

Speaker suspends Lankan Assembly

COLOMBO, Oct 8: Sri Lanka's parliamentary Speaker suspended the assembly today amid a huge uproar created by opposition MPs protesting his rejection of an impeachment resolution against President Ranasinghe Premadasa, reports AFP.

"If you don't conduct yourself properly, I will adjourn the House," Speaker Mohammad Haniffa Mohammad repeatedly warned opposition MPs soon after announcing he had rejected the unprecedented motion against Premadasa.

Shortly after Parliament began sitting today Mohammad came under intense heckling by opposition lawmakers for his decision taken Monday not to proceed against Premadasa. Parliament, which still has

an opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion against Premadasa before it, will resume Wednesday.

Tamilis' targets bombed

Reuters adds: Sri Lanka troops backed by bomber planes attacked Tamil rebel targets in the northern districts of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi on Monday, a military spokesman said today.

In the northeastern Mannar district, troops killed two members of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on Monday, he said.

The Tigers are fighting for their own homeland in the north and east.

Two rebels were killed by a rival Tamil group in the northern Vavuniya district on Monday, the spokesman said.

Bonn says it can't halt neo-Nazi attack on foreigners

BONN, Oct 8: The Bonn government said on Monday it could do little to halt a spate of vicious racist attacks on foreigners apart from asking Germans to help defend the victims, reports Reuter.

"We have of course no possibility of eliminating overnight a wave of hostility, of attacks, against foreigners," government spokesman Dieter Vogel said in a radio interview. "This cannot be done by decree."

There have been hundreds of attacks on asylum-seekers and immigrants in East and West Germany in the last three weeks.

Police reported about 50 incidents involving neo-Nazi

gangs over the weekend. Two hostels for foreigners in the southern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg were attacked early on Monday morning.

Officials in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia said they expected to charge three youths suspected of lobbing petrol bombs into a hostel for foreigners last week, badly burning two Lebanese children.

State Justice Minister Rolf Krumsack warned right-wing gangs that arson and attempted murder carried maximum sentences of life imprisonment.

Vogel appeared to offer tacit support to pro-immigrant groups which have begun or-

ganising defensive overnight vigils outside homes for asylum-seekers, the main target of neo-Nazi violence.

"We can try to ensure, by making constant appeals, that people themselves protect foreigners and we can try to help with border guard units.... when state police are unable to cope," he said.

"But there can be no federal initiative in the sense that we could say we will make sure this does not happen again from tomorrow."

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats want to alter the 1949 Constitution which gives foreigners a blanket right to claim asylum in Germany to ensure only people

facing genuine persecution at home are admitted into Germany.

But they are being prevented from doing so by their Free Democrat coalition partners and the opposition Social Democrats, who are denying Kohl the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to amend the Constitution.

Cross-party talks on asylum on Thursday are expected to agree on little more than a further speeding-up of procedures for handling asylum-seekers.

A record 200,000 foreigners are expected to apply for asylum this year, but only about five per cent can hope to get it.

Off the Record

I don't seek peerage; Thatcher

LONDON: Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher wrote to The Times newspaper Tuesday to deny an earlier report that she was seeking to be made a Countess in the honours list next year, reports AFP.

In a brief letter to the paper's editor she said: "I wish to make it clear that I have not sought and do not seek a hereditary peerage."

The denial followed a report in The Times last week, quoting government sources as saying Britain's former Prime Minister was seeking the hereditary honour.

The same sources had told The Times that Thatcher was seeking the title Countess finchely in honour of the north London district she has represented in Britain's House of Commons for 32 years.



But while the former Conservative leader's letter denied that she had sought a hereditary peerage, she has not denied in public that she will accept the lesser honour of a life peerage when she makes her announced retirement from the Commons next year.

The life peerage, which it is believed she will accept, will then give her a seat in the House of Lords and avoid the protests over the use of a hereditary system by a politician who has long espoused values of a meritocracy.

Phoney phone calls

NEW DELHI: India's federal Communications Minister Tuesday called on the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to track down and nab officials of his own ministry involved in making tens of thousands of dollars worth of unpaid phone calls, reports AFP.

Minister of State for Communications Rajesh Pilot said he had documented complaints that telecom officials throughout India were taking hefty bribes to put through hundreds of thousands of rupees of international calls monthly.

Pilot said three Post Masters General had already been suspended for involvement in "financial irregularities" but provided no further details of the suspensions.

