

Gunmen assassinate Pak politician

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Oct 3 : Gunmen on Thursday assassinated one of Pakistan's more colorful politicians, Gen. Fazle Haq, a former governor and chief minister of Pakistan's tribal Northwest Frontier Province, reports AP.

The stocky gray-haired general-turned-politician was returning home from the provincial assembly in the heart of this dusty frontier when a carload of bandits armed with semi-automatic rifles sprayed his vehicle with bullets, a police official said. He spoke on condition he not be identified.

No one claimed responsibility.

Several months ago, gunmen killed Haq's sister and brother-in-law in what police said was a family feud. Police have so far refused to say whether there is any connection between the killings. Haq came to power in the 1980s during military rule in Pakistan. His political mentor

was Pakistan's President Gen. Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, who died in a mysterious plane crash in August 1988.

During former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's administration, Haq was imprisoned on murder charges in the 1988 shooting death of a prominent Shiite leader, Arif Husain al-Husseini.

He denied the charge and assailed Ms. Bhutto for political victimization.

When she was dismissed from power on corruption charges in August 1990, Haq was released.

While governor of Pakistan's rugged frontier province that borders war-scarred Afghanistan, Haq was known for his strong-arm tactics.

In 1985, he led heavily armed soldiers into Pakistan's lawless tribal area and bulldozed the homes of several prominent tribal leaders, accusing them of dealing in drugs. Dozens of people were killed.

Iran Air official arrested for killing Bakhtiar

PARIS, Oct 3 : French police on Wednesday arrested the head of security services for the Iran Air company at Paris's Orly Airport in connection with the murder in August of the exiled former Prime Minister of Iran at his Paris home, well-informed sources said here, reports AFP.

The sources said the men, whose identity was not released, was suspected of belonging to a "French network" which helped provide logistics for the three men who are believed to have carried out the assassination of Shapur Bakhtiar and an aide on August 6 in the Paris suburb of

Suresnes.

They said the arrest of the Iran Air official, which was interpreted here as a hard blow for Tehran in its bid to normalise its relations with France, would "help untangle the web" of the organisation set up to facilitate the murder.

One of the suspects in the killing, Ali Rad Vakili, has been arrested and the two others, Mohammad Azadi and Farydun Boyerhamadi, are on the run.

The sources said examining magistrate Jean-Louis Brugiere had now been able to get a clear idea of the pyramid-shaped organisation set up around the killing and added that all the tracks being followed led towards the Tehran government.

Bakhtiar, who had been living in exile in France since the Islamic revolution of 1979, was the last Prime Minister of the late Shah of Iran.

The head of the logistics network is believed to have been Masoud Hendi, a 44-year-old Iranian businessman who was arrested and charged here late last month.

He is in particular believed to have helped get the three alleged killers into the country by procuring their visas.

Indo-Pak talks to ease tension begin Oct 29

ISLAMABAD, Oct 3 : Senior Indian and Pakistani officials will meet in Islamabad from October 29 to 31 for talks on easing border tension in disputed Kashmir state, a Pakistani spokesman said Wednesday, reports Reuter.

BRIEFLY

Perez's call to halt fighting in Y'slavia : UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar issued a new appeal on Wednesday for a halt to the fighting in Yugoslavia and for cooperation with European Community peace efforts, reports Reuter from United Nations.

Yugoslav Armed Forces on Wednesday pounded the city of Dubrovnik and launched an offensive across Croatia in which dozens of people were killed in the worst fighting for weeks. In answer to queries, Perez de Cuellar said, "I would like to take advantage of your question in order to make an appeal to all parties to reduce the hostilities and help the peace efforts of the EC countries."

France-Kuwait defence pact likely : France, a key player in the Gulf war, is discussing a defence cooperation accord with Kuwait that would enable it to stock arms and use military bases in the Gulf state, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Paris said on Wednesday, reports Reuter from Paris.

Ambassador Tarek Ruzouqi said the proposal to give France use of facilities in Kuwait was similar to accords already reached with Washington and under discussion with Britain.

"These three countries have presented their wish to participate in the security of Kuwait and the region in case of danger," he told reporters.

