

## 5 children saved from camel race ordeal



A Pakistani woman, identified as 'Zahida' (C), sits with five children at a police station in Islamabad on Monday after being detained at the international airport for allegedly trying to smuggle out the children to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) destined to be used as camel jockeys.

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan police have rescued five children aged between three and seven who were allegedly being smuggled to Dubai for use as camel jockeys, the Federal Investigations Agency (FIA) said Monday.

A woman with three boys and two girls, whom she claimed were her children, was stopped at Islamabad's international airport late Sunday, the FIA's chief airport officer, Sadar Azim, said.

He said the woman and the five children posed as a family, but a closer look at the "mother's" passport showed that the names of the children had been included fraudulently.

Police believe the woman was taking the children to Dubai to be used in the national sport, Azim said.

## 'India ready for jt LoC patrols'

AFP, Tokyo

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes said Monday New Delhi is sticking to its proposal for joint patrols with Pakistan in the disputed region of Kashmir although it would take time before the two rivals can trust each other.

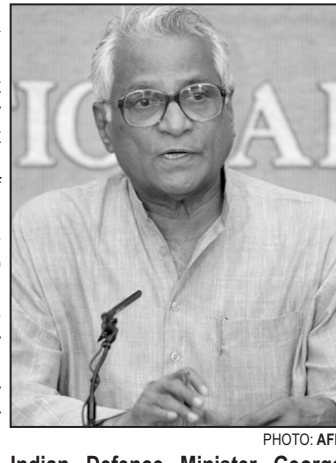
"We are still ready for joint surveillance," of the Line of Control (LoC) dividing the territory between Indian and Pakistani control, the visiting minister told a news conference here, despite Islamabad saying it was unlikely to work.

But to realise it "there has to be a certain level of understanding, and there has to be confidence in each other on the borders," Fernandes added.

"We have our troops on our side. They have their troops on the other side. They are looking at each other not as friends.

"Therefore, we believe that it will take some time before confidence-building measures can be brought into action."

The issue of militants' infiltration into Kashmir is at



Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes speaks at a news conference at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo on Monday.

the heart of the military stand-off between India and Pakistan, and the nuclear-armed neighbours have deployed a million troops along their shared border.

But Fernandes asserted that there was little risk of a nuclear war breaking out.

India is "very clear" in its nuclear doctrine, he said, recalling New Delhi's pledge never to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf also said recently only irresponsible people could discuss using nuclear weapons and only mad people would act on it, the minister said.

"So therefore, on the nuclear issue, I don't see why anyone should have any kind of fear," he said.

Kashmir is divided between the rivals and claimed by both. Pakistan and India have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir.

Fernandes is on a week-long tour of Japan at the invitation of his Japanese counterpart Gen Nakatani.

During his stay, the minister will hold talks with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi as well as Nakatani.

## Israel sees end of Arafat PA denies intelligence boss sacked

AFP, Ramallah

Yasser Arafat again faced major strains within his powerful security forces Monday over whether or not he sacked a top intelligence chief as part of pledged reforms.

The new twist came as a press report said the Israeli army's general staff considered the Palestinian leader's days at the top to be limited.

Two senior Palestinian officials close to Arafat said he had signed a decree dismissing West Bank intelligence chief Tawfiq Tirawi, whom Israel accuses of masterminding "terror" attacks.

But the news was immediately challenged by Amin al-Hindi, the intelligence chief for all the Palestinian territories, who vehemently denied it and denounced the information as a pack of lies.

"This is completely false. Tirawi is still head of Palestinian intelligence in the West Bank," Hindi said in a statement, responding to the news leaked by two senior Palestinian officials close to Arafat.

"This information is part of a propaganda campaign."

Tirawi himself also slammed the report as "incorrect news that is completely untrue."

Top Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rudeina likewise denied the reports as "totally untrue."

The dispute resembled last week's head-on collision between Arafat and his former West Bank preventive security chief Jibril Rajoub, who was officially replaced

Thursday after denying he had been dismissed.

Arafat also sacked last week his police chief Ghazi Jabali, who like Rajoub at first defied the order, but then resigned two days later.

The Palestinian leader is still coping with the fallout from the dumping of Rajoub, whose supporters took to the streets Sunday in the West Bank town of Hebron, still angry three days after his boss's ouster.

