

## 200 bombs seized in West Bengal

CALCUTTA, Aug 1: In a major haul, 200 bombs were seized from a house after one accidentally exploded at Tilja village in South 24 Pargana district, SP A K Malwal said, reports BSS.

Local people rushed to the house after hearing the sound of the explosion and later informed the police, Malwal said. After reaching the spot, police found four injured men and a cache of 200 bombs.

The victims sustained minor injuries in the explosion, he said.

## Nepalese PM in India for security talks

NEW DELHI, Aug 1: India's concerns about Pakistani intelligence agents operating in neighboring Nepal will be settled during talks this week, Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said Tuesday, reports AP.

The two countries have a unique relationship under a 1950 treaty that allows citizens to cross the border without travel documents. But relations were damaged last year when India says, Pakistanis took advantage of lax security at the Katmandu International Airport to hijack an Indian Airlines passenger plane to Afghanistan.

Pakistan has rejected India's identification of the hijackers, who have not been found.

Indian Airlines stopped flights to Nepal for many months, and resumed them only after Nepal had strengthened security at the airport and new rules were issued, requiring air travelers between the two countries to carry travel documents.

India has called upon Nepal to halt activities by Pakistani intelligence agents. Asked about the concerns after his ceremonial welcome at the presidential palace in New Delhi on Tuesday, Koirala said they will be settled as we are talking with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on it.

## Anwar accuses chief justice of being biased

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1: In an angry exchange with the country's top judge, jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim on Tuesday accused Chief Justice Eusoff Chin of being biased and close to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, reports UNB.

"With all that I know of you, subservient to the prime minister, and now beholden to him, I am apprehensive of your impartiality on this appeal," Anwar said during a Federal Court hearing of his appeal to force Mahathir to testify in his sodomy trial.

Eusoff rejected a plea by Anwar to step out of the three-judge bench hearing the case and replace himself by another judge.

"We are being tolerant," he told Anwar. "Your intention is to attack me personally."

Anwar was arguing his own case just three days before a high court was scheduled to deliver a verdict in his yearlong sodomy case. In case the Federal Court overturned an earlier decision and rule that Mahathir must testify, it could reopen the sodomy trial and delay the verdict.

If it upholds High Court Judge Ariffin Jaka's ruling that Mahathir's testimony was not relevant, then Ariffin would go ahead and pronounce a verdict on Friday on whether Anwar sodomized his former family driver.

## Newspaper publisher jailed in Iran

TEHRAN, Aug 1: Tehran's press court sentenced the publisher of the banned reformist daily Arya to a four-month jail term and a ban on further press activities, newspapers reported today, reports AFP.

Hamid Reza Zohdi was found guilty of "provoking public opinion, publishing malicious lies, insulting the state, eroding the regime of the Islamic Republic and (printing) anti-state propaganda."

Zohdi's family told AFP that the court had not yet formally notified him of the verdict but expected it to do so by the end of the week.

In addition to the jail term, the court also ordered a cash fine and the revocation of Zohdi's publication licence, papers said.

Arya was one of 19 publications, almost all pro-reform papers that back President Mohammad Khatami, banned in a sweeping crackdown by the conservative courts after reformers won control of parliament in February.

It was considered one of the most open of the newspapers which initially flourished after Khatami's election in 1997.

Mehdi Karubi, the new speaker of parliament, on Monday blasted the "illegal and arbitrary" closures in a meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

But judiciary chief Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi has rejected calls from parliament to stop shutting down newspapers, telling deputies in June that Iran's courts are independent of political manoeuvring.

# Speight charged with minor crimes

## Treason investigation on

SUVA, Aug 1: Rebel leader George Speight has been charged with crimes related to a wave of civil unrest in Fiji which followed his coup in May, police said Tuesday, reports AP.

The charges — against Speight and a small group of key advisers — did not include treason, although an investigation into that charge was still underway, Assistant Police Commissioner Moses Driver said.

"Speight has been charged with minor charges only but we are of course investigating the major crime of treason," Driver told The Associated Press.

The charges also fell outside an amnesty period granted between the time rebel gunmen stormed Parliament on May 19 and the date that the last of their dozens of hostages were released on July 13, Driver said.

Speight and his group were charged late Monday with unlawful assembly, a minor crime which carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison.

Speight also was charged with assisting in the illegal burial of a body in Parliament — Speight was among mourners when a rebel killed in a gun battle was buried July 18 and with conspiring with people who were illegally armed. The maximum sentences for those crimes were not immediately clear.

Also Monday, interim Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase toured parliament to witness first hand the damage caused during the 8-week hostage standoff.