UN won't soften sanctions on Iraq : The Security Council decided on Wednesday not to soften its economic sanctions against Iraq, reports Reuter from United Nations.

It conducted its third routine review—held every 60 days—since the council adopted a sweeping resolution on April 3 to strip Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction and earmark part of future oil revenues for Gulf war reparations.

The resolution leaves open the possibility of reducing or lifting the sanctions, first imposed in August last year after Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

OAS sanctions against Haiti : The Organization of American States reached agreement early Thursday on a series of sanctions against the military regime in Haiti and also demanded the immediate restoration of democratic rule there, AP from Washington reports.

OAS foreign ministers worked out the agreement during marathon negotiations following a personal appeal for intervention by ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The resolution was approved by consensus at 0625 GMT.

Meanwhile, in Haiti, the army's chief, Brig. Gen. Raoul Cedras, said the military would hand over power to Parliament but warned Aristide not to try to return from exile. Cedras also denied he planned the coup on Monday that ousted Aristide.

As a first step, the OAS will dispatch a high-level mission to Haiti as soon as possible to demand that the junta relinquish power back to Aristide, who was deposed on Monday.

US considers Oct 30 for ME confce : The United States is considering October 30 and 31 as the dates for a Middle East peace conference, sources at the United Nations said on Wednesday, reports Reuter from United Nations.

This emerged when a Paris conference on a Cambodian peace settlement originally scheduled for those dates was advanced to October 23.

The sources said the U S State Department had tentatively marked October 30 and 31 as the dates for the U S - Soviet sponsored middle East conference and therefore wanted the Cambodia meeting rescheduled.



TOKYO : Contestants from Latin America (L-R) Miss Costa Rica Ehenie Jimenez, Miss Mexico Cristina Serrano, Miss Brazil Lisiane Braile, Miss Venezuela Ninrka Acevedo and Miss Bolivia Rosmy Pol pose for photographers during a photo session for the Miss International beauty pageant. Fiftyone contestants will be vying for the Miss International title October 13 here. — AFP/UNB photo

US sending marines for possible evacuation from Haiti

WASHINGTON, Oct 3 : The United States is sending up to 400 marines to Guantanamo Naval Station in Cuba for possible use in evacuating Americans from Haiti following the ouster of its democratically elected President, US defence officials said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The officials, who asked not to be identified, stressed that no decision had been made to evacuate Americans and that the marines would only be involved in such a rescue effort.

"We have no orders from the State Department for such a move. But I emphasize that we are not getting involved in the internal affairs of Haiti and this would only be in an emergency evacuation," said one official. The reports of a possible evacuation came as the Organisation of American States met here, with ousted Haitian President Jean-

Bertrand Aristide present, to decide on a response to the military coup.

The US officials said they expected between 300 and 400 marines would be sent quickly from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to the American base in Cuba, which is only a short distance from Haiti.

"We always have to be prepared for contingency situations," Defence Department spokesman Pete Williams said.

He refused to confirm or deny the movement of the marines to the base, but other defence officials said they expected that aircraft and helicopters would be used if an evacuation was ordered.

The officials said they did not know how many Americans were in Haiti but reports have indicated about 8,000 live there.

At the State Department, spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said : "Each embassy always has contingency plans in case of an emergency to help Americans get out of harm's way but there is no evacuation order that I'm personally aware of to evacuate Americans from Haiti."

In Haiti's capital of Port-Au-Prince Wednesday, soldiers patrolled the streets for a third day amid sporadic shooting. Aristide's supporters built barricades for stones and trees and set tyres aflame to block

New criminal proceedings against Union Carbide ordered

NEW DELHI, Oct 3 : The Indian Supreme Court on Thursday ordered new criminal proceedings against Union Carbide Corp. for the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster that killed more than 3,800 people, reports AP.

The five-judge panel upheld the dir's 470 million settlement reached in 1989 for the world's deadliest industrial disaster, but it lifted the criminal immunity granted the US multinational company and its Indian subsidiary.