Officers loyal to Rajoub also met Arafat over the weekend to plead their case against his nominated successor, former Jenin governor Zuheir Manasrah, saying they had convinced Arafat to reconsider.

Manasrah refused to comment on the matter.

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## 'Boot out politicians if they fail to keep AIDS pledges'

AFP, Madrid

The biggest AIDS conference in history began Sunday in Spain to a call from a top UN official to boot out politicians who fail to honour their pledges to fight the world's worsening health crisis.

Peter Piot, executive director of the UN programme UNAIDS, told an opening ceremony of 15,000 doctors, researchers and activists that national leaders should be scrutinised for how they met their promises on AIDS funding.

"Let's make the AIDS response truly political. Let's bring forward the day when leaders who keep their promises on AIDS are rewarded with our trust and those who don't,

lose their jobs to those who will," he said.

World leaders made funding promises at a special UN general assembly session last year. Piot warned the "delivery date" was set for 2004, when the next AIDS conference takes place in Bangkok, making that meeting "a time for accountability."

Piot said funding to help developing countries had risen sixfold since 1998, to nearly three billion dollars (euros) per year.

But this was less than a third of what was needed, he said.

"Ten billion dollars annually is all it will take for a minimum credible response to the epidemic," he said.

Opening ceremonies saw local actors play out a brief drama with

anguished, contorted figures, and a cello soloist played a haunting melody to a hushed, candlelit auditorium in memory of those who have died of AIDS.

New research, released just hours before, raised fears that the AIDS crisis may be a demographic coup de grace to some of the world's poorest states.

Seven countries in sub-Saharan countries now have life expectancies of less than 40 years of age, according to the study conducted by the US Census Bureau.

In Botswana, where 38.8 percent of the adult population has the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), life expectancy is only 39 years, compared with 72 years if it were not for AIDS.

## Advani hints more changes in BJP

PTI, Ahmedabad

Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani on Sunday indicated more organisational reshuffle in BJP and said that time might not be ripe for holding Assembly polls in Gujarat.

Addressing a press conference, Advani said, "We have sent two of our most able ministers (BJP president M Venkaiah Naidu and Arun Jaitley) for party work and more are likely to follow suit if the need arises."

"This was the way the BJP has set a new benchmark in a bold and innovative self-restructuring," he said.

Advani said the NDA had fulfilled one of its important commitments made to the electorate by providing a stable government and the recent reshuffle has demonstrated the BJP's ability for radical restructuring

and its capacity to undertake innovative experiments.

Advani said the party has shown its ability to restructure itself smoothly in order to effectively respond to changing needs and there was greater willingness for experimentation in BJP than perhaps in other parties.

He said: "We need to conduct a mid-course review of our policies and programmes. We want to especially focus on improving the government machinery's capacity to implement our policies and programmes with the twin objectives of accelerated poverty alleviation and employment generation."

The Deputy Prime Minister said the situation in Gujarat was not yet normal and it is for the state government to decide when to hold Assembly elections.

"The people are still gripped by a

sense of insecurity and complete peace and normalcy would have to be restored in riot-hit Gujarat," Advani said.

"The NDA is the only government which has completed more than four years as a coalition government," Advani claimed on the eve of the Vajpayee government completing 1000 days in office.

"The coalition has remained in power under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee which has not only been accepted by the NDA but beyond it. It was gratifying to note that no coalition government has lasted half as long," Advani told a press conference.

Advani said the reshuffle in the central ministry was an important milestone for NDA and BJP as Vajpayee has inducted many promising and new personalities in his council of ministers.

## Lanka plans to impeach president

INTERNET, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government is planning to move an impeachment motion in parliament against President Chandrika Kumaratunga on allegations of corruption and abuse of power, the local Sunday Leader newspaper reported.

The paper said that the political committee of the United National Front government took the decision at a special meeting on July 4. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was reportedly chairing the meeting, which saw the participation of several other senior cabinet ministers.

According to the paper the impeachment case will be based on a 2.3 billion rupee vehicle scandal where President Kumaratunga had allegedly imported several limousines worth billions of rupees and is yet to inform the cabinet of ministers

where the cars are presently being kept.

