determined not to aid any combatants.

This comes despite the kidnappers' demands for food and other aid as a key condition for the release of the UN employees, aid workers, West African intervention force soldiers and journalists who were kidnapped Wednesday in the Okra Hills, outside Freetown.

# Pakistan proposes meeting with India at UN

## Vajpayee rules out dialogue

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Pakistan on Sunday called for a meeting with Indian leaders during next month's UN General Assembly session to resume peace talks fractured by the conflict in Kashmir, reports AFP.

Pakistan's High Commissioner to India Ashraf Jehangir Qazi told the Press Trust of India that stalled talks between the two rivals should resume as early as possible and not be held "hostage" to the campaign for the September-October general elections in India.

The call came as Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday squarely ruled out a dialogue with Pakistan saying it will have to first stop backing Muslim separatism in the Himalayan state of Kashmir.

Qazi argued that "pre-conditions set by New Delhi would only impede the process of normalisation of relations."

He also denied Indian charges that Pakistan army regularly backed Islamic guer-

illas who intruded into the Indian zone of Kashmir, sparking off the conflict which left more than 1,000 dead on both sides.

"At no stage Pakistan ever conceded India's assumption that Pakistani regular forces were across the Line of Control (LoC)," the diplomat said of the 27-year-old line that divides Kashmir.

Qazi also rejected suggestions that the Pakistani army acted without Islamabad's approval during the conflict, which began on May 9.

Qazi said there should be no pre-conditions for the resumption of peace talks between the two neighbours who have fought three wars since 1947.

Vajpayee told his first rally here ahead of next month's elections that Pakistan was responsible for a dramatic rise in Islamic militancy in Kashmir following the recent military conflict in the region.

"Now they (Pakistan) are trying to create problems all over Kashmir by boosting terror-

ism," the Hindu nationalist leader told a 7,000-strong rally at a sports stadium.

"That is an extension of all they (Pakistan) did in Kargil," he said, referring to the Kashmir battle zone where Indian troops fought hundreds of Muslim guerilla intruders and alleged Pakistani soldiers in May-July.

Nearly 80 people, including Muslim militants, civilians and Indian security forces, have died this month in a sudden surge in militancy in Kashmir. Two Indian army camps have been attacked since Friday and an Indian colonel was shot dead Saturday.

"With violence and deaths there can be no dialogue," Vajpayee said. "We should create an atmosphere for a dialogue. It has to be meaningful, not just to prove a point."

The prime minister, in an apparent reference to the United States which is pressing for early India-Pakistan talks, said New Delhi will not talk to

Islamabad under pressure. "Nobody in the world can force us to go for a dialogue after keeping a gun to our head. This is the whole world knows," he said to wild cheers from the almost wholly male supporters.

India waged a fierce two-month military campaign until last month to evict hundreds of heavily-armed Pakistan-backed Muslim guerillas who had occupied key hills in Indian Kashmir.

The fighting left more than 1,000 combatants dead on both sides, including 400 Indian soldiers, and almost sparked a fourth war between India and Pakistan.

Vajpayee denied the Islamic intruders withdrew from Indian Kashmir only due to pressure from Washington, saying the Indian military exploits played the key role.

"There is no doubt there was international pressure (on Pakistan) to vacate," he said. "But would they have left if they had been winning the war?"

## PKK rebels attack dam in Turkey

ANKARA, Aug 8: Rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) attacked a dam being built in Mus province, eastern Turkey, setting fire to construction machinery, the Anatolia news agency reported Sunday, reports AFP.

The rebels disarmed two guards from the local pro-government Kurdish militia during the raid overnight Friday.

They set fire to two diggers on the construction site for the Alparslan dam in Bulanik district before fleeing.

It was the second time the dam had been a target for attack by Kurdish rebels. On July 28, they opened fire on a military vehicle patrolling the site, killing one soldier and wounding seven others.

The armed wing of the PKK frequently carries out attacks on state-backed construction sites, particularly in southeastern Anatolia, the main battleground for the Kurdish separatist armed struggle.