Under the terms of the 1989 settlement, all criminal proceedings were dropped, including a charge of culpable homicide against former Union Carbide chairman Warren Anderson. Critics had said the settlement was too low and Union Carbide should be brought to trial.

Off the Record

Sonia still casting long shadow

NEW DELHI : Rajiv Gandhi's Italian-born widow is casting a long shadow over India's three-month-old minority government as it braces for crucial Parliamentary by-elections, reports AP.

No one in the ruling Congress (I) Party, including Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, seems to be sure whether Sonia Gandhi will contest the seat won by her husband before his assassination.

And the 44-year-old mother of two has not helped the uncertainty by maintaining a stubborn silence on her future, despite increasing speculation in the domestic media and among political parties.

A vocal section in the Congress wants her to emerge from her high-profile isolation and plunge into active politics, while another would be happy to see her remain cloistered in her high-security residence.

Both groups are keeping their fingers crossed ahead of nominations for 16 constituencies which are to go to the polls in November. They include Amethi, which former Premier Rajiv Gandhi had represented since 1981.

The main question is whether Sonia Gandhi will become a Congress candidate and keep the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty's flag flying, or opt once and for all out of politics after three violent deaths in the family.

British spy novelist inspires Primakov

MOSCOW : The New head of Soviet foreign intelligence said on Wednesday he wanted Soviet and US spies, arch-enemies for decades, to start working together, reports Reuter.

"We need a reorganisation and it will take place," Yevgeny Primakov said at his first news conference since being appointed Soviet spy master on Monday. "Intelligence is a closed kind of thing, but I want to develop glasnost where it is possible."

Primakov, a 61-year-old Middle East expert, is taking on an entirely new job, created when President Mikhail Gorbachev separated foreign intelligence from the feared secret police.

He will report for the time being to the KGB's liberal new boss Vadim Bakatin, who was appointed after a failed coup by Soviet hardliners last August.

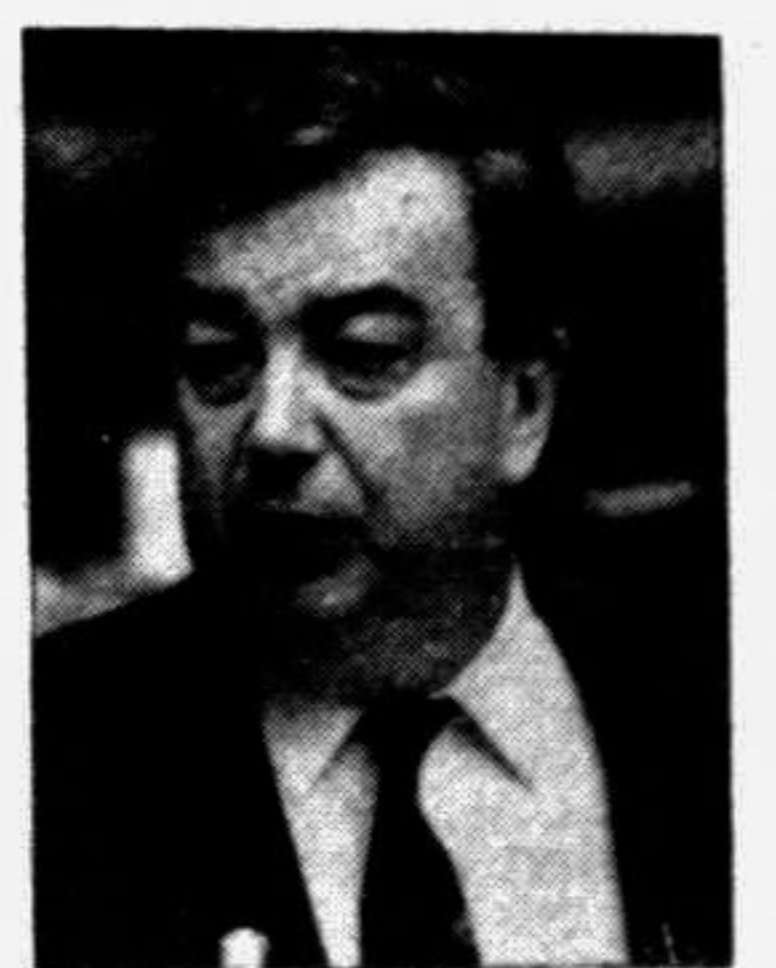
"I'm a deputy until intelligence is established as a separate organ. This will take place very soon," he said.