The issue has been dominating cabinet meetings in the past weeks as some of her angry opponents in the UNF have tried to seek explanations from her on the fate of the vehicles.

Kumaratunga has the power as Executive President to dissolve parliament within one year of elections and the UNF has been worried that she will take advantage of her constitutional right to shut parliament in December and give her party, the Peoples Alliance (PA), another opportunity to come back to power, which is also a major factor that could prompt an impeachment proceeding.

The President has not implied she would do this and since her opponents came into office in December she has tried to work well with them but the strong political

dissent that has existed between her party and the UNF through the years has made the co-habitation exercise somewhat a failure.

Impeaching Kumaratunga would be a tiresome task as her position is well protected by the constitution. The government would not only have to make a valid case that has to be accepted by the country's highest court but will also need a two-thirds majority vote in parliament and they are far from close to achieving this.

The political committee of the government has also decided to impeach the country's Chief Justice Sarath Silva, the paper added.

Impeachment proceedings on him had already been initiated by the UNF when they were in opposition last year but the matter was quashed after parliament was dissolved in 2001.

## Indonesian karaoke lounge fire kills 22

AFP, Jakarta

At least 22 people are feared to have died when a blaze engulfed a karaoke lounge and restaurant in the Indonesian city of Palembang, police said Monday.

The remains of 22 people had been found so far and the death toll could rise as a search was continuing, said police Second Sergeant Bram in the city in South Sumatra.

Bram told AFP that 13 people were injured including some who tried to jump from the upper floors of the blazing six-storey building on Sunday.

The fire broke out at the Hepi karaoke lounge and restaurant on Sunday afternoon and was only

extinguished around 1:00 am Monday, the fire brigade said.

A local photographer said rescuers had still not searched every part of the building as of Monday afternoon.

Although the fire had been extinguished, some parts of the building were still too hot to enter and firemen were dousing them.

Maliki, a forensic doctor at the state Muhammad Husin hospital in Palembang, said the remains of 17 people had so far been brought to the hospital. Only 11 of them had been identified.

SCTV television said at least four people, including the manager of the lounge, were rescued. It said the building had no emergency staircase or fire extinguishers.

## OAU makes way for African Union

REUTERS, Durban

African leaders on Monday bury the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), long seen as an empty talking shop, and prepare to unveil a sturdier African Union (AU) aimed at ending war and underdevelopment.

The last OAU summit will dismantle a 40-year-old grouping crippled by a lack of money, bureaucratic infighting and a host of conflicts from Sudan to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In its place, at the summit in the South African resort of Durban on Tuesday, will come the AU, a gathering that aims to replicate the European Union in fostering prosperity and democracy through social, economic and regional integration.

But even as speakers including South African President Thabo Mbeki and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi usher out the OAU and hail its role in decolonisation and fighting apartheid, turmoil on the continent is casting shadows over the new union's future.

"The new body will inherit an ineffectual structure and a continent riddled with corruption, disregard for the most basic tenets of human rights, and a continent crippled by poverty and disease," said Johannesburg's Sunday Times.

"What is worrying is that some of the leaders who will commit themselves to the AU's objectives are themselves dictators, murderers and thieves."

Unlike the OAU, the 53-nation

union will have the right to intervene in member states in cases of genocide and war crimes and so, in theory, be better placed to tackle abuses.

"Africa is drawing the line between the era of the liberation struggle and the era of development," said Ghanaian President John Kufuor, one of 33 heads of state who had arrived by Sunday evening for the first such African summit held in South Africa since the end of white minority rule in 1994.

But already African leaders are causing doubts about their readiness to get tough with each other over alleged wrongdoing in a continent ravaged by official corruption and conflict.

## Indian parties reject SC ruling on polls candidates crimes

AFP, New Delhi

Indian political parties on Monday rejected a Supreme Court ruling that will make it compulsory for all electoral candidates to declare criminal cases pending against them, as well as all their assets.

Instead, they said a comprehensive law should be framed in consultation with all parties that will guide electoral reforms.

Spokesman for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the political parties were also against having to declare the educational qualifications of candidates.

India's Supreme Court said in May all candidates contesting elections must disclose any criminal cases pending against them as well as their assets, liabilities and educational qualifications.