The group has been waging an armed campaign for Kurdish self-rule in southeastern Turkey since 1984. More than 31,000 people have died in the conflict.

# Militants step up attacks on security camps in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Aug 8: Armed Muslim guerillas renewed their attacks on Indian military and police camps in Kashmir killing at least two and injuring seven police and soldiers, official said here Sunday, reports AFP.

They reported a total of four such attacks on Saturday night and said the raids were spread across the Indian zone of the divided Himalayan state.

A soldier died and six others were injured when militants fired three rockets on a military camp at Trigham in Kupwara district, which borders Pakistan. An army barrack was destroyed in the attack.

Indian troops, stunned by the barrage, later cordoned off the area and began a massive search in a nearby wood for the attackers.

The attack came hours after guerillas shot dead an Indian army colonel as he came out of his home in Kupwara.

The guerillas also fired three rockets overnight at a fortified police station in the town of Chador, 20 kilometres from Srinagar but there were no casualties.

A constable was injured in a third such attack on a police camp in the southern Kashmir district of Poonch, officials said, adding that another police post was riddled by bullets in the adjacent district of Rajouri.

Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, meanwhile, blamed the attacks on Pakistan and said Islamabad was reviving a "proxy war" after suffering a defeat during a recent military conflict in Kashmir's Kargil sector.

"It is a serious matter..." he told a political rally in the western Indian city of Pune.

On Friday, heavily-armed militants stormed an army camp in Kupwara, the first such raid in Kashmir, and killed five soldiers. Six of the raiders were killed in the ensuing gun battle.

Nearly 80 militants, security personnel and civilians have been killed in a dramatic rise in violence in picturesque Kashmir this month.

The violence comes ahead of India's independence day on August 15 -- an annual event that Muslim separatists campaigning to end Indian rule in Kashmir have previously tried

to sabotage. Indian forces have also simultaneously stepped up cordon-and-search operations in Kashmir for militants and arms.

Police and paramilitary forces daily search residential and commercial areas near Srinagar's Bakshi stadium where Indian independence celebrations are held.

It has been rocketed by militants every August 15 from 1991 until 1996. A bomb blast during a Republic Day parade in January 1996 in Kashmir's Jammu city killed three people.

The celebrations, however, passed off peacefully the last two years.

Search operations are also a daily feature at Lal Chowk, the business hub of Srinagar where 12 suspected militants were detained in the last one week.

In past days hundreds of male residents have been ordered out of their homes in Srinagar and paraded before masked men -- former militants who now work for the army.

Police officials say they expect violence on August 15.



Indonesian presidential hopeful Megawati Sukarnoputri (L) looks at her seven-month-old granddaughter, Pinka, enclosed in a bird cage during a traditional Javanese ceremony at her residence in Jakarta yesterday. Traditionally, Javanese babies are put inside cages at the age of seven months and given to pick from various items on display to predict the child's future vocation. Pinka chose a stethoscope, a gold necklace and a hundred dollar bill.

—AFP photo

# Yangon quiet on anniversary of bloody uprising

YANGON, Aug 8: The streets of the Myanmar capital were quiet on Sunday, the 11th anniversary of a bloody student uprising, despite calls by exiled dissidents for civil protests, reports AFP.

Residents in Yangon said night-time security had been stepped up over the week, but there were no apparent signs of unusual activity or increased security during the day.

"I haven't seen anything other than the normal police and military presence outside the NLD's headquarters or Aung San Suu Kyi's compound," one observer said.

Sunday marked the anniversary of an uprising in the military-ruled country on August 8, 1988, or 8/8/88, in which hundreds of democracy demonstrators were gunned down and a junta took power from military dictator Ne Win.

Myanmar pro-democracy opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who heads the National League for Democracy (NLD), called for reconciliation on the eve of the anniversary, saying soldiers need not fear retribution from a civilian govern-

ment. She urged the ruling army and the people "to work hand in hand to achieve democracy, where the people govern the country."

"There is no question that the people's government will honour the role of the Tatmadaw (military)," said a transcript of the message distributed by the Alternative Asean Network on Burma (ALTSEAN).