The CBI — India's equivalent of the American FBI or Federal Bureau of Investigation — would be paid by the Communications Department to monitor all employees from his own office down to the lowest clerk until internal security could be tightened, Pilot told the Press Trust of India (PTI).

No planning at Patpong

BANGKOK: Planning is not a strong point on Patpong. Some of the hundreds of prostitutes that staff the noisy bars of the world famous sex street have heard rumours about a big meeting of bankers coming to town from around the world, reports Reuter.

The annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund takes place here October 15-17 and is preceded by dozens of informal get-togethers among the world's leading economic planners.

Ten thousand delegates, observers and journalists are gathering for Bangkok's biggest-ever convention.

"I heard 20,000 men and no women, said Pen with a greedy smile. She brags that she works at the "third best bar" on the street.

Have her bosses taken on any new employees to cope with a surge in business?

There are always new girls, Pen replies.

"I have only been here two days, says Ping, a teenage girl in a skimpy bathing suit. She had never heard of the World Bank, she said, or Bangkok's new 100-million-dollar convention centre built for its meeting.

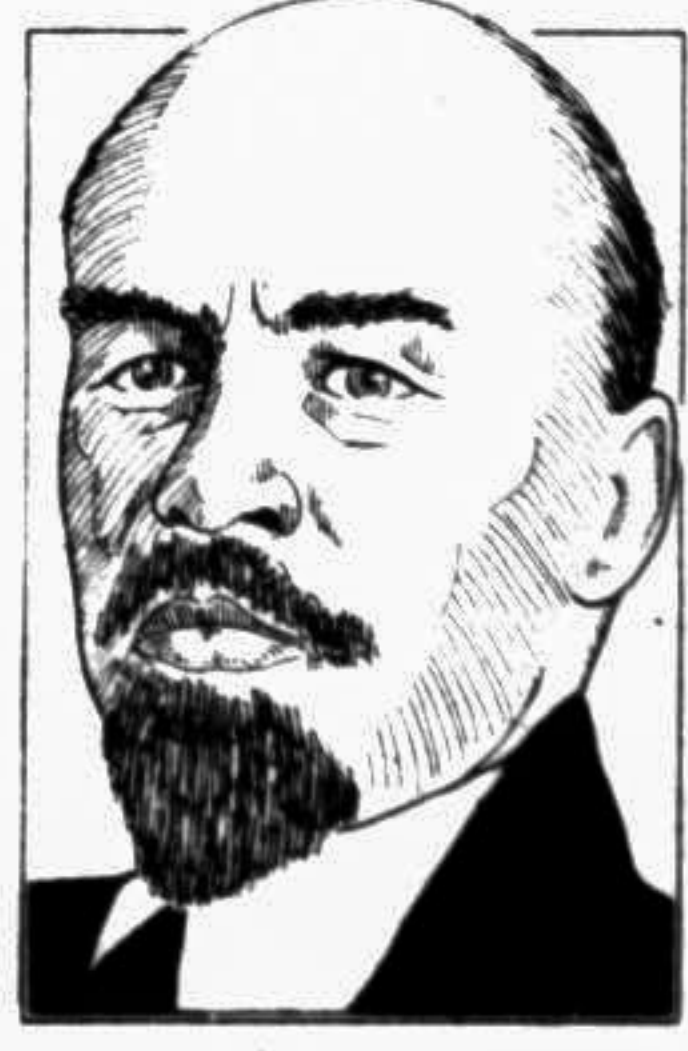
Noy, another teenager, knows very little English. Her response to questions about her plans for next few weeks is always the same. "I like you, she says. "I want to go with you."

Lenin's statue worth 1 lakh

MOSCOW: A statue of Lenin removed from the centre of the Dushanbe, the capital of Tadjikistan, was sold Monday for 100,000 dollars, the RIA news agency reported, reports AFP.

The buyer was Alexis Safarov, a Tadjik who obtained Finnish citizenship, it said.

A conservative leadership came to power on September 23 in Tadjikistan after parliamentary President Kadriddin Aslonov resigned, following the removal of the Lenin statue from the capital and the suspension of the republic's Communist Party.



Now ear grafted in thigh

LONDON: British surgeons grafted a man's right ear to his thigh after it was bitten off in a fight, reports Reuter.

Doctors explained it was too mangled to stitch back on to his head and would live on the leg of Patrick Neary, 32, for five months where it would have a better chance.

The ear was cleaned up as well as could be expected, and was then grafted on the Neary's right thigh where it will stay for around five months, said Dominic Conlin of the Queen Victoria Hospital, West Sussex, in southern England.