The court had ordered the election commission, which oversees polling across the country, to issue the necessary directions to political parties as well as draw up a set of guidelines for poll candidates.

However, political parties say only parliament can make changes to the law.

They said guidelines issued by the regulator may be open to interpretation and not have sufficient

legal validity.

The Supreme Court had said in its order that voters have a right to know the background of the candidates standing for election.

According to Indian law, politicians cannot stand if they have been convicted of a crime, but having a criminal case pending against them does not debar them.

Many politicians with criminal cases pending against them, particularly in the impoverished states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, contest polls and often get elected.

There is no minimum educational qualification for poll contestants.

## Military govt trying to keep me out: Benazir

IANS, Karachi

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has charged the military regime with attempting to keep the country's two biggest political parties - her Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) - from contesting the October general elections.

"I reject the new constitutional amendments because only the people have the mandate to elect a prime minister for a third term," Bhutto said in a statement issued from Bilawal House on Sunday, Online news agency reports.

The constitutional reforms package proposed by President

Parvez Musharraf contains a clause barring a prime minister from serving a third term.

Both Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) have served two terms in office.

"The new constitutional package is nothing but a part of the well-planned agenda of the military regime to damage the political stature of Nawaz Sharif and me," the statement added.

AFP adds: Pakistan's main political parties Sunday united in their opposition to an order from military ruler Pervez Musharraf banning former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto from running for re-election.

## 'Musharraf's latest ban to inject fresh blood to Pak politics'

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's move to ban premiers from a third term was designed to inject "new blood" into the country's shattered political scene, a top minister said Monday, as observers flayed the ban as "throwing a shadow" over hopes for democracy.

The "Qualification for Public Office Order 2002," issued late Saturday, decrees that "a person who has at any time held office of the prime minister or that of chief minister of a province, or a combination of such offices, for two terms ... shall not be qualified to hold" either post.

Federal Law Minister Khlid Ranjha rejected criticism that it was taking away the electorate's right to decide, saying the move was aimed at revitalising an arena long dominated by the same figures.

"With this the political leadership will not have stagnation. It will create political discipline," he told AFP.

"Moreover a party leader, conscious that there would be no more

than two terms, would work more devotedly.

"This is constitutional rationalisation."

The government's rationalisation has done little to placate critics.

"The long-awaited law ... throws a shadow over the coming restoration of democracy," The Nation daily pronounced in its editorial Monday.

Opposition parties and observers have accused Musharraf of targeting former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party and Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League, both of whom ruled Pakistan twice.

A reported meeting of the traditional arch-rivals last week in Saudi Arabia, where Sharif lives in exile, was seen as the catalyst, amid rumours rife in the Pakistani press that the two had brokered a deal to share supporters in coming parliamentary elections.

The context and timing of the ban "makes the motive very suspect," political commentator Nasim Zehra said at the weekend, echoing cries that it was little more than a ploy to

reinforce Musharraf's bid to stymie a return to power by Bhutto or Sharif.

"It's plain and simple that it's meant to keep these two individuals out."