ALTSEAN is a Southeast Asian network of academics, non-governmental organisations and dissidents. Burma is the former name for Myanmar.

The NLD under Aung San Suu Kyi won an easy victory in 1990 elections but the military refuses to recognise the result and keeps the Nobel peace laureate under constant military surveillance at her Yangon home.

Exiled students and monks in the capital of neighbouring Thailand Sunday marked the anniversary with a noisy but peaceful demonstration outside their embassy.

About 150 students and

monks gathered in front of the Myanmar embassy, carrying banners calling for democracy and the release of all political prisoners.

A statement issued by the Burmese Students Association (BSA) for its "constructive engagement" policy toward the junta.

The statement said human rights violations were worse than ever despite the policy.

"It proves that the ASEAN policy is wrong and has lost touch with the Burmese people's real needs," it said.

The statement said that ASEAN, which Myanmar joined in 1997, ignored the people's "anti-military dictatorship struggle, (and) continuous calls for democracy and human rights."

The ASEAN policy encourages the junta to commit more human rights abuses," it said.

The Thailand-based All Burma Students Democratic Front earlier issued a statement warning conditions in Myanmar were worsening and ripe for another uprising.

## BRIEFLY

**10 Tamil rebels killed:** Government forces have shot dead at least 10 Tamil Tiger guerrillas in fresh fighting in northern Sri Lanka, the defence ministry here said Sunday, AFP reports from Colombo.

Nine members of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were killed by troops in four different clashes in the region of Wanni on Saturday, the ministry here said in a statement. It said a 10th rebel was killed by the army in the northern peninsula of Jaffna on the same day. The ministry did not say if government soldiers suffered any casualties during the latest clashes.

**Bus crash kills 18 in Zambia:** Eighteen people died on the spot in a weekend road accident in central Zambia when a bus rammed into a parked truck, state radio reported Sunday, reports AFP from Lusaka.

Scores of others were injured, 23 of them seriously, in the accident at Luansimba in Mkushi district, about 300 kilometres north of the capital Lusaka. Provincial police chief Francis Musonda said 17 passengers on the bus were killed along with the driver of the Mercedes Benz truck.

**Journalist found dead in Aceh:** An Indonesian journalist has been found hacked to death in the latest incident of violence in troubled Aceh province, a report said Sunday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The body of Supriadi, 34, a writer for Medan Pos, a newspaper based in neighboring North Sumatra province, was found Thursday in Buki Hagu village in North Aceh district. His head was almost severed, the Kompas daily said. The victim's wife, Ponnyem, was quoted by Kompas as saying Supriadi was picked up by two unidentified men on Monday and had not returned since.

# Palestinians demand progress before Arafat-Barak meeting

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Aug 8: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is not prepared to hold another meeting with new Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak unless he comes up with concrete proposals to end the mounting deadlock in negotiations, aides said Sunday, reports AFP.

"A meeting must bring about concrete results... we are not prepared to take part in the sort of public relations exercise which (Barak's right-wing predecessor) Benjamin Netanyahu loved to conduct," minister without portfolio Ziad Abu Azid told Palestinian radio.

After their last meeting, on July 27, the two leaders indicated they would meet again soon but fixed no date or venue.

Israeli officials said they were continuing contacts with the Palestinians to try to set up our contacts with the Palestinian Authority but so far no date has been set for a new meeting," said a spokesman for the prime minister's office.

Since their last meeting, the new Israeli government's rela-

tions with the Palestinians have been strained by Barak's plans to further delay implementation of the long-overdue Wye River agreement.

"The new Israeli government's request for a delay has contributed to a return to mistrust between the two sides," Abu Zaid said.

Barak, who took office on July 6, wants to further delay two pullbacks from a further 11 per cent of the West Bank which were pledged under the agreement brokered by US President Bill Clinton last October.

He wants to start one pledged pullback in October -- 10 months later than scheduled -- and he wants to put off the second until a framework agreement has been reached for so-called final status talks on a permanent settlement.

At their last meeting he persuaded Arafat to reluctantly agree to take two weeks to consider his proposals, but the Palestinians suspended the talks with Israeli negotiators after just two meetings and the two weeks run out on Wednesday.