He said his division would then concentrate on fighting drug-trafficking and international terrorism, areas in which Moscow should team up with Washington.

"It is apparent we have to step up our cooperation and I am willing to do that," he said.

Primakov said he had never worked for the KGB before — millions of other Russians are suspected of being part-time agents — but he intended to take lessons in espionage from British spy novelist John le Carré.

"He's one of my most favourite writers," Primakov said. "I shall re-read his novels to get something useful."



Hun Sen sees no hurdle in peace treaty

NEW DELHI, Oct 3 : Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia arrived Thursday on a three-day visit, saying he did not expect any obstacles toward an imminent peace treaty to end the 12-year civil war in his country, reports AP.

Hun Sen said he would like India and the Non Aligned Movement to take part in the implementation of the peace settlement that was reached in New York last month between his Vietnam-backed Phnom Penh government and three guerrilla groups.

The four factions agreed on a scheme for national elections, removing the last obsta-

cle to signing a peace treaty later this month in Paris at the International Conference.

Hun Sen told reporters at the New Delhi airport that he favoured early polls, probably in 1992 winter or early 1993.

"We should not delay them (the elections) beyond a point, he said.

Reuter adds: Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar on Wednesday recommended an advance 268-member peacekeeping mission go to Cambodia next month to monitor a ceasefire and help clear thousands of mines littering the country during the last 20 years of warfare.

Pak court order against 2 Americans barbaric : Solarz

WASHINGTON, Oct 3 : A Pakistani court order to amputate the hands and feet of two Americans convicted of bank robbery has sparked protest among US officials and lawmakers, reports AP.

Representative Stephen Solarz, the Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee Chairman, said in a report published by the Washington Post that the order to cut off the right hands and left feet of Daniel and Charles Boyd was "barbaric."

"Were Pakistan to carry out such a sentence, it would have an absolutely chilling impact upon US-Pakistani relations," he said, adding such a punishment was "utterly unthinkable."

The Post also reported that the State Department had expressed its concern about the case to Pakistani officials and considered the penalty "particularly harsh."

The two men, who converted to Islam and moved to Pakistan two years ago, are in a Peshawar jail awaiting appeal of their September 25 sentence, which includes prison

terms of at least five years. The two brothers, aged 30 and 32, maintain that they are not guilty of bank robbery and that the charges stemmed from a dispute with a bank manager.



NEW DELHI : A youth chants slogans demanding government action for the massacre last August of untouchables by upper caste Hindus in Southern Andhra Pradesh state. India marks the 122nd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who affectionately referred to untouchables as Harijans, or God's children, and stated that his next incarnation he desired to be born a Harijan to experience fully their plight. — AFP/UNB Photo

Y'slav navy resumes blockade of Croatian ports

BELGRADE, Oct 3 : The Yugoslav Navy on Thursday resumed a blockade of Croatia's Adriatic Sea ports, rejecting new peace overtures by the rebel republic to end a 3-month fighting, reports AP.

Fighting raged around the Adriatic port of Dubrovnik and the strategic east Croatian stronghold of Vukoviz border with arch-rival Serbia.

The federal army said the naval blockade was reimposed because of violations of a Sept 22 cease-fire agreement by Croatian forces, blockades of army barracks and attacks on military installations.

The navy lifted the blockade of Croatian ports soon after the latest cease-fire agreement went into force last month. But the accord collapsed Tuesday, when heavy fighting erupted in east Croatia's Slavonia region and on the coast around Dubrovnik.

The federal army, saying it is fed up with talk, battled Wednesday for some of the biggest military prizes yet in war-torn Croatia — the medieval jewel of Dubrovnik, dear to many Croats, and the eastern strongholds Vukovar and Vinkovet.