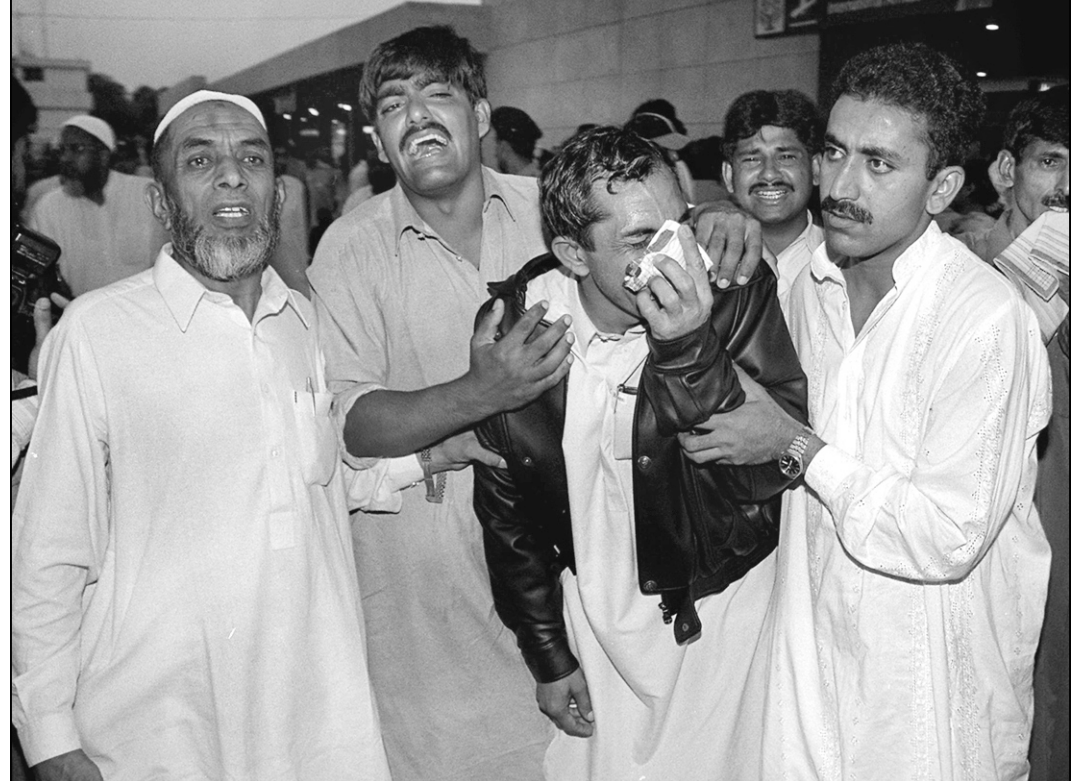
Ranjha rejected charges that the new decree targeted Benazir and Sharif.

"It is not person specific. They may say so. Many countries have this provision," he said. "It is a legal decision."

"They can take the matter to the court and may have it reversed through the next parliament."

The decree is the latest in a series of restrictions on candidates announced by Musharraf, the armed forces chief who overthrew the elected Sharif government in October 1999 and last year declared himself president.

The military ruler has already banned non-university graduates from running for election, and has proposed barring candidates convicted of crimes "involving moral turpitude or for giving false evidence."



Relatives console Rab Nawaz (2nd R), the father of the Pakistani girls killed in the United Kingdom as their bodies arrive at the Islamabad International Airport on Monday. Five young sisters alongside their mother, uncle and grandmother were killed in an arson attack at their home in Birky, Huddersfield, in United Kingdom on May 12. The bodies were later transported to a village, some 50 km from Islamabad for burials.

## Nizam's descendant gets the due share

AFP, Hyderabad

The direct descendant of the Nizam of Hyderabad, an Indian Muslim ruler who had once laid claim to the title of the richest person in the world, has received 740 million rupees (15 million dollars) for his share from the sale of rare jewels.

A royal family member said Monday Mir Barkat Ali Khan, grandson of Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, and also known as Mukarram Khan, had reached a legal settlement with other relations who were all claimants to the 1995 sale.

"We felt Mukarram Khan did not deserve to automatically inherit the late Nizam's assets as he has done little to preserve the Nizam's legacy," Khudrat Ali Khan, his cousin, told AFP.

After a legal tussle, the settlement was reached in order to avoid a delay in distribution of the money. Under the terms, Ali Khan got less than the 1.12 billion rupees of the original inheritance.

Ali Khan does not live in India and shuttles between Australia and Turkey.

The sale of the 173-piece jewel collection in 1995, which earned 2.18 billion rupees, could take place only after a complicated legal

battle between the Indian government and a trust set up by the Nizam.

But another court dispute broke out when family relations challenged the right of Ali Khan to get an extra sum as the direct heir of the Nizam.

The collection had remained in the custody of two trusts created by the late Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, to safeguard the family's wealth.

However, after India abolished the privy purses given to princes in 1972, many noble families began sending precious belongings abroad for fear of them being taken over by the government.

To stem the outflow, the government that year established an act allowing it to acquire Indian antiques.

The government acquired the 173 pieces in 1995 after 17 years of protracted legal battle.

The collection includes the Jacob diamond, believed to be the third largest diamond in the world, as well as exquisitely crafted turban ornaments, necklaces, belts, buckles, armlets, finger rings, toe rings, ear rings, buttons and cuff links.