## Israel lifts closure on Hebron

HEBRON, West Bank, Aug 8: The Israeli army announced on Sunday that it was lifting the curfew imposed on this flashpoint West Bank town after the shooting of two Jewish settlers, reports AFP.

The army said it was also lifting the curfew imposed on the Israeli-controlled part of the city where the attack took place.

Gunmen shot and wounded the two settlers late Tuesday in the first attack in the Palestinian territories since the new Israeli government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak came to power last month.

On Saturday, the armed wing of the biggest Palestinian opposition group, Hamas, claimed responsibility for the shooting and warned it would launch further attacks.

Most of this city of 150,000 people passed under Palestinian control in 1997, but Israel retained control over the city centre where around 400 hardcore settlers live in enclaves alongside some 20,000 Palestinians.

## Hamas claims responsibility for shooting in Hebron

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip, Aug 8: The militant Islamic group Hamas on Saturday took responsibility for a shooting attack on Jewish settlers in the West Bank City of Hebron, according to a fax claiming to be from the organisation, reports AP.

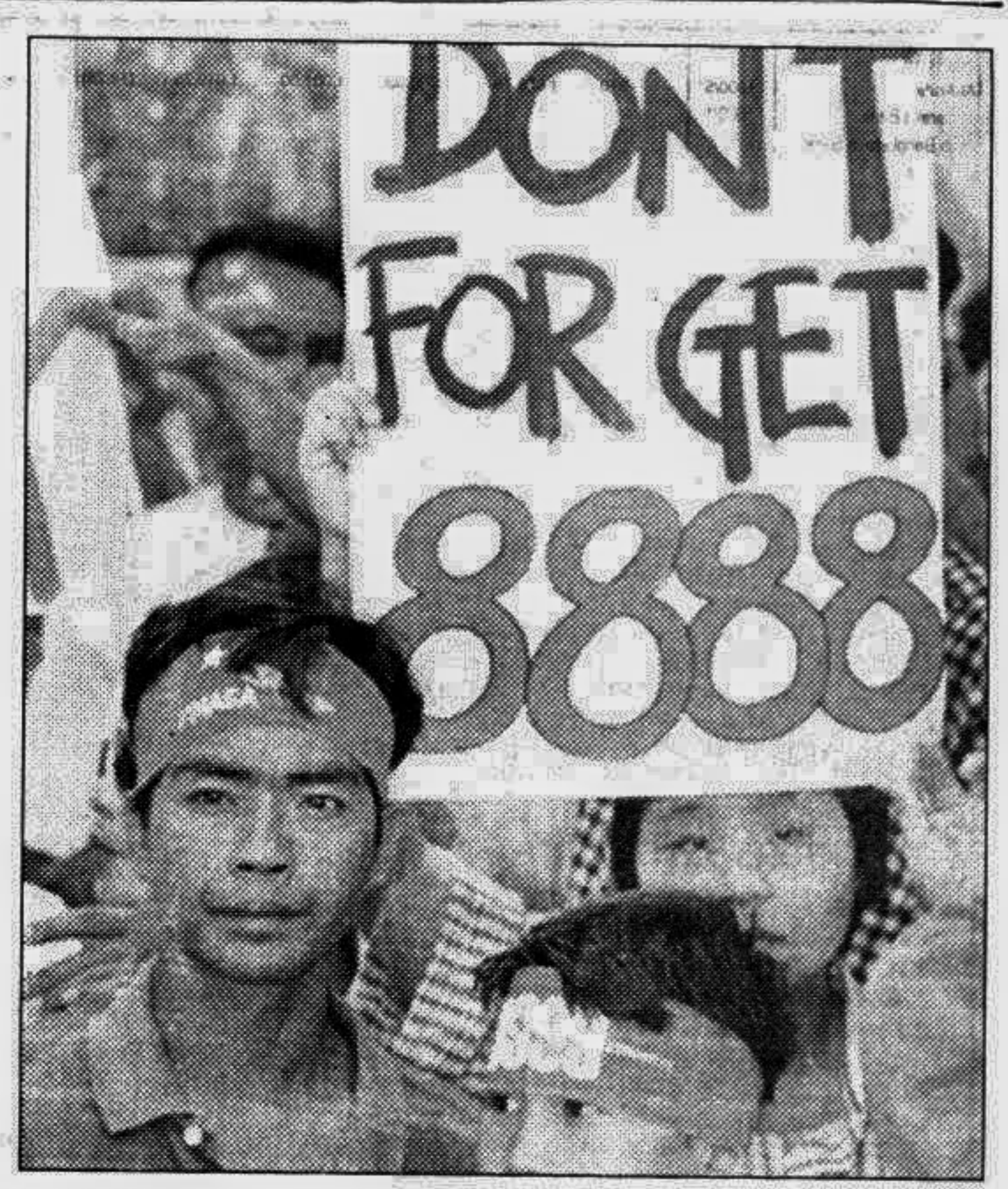
A spokesman for the political wing of Hamas, Mahmoud Zahar, said he could not authenticate the statement because the group's military wing, Izzedine Al Qassam, works separately from the political wing.