"We have seen the extent of the desecration and destruction of the facilities of the finest institution in the country," Qarase told parliamentary staff who were cleaning the complex.

"It is a national disgrace. It is difficult to believe that so many people can inflict so much damage and bring so much pain to the rest of the country."

The announcement came a day after scores of rebel supporters, many with black eyes and bandaged wounds, were hauled into court as prosecutors pressed the first charges stemming from the coup.

Speight's lawyer said Monday he wanted the rebel leader brought before the court as soon as possible.

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## Barak survives confidence vote

JERUSALEM, Aug 1: Israel's besieged Prime Minister Ehud Barak scraped through a no-confidence motion that could have toppled his government on Monday only hours after the right-wing's unprecedented victory in presidential elections, reports AFP.

But Barak, limping along without a coalition for three weeks, faced mounting calls even within his own party for early elections, a move that could set back peacemaking with the Palestinians for months.

In a nail-biting vote Monday, 50 MPs voted for the censure motion lodged by the biggest right-wing opposition party Likud in protest at Barak's "concessions" to the Palestinians at the failed Camp David summit. Another 50 voted against and eight abstained.

The bill, if passed by the required absolute majority of 61 members of the 120-seat parliament, would have forced elections to be held in 90 days, three years ahead of schedule.

It followed parliament's shock election of little-known Likud MP Moshe Katsav to the largely symbolic post of president, a major upset for Barak who had backed Shimon Peres, the former Labour prime minister and Nobel peace prize winner.

## Breakthrough in animal-human transplant

LONDON, Aug 1: British medical researchers today claimed to have made a breakthrough which could ease the transplanting of animal organs to humans without the risk of them being rejected, reports Reuters.

Rajkumar's abduction by the bandit Veerappan, who has been charged with 120 killings and numerous other crimes, triggered unrest in the city of Bangalore on Monday as angry Rajkumar fans attacked vehicles and forced businesses to close.

Rajkumar is a cult figure in the southern state of Karnataka, whose capital is Bangalore. Now 72, he has acted in 210 films in Kannada, a language spoken by about 60 million people.

Most shops and businesses remained closed today morning and public transport was off the roads after a Kannada-language

organisation called for a general strike to protest against the kidnapping. There were no reports of violence, police said.

The screen idol was seized at gunpoint by Veerappan and his gang on Sunday night from his farmhouse in the village of Gajanur, about 225 km south of Bangalore and just inside the state of Tamil Nadu.

Veerappan had in the past kidnapped government officials, and once a pair of wildlife photographers, hoping to bargain for amnesty in exchange for their safe return. But authorities dragged out negotiations and the hostages were released.

"At this point of time, we expect him to once again demand amnesty for his crimes and rehabilitation," a senior Karnataka state government official told Reuters.

As a result, transplanted cells were no longer branded as being foreign.

Professor Robert Lehler, who headed the research team, said: "Our findings offer a novel solution in the battle to get foreign organs accepted by human bodies."

"Eventually we hope that using foreign organs in humans may start to solve the huge shortage of organ donors across the world."

BEIJING, Aug 1: The pill for men? Chinese researchers say they've got it, reports AP.

The China Daily reported today that scientists from Shanghai tested an oral contraceptive that stopped sperm production in 90 per cent of men who took it — with "hardly any" of the side-effects associated with the drug's female version.

The pills contained the hormone progesterin, a key ingredient in oral contraceptives for women, the state-run newspaper said.

The researchers from the Shanghai Institute of Family Planning Technical Instruction said it was the first time the hormone had been given to men to help prevent pregnancy, the newspaper reported.

"This is a great breakthrough in the process of helping husbands share the burden of contraception in the new century," it quoted the institute's vice-director, Zhu Huibing, as saying.

Birth control is a crucial issue for China. Its population, officially 1.25 billion but believed to be higher, is predicted to reach a worrisome 1.6 billion people in the mid-21st century.

In the male contraceptive trial, 30 volunteers in Shanghai were given one or two pills a day for periods ranging from six months to one year. After stopping the dosage, subjects' sperm counts returned to normal in two or three months, the China Daily said.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, but the military said investigators were not ruling out involvement of either communist rebels or Muslim separatist guerrillas. Both groups operate in Mindanao.

Since the Hizbul announced its intention to launch an offensive against the group and is in contact with its leaders on formal encounters with Indian forces in the past six months, according to Indian estimates.