Japanese Finance Minister resigns

TOKYO, Oct 3 : Japanese Finance Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto tendered his resignation to Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu today but was asked to stay on until after International Monetary Fund and other meetings in Bangkok later this month, Japan's NIK National Television said, reports Reuter.

Kaifu said he wanted Hashimoto to attend the Group of Seven and other meetings in Bangkok in mid-October, NIK said.

The meetings are to end on October.

Akihito arrives in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Oct 3 : Japanese Emperor Akihito arrived in Indonesia today on the last leg of a landmark visit to Southeast Asia where bitter memories remain of his country's war-time rule, reports Reuter.

Akihito and Empress Michiko arrived from Malaysia and were met at Jakarta's military airport by Indonesian Defence Minister Denny Murdani.

Security was heavy and commandos patrolled the airport roofs and checked cars, warning of possible attempts to disrupt the visit.

Pictures of members of the radical Japanese Red Army have been posted at major airports.

Whales get police escort

BARNSTABLE (Mass) : A dozen pilot whales were given a police escort to the open sea after becoming stranded on a Cape Cod beach for the third time in a week, reports AP.

The whales ran aground in Barnstable on Tuesday evening but swam out to sea at high tide, guided by a police boat.

The whales were survivors from a group that became stranded in Truro. That were out to sea during high tide but became stuck the next day in Dennis, where four died and an ailing whale was put to sleep.

"It's hard to stop a stranding," said Sandra Goldfarb of the New England Aquarium. "Once a whale strands, its organs and systems start to break down. Depending on how its condition is, it might not be healthy enough to make it out to sea."

Pilot whales measure up to 20 feet (six metre) long and weigh 2,000 to 4,000 pounds (900 to 1,800 kilograms). Once beached, their bulk can crush their internal organs. Whale blubber, which insulates them from cold in the sea, causes them to overheat on land.

Of the 12 whales that survived Monday's stranding, nine were helped off the beach by rescuers and escorted to Sesuit Harbor. The three others were lifted off the sand by high tide. But by Tuesday evening all 12 were stuck again.

Experts theorize that whales run aground when they follow a sick leader or when the slopping beach throws their navigational abilities out of whack.

Waiting for a flat for 65 years

YEREVAN : This is exactly the period an inhabitant of Yerevan has to wait for a flat at the current rate of housing construction. This conclusion was drawn by a correspondent of the 'Snark' news agency after visiting the executive committee of the Yerevan city Soviet. During the first half of 1991 the state has commissioned a little over 300 flats, and cooperatives have built almost 400 flats in Yerevan, while about 45,000 families in the capital are on the waiting lists now, reports Novosti.

At present a one-room flat costs on the Yerevan black market from 80,000 to 100,000 roubles, depending on the district. The cost of a four-room flat in a new house in the city centre has soared to almost a million roubles. People pay 300 roubles a month just to rent a room. All settlements are conducted in cash only.

AIDS reservoir

BANGKOK, Oct 3 : A bustling brothel province in southern Thailand is becoming a reservoir for AIDS as the disease spreads at an "alarming" rate, a local public health official said today, reports AP.

Jessada Jongpaibul, the head of Hiet Yai hospital academic division, said in a telephone interview that 1,329 out of 100,000 people in Songkhla had tested positive for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes AIDS.

However, the real number of AIDS carriers is estimated to be at least five times higher, Jessada said. Songkhla, a border province about 950 kilometers (570 miles) from here, is a haven for pleasure seeking men from Malaysia, and Singapore, with numerous brothels offering a wide choice of prostitutes, including Thais, Burmese, southern Chinese and hill tribes.

There are thought to be about 10,000 prostitutes working in the province, while during high seasons this number could swell to 30,000 or more with additional forces of "expat" prostitutes arriving from Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Pattaya.

So far, 623 men and 706 men and 706 women—mostly prostitutes, but also housewives — have tested HIV positive in this province.

Among those infected were some pregnant women, about 20 of whom tested positive with the deadly virus when they registered their pregnancy, Jessada, a medical doctor said.

"This is frightening. If nothing is done it will be soon like Africa," he said. Despite the large number of people infected with the disease, anti-AIDS campaigns here are generally cold-shouldered.