The one-page fax was shorter than Izzedine Al Qassam's usual statements and did not carry its official stamp bearing two rifles superimposed on a map of Israel and the Palestinian areas.

The statement sent to the Associated Press office in Gaza Saturday said that "one of our fighter groups in Hebron... attacked a vehicle of settlers" on Tuesday, Aug 3rd. Two settlers were lightly injured, one of whom lost two fingers in the attack.

Israeli news organisations said they received similar leaflets also claiming responsibility for unspecified additional attacks in the West Bank settlement bloc of Gush Etzion and the West Bank town of Jenin.

In the statement, Hamas vowed to continue its armed struggle against Israel despite a vow by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority to help Israel prevent terrorist attacks.



Exiled Myanmar students and activists hold a banner commemorating the 11th anniversary of the first junta crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar. Some 150 protesters demonstrated in front of the Myanmar embassy in Bangkok yesterday.

—AFP photo

# Anti-Taliban forces recapture towns

KABUL, Aug 8: Afghan opposition forces have recaptured several strategic northern towns, an opposition spokesman said Sunday, as the ruling Taliban militia appeared to be shoring up defences in the capital Kabul, reports AFP.

Araf said forces loyal to opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood regained Dasht-i-Archi and Imam Sahab districts in the northern province of Kunduz and the port town of Sher Khan Bandar on the border with Tajikistan.

Araf, speaking by satellite telephone from Masood's Panjsher Valley stronghold, told AFP opposition fighters also repulsed a heavy attack by the Taliban on areas around Taloqan, in the northern province of Takhar.

The fighting was very heavy and the attack was backed by Taliban jets, but they failed to have any gains," Araf said, adding the clashes had subsided.

"First we captured Dasht-i-Archi, then Imam Sahab and Sher Khan Bandar after heavy fighting on Saturday."

Sher Khan Bandar is located on the right side of the Amu Darya or Oxus River which forms the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. It faces Termez port in the former Soviet republic.

Araf also said pro-Masood soldiers also retook several strategic heights they had lost to Taliban troops in the Ghorband valley.

And he added that Taliban jets on Sunday carried out eight sorties on residential areas of Charikar and Gulbahaar.

The three strategic locations were earlier seized by the Taliban in a major offensive that briefly dismantled Masood's frontlines north of Kabul with the fall of several towns in the nearby provinces of Parwan and Kapisa.

However, the opposition launched a surprise counter-attack earlier this week driving the Taliban back to Kabul with heavy losses.

Opposition sources said between 800 and 1,000 Taliban fighters were killed in the counter-offensive.

While the opposition has declined to release its own casualty figures, independent sources have said the number of dead and wounded for both sides in 11 days of fighting was close to 4,000.

Meanwhile in Kabul, reports said the militia was bolstering the city's defences.

Hundreds of well-armed Taliban were seen cruising the streets in jeeps while the authorities erected special check points to search for illegal arms.