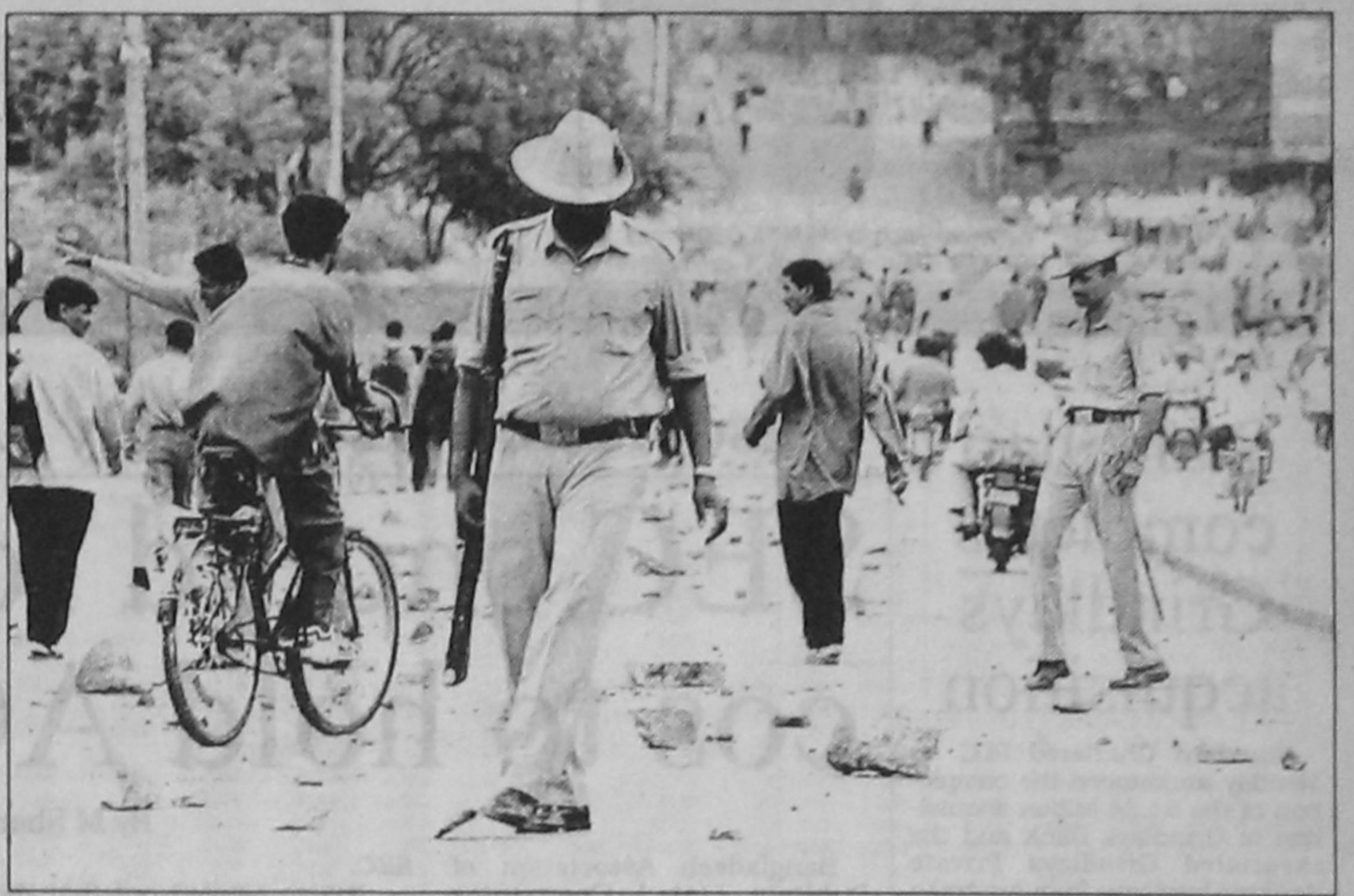
New Delhi accuses Islamabad of arming the rebels and said the government expected Pakistan to try and sabotage the process, the first serious bid to end 11 years of violence which has left 25,000 dead in Kashmir.

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Policemen clear brick and stones off a road in Bangalore on Monday after people vented their fury by pelting stones and burning tyres on hearing the kidnapping of southern India's popular actor Rajkumar by India's most wanted criminal Veerappan late Sunday in the forest region of southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The Police had to impose a curfew in the city after the kidnapping sparked clashes between the Tamil and Kannadiga communities. — AFP photo

## Indian bandit may seek amnesty in return for release of film star

BANGALORE, India, Aug 1: India's most dreaded bandit is expected to seek amnesty for his crimes in return for the release of kidnapped movie icon Rajkumar, a local government official said today, reports Reuters.

Rajkumar's abduction by the bandit Veerappan, who has been charged with 120 killings and numerous other crimes, triggered unrest in the city of Bangalore on Monday as angry Rajkumar fans attacked vehicles and forced businesses to close.

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