His position will then be assessed again, and hopefully his ear can be moved to its rightful position, he added.

Y'slav warplanes bomb Zagreb

ZAGREB (Yugoslavia), Oct 8: Croatia's leaders met early Tuesday to discuss whether to accept an army ceasefire offer after a near escape from a missile that blew up the republic's president, reports AP.

The attack Monday came hours before a deadline set by the European Community for the parties to cease hostilities or face economic sanctions.

Later Monday, the presidency of Serbia and its three allies offered to stop fighting at midnight if the Europeans involved in mediating the conflict could guarantee Croatia's cooperation.

Serbia said that once the ceasefire took hold, Croatia would have 24 hours to lift its blockades of federal army garrisons. The army would resume battle if Croatia failed to comply, it warned.

There was no immediate Croatian response but the republic's leaders were meeting past midnight, apparently to consider a reply. The army has used the blockades to justify its onslaught against Croatian forces over the past week. Croatia has refused to lift the blockades until the army attack ceases.



ATHENS: Palestinian Md Rashid gestures during his trial as policeman look on. A Three-member tribunal meeting under stringent security measures at the Korydalos maximum security prison will try Rashid, accused of the 1982 Pan Am blast over Hawaii. — AFP/UNB photo

Kashmiri militants kidnap cousin of Nabi Azad

SRINAGAR, Oct 8: Kashmiri militants said Monday they had kidnapped the cousin of an Indian federal minister and that they would make their demands for his release known at a later date, reports AFP.

The Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen said it had seized junior engineer Bashir Ahmad Raadher, 26, whom they identified as a cousin of Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Ghulam Nabi Azad, a Muslim.

There was no immediate official confirmation here or in Delhi of the claim by the group, one of several waging a bloody battle to secede Kashmir from India.

In New Delhi, Azad, whose brother-in-law was kidnapped last month and is still in the hands of a rival militant group, was unavailable for comment.

A Muslim spokesman, speaking by telephone from an undisclosed location to reporters in Srinagar, claimed it had grabbed the minister's cousin Sunday while he was in Srinagar for a public service interview.

Srinagar is the urban hub of the separatist campaign in Muslim majority Kashmir where the militants frequently resort to kidnapping officials, their relatives and foreigners to force the release of jailed colleagues.

"We will be issuing some demands later," the Muslim spokesman said without specifying a time.

Ghulam Nabi Azad's brother-in-law, 20-year old student Tasaduk Dev was kidnapped in Kashmir by the Al-Umar Mujahideen on September 22, and is still in their hands.

A third militant group, the Hezb-ul-Mujahideen meanwhile said they had executed all four Indian army troops they captured in Kashmir early in August, but again officials

said they could not confirm the report.

"We have not found the bodies," said one official spokesman who declined to be named.

In a separate incident in the Masdal area of Kashmir, some 37 kilometers (23 miles) north of Srinagar, villagers reported by telephone that a police case had been filed against an Indian army truck driver alleged to have run over and killed two women Sunday.

The villagers said four others including two children had been injured in the incident. Officials had no comment on the report.

Reuters adds: Muslim separatists in India's Jammu and Kashmir state killed four captured security personnel after New Delhi refused to trade the hostages for jailed militants, a guerrilla spokesman said on Monday.

Three of those killed on Sunday were civilian employees of the Indian army

BRITFLY

9 killed in Jakarta bus mishap

A speeding tourist bus slammed again a minibus parked on the side of the road for repair in Subang, West Java, killing nine people and seriously injuring two others, the Angkatan Bersenjata daily said Tuesday, reports AFP from Jakarta.

The minibus carrying 11 people who wanted to visit a hotwater source in Subang, was being repaired following engine trouble when a large tourists bus ramed into from behind Sunday, the daily said.

The victims were all passengers of the minibus who were standing on the side of the road awaiting the repairs, it said.

Naguib Mahfouz will travel abroad: Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988, will travel abroad for the first time on Saturday, the semi-official newspaper Al-Ahram reported on Monday, reports Reuter from Cairo.

Mahfouz, 79, has obtained his first passport and will go to London for surgery to treat an expansion of the aorta artery in the stomach area, it said in its early Tuesday edition.

When he won the Nobel Prize, his two daughters travelled to Sweden to collect it on his behalf.

Ishaq Khan arrives in Saudi Arabia

President Gulam Ishaq Khan of Pakistan arrived in Saudi Arabia for a four-day state visit and was received at the airport by King Fahd, reports AP from Jeddah.

Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdel-Aziz was also among those who received the Pakistani leader on his first state visit to the kingdom since he became president in December 1988.

He will hold talks with King Fahd Tuesday which are expected to focus on Afghanistan, the problem with India over Kashmir and Middle East peace moves.

As part of his efforts to resolve the 13-year-old Afghan crisis, Ishaq Khan last month visited to Iran for talks.

Croatia discusses Serbia's offer

Croatia's leaders met early Tuesday to discuss whether to accept an army cease-fire offer after a near escape from a missile that blew up the republic's presidential palace, reports AP from Zagreb.

The attack Monday came hours before a deadline set by the European Community for the parties to cease hostilities or face economic sanctions.

Later Monday, the presidency of Serbia and its three allies offered to stop fighting at midnight if the Europeans involved in mediating the conflict could guarantee Croatia's cooperation.

Serbia said that once the cease-fire took hold, Croatia would have 24 hours to lift its blockades of federal army garrisons. The army would resume battle if Croatia failed to comply, it warned.

Confce on defence system held in Kiev

A conference in Kiev, capital of Soviet Ukraine, on the 'Principles of National Security of Sovereign States' discussed defence arrangements between the individual republics and the federation, the Interfax news agency reported Monday, reports AFP from Moscow.

The conference which ended Monday, was attended by representatives from the United States, France and the newly independent Baltic republics.

It was organised by the Ukrainian Republican Party and the Republic's Union of Army Officers whose president, Colonel Vilen Martirosian, said that joint supervision was likely to be maintained at federal level for strategic defence forces and anti-aircraft defence.

Joshi denies secret deal with Cong-I

The Bharatiya Janata Party President, Murli Manohar Joshi, has denied his party had struck a secret deal with the Congress-I in which it had promised not to disturb the Narasimha Rao government if the central government in turn stayed clear of BJP-run governments in some states.

"Such speculations are baseless and figments of the imagination of BJP detractors," Joshi told journalists Monday.

He said the BJP was the only party to vote for a no-confidence motion against the Rao government.

Jordanian PM urged to resign: A majority of Jordan's 8-seat Lower House of Parliament on Monday urged Prime Minister Taher al-Masri to resign, saying he and his government were not up to the job, reports Reuter from Amman.

But the move, although unprecedented, was largely symbolic as Parliament is in recess until December 1.

A terse statement signed by an unlikely alliance of 49 Muslim fundamentalists, leftists and pro-establishment figures said Masri, the man King Hussein has entrusted with leading Jordan into Middle East peace talks, no longer enjoyed their confidence.

"Since Masri's government is not capable of facing the needs of the current situation on both the internal and external levels, we announce that this government does not enjoy our confidence anymore and urge it to resign," the statement read.

Kurdish rebels kill 60 Iraqi troops

SULAIMANIYA (Iraq), Oct 8: Iraqi Kurdish guerrillas yesterday shot dead at least 60 unarmed Iraqi soldiers who had surrendered during a fight in the city of Sulaimaniya, eyewitnesses said, reports Reuter.

The soldiers were shot at point blank range while kneeling with their hands on their heads inside a building, the witnesses said.

They appeared to have been captured after hand-to-hand fighting on the outskirts of the city which was coming under mortar fire and possibly shelling from Iraqi tanks on the outskirts.

Dozens of civilians in Sulaimaniya were killed by

sharpened or bullets and at least 15 Kurdish guerrillas died in the fighting, the witnesses said.

Sulaimaniya hospital was treating dozens of casualties.

Fighting broke out between Kurdish rebels and Iraqi forces in the town of Kilri on Saturday and spread to the city of Arbat on Monday.

The witnesses said the Iraqi attacks on Arbat and Sulaimaniya seemed to be totally unprovoked.

Sulaimaniya was relatively calm despite fierce fighting on the outskirts but long queues were forming at petrol stations.

No favourite yet to succeed Perez

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 8: The UN Security Council on Monday began selecting the next Secretary-General in an arcane procedure that primarily plays out in smoke-filled rooms among the "Big Five" powers, reports AP.

No favourite candidate to succeed Javier Perez de Cuellar has emerged. The five powers — the United States, Britain, China, France and the Soviet Union — have not stated their preference. More than 40 names have been circulating.

The 15-member council hopes to decide this month, allowing sufficient time for transition and overlap with Perez de Cuellar, who leaves December 31 after 10 years on the job. He insists he will not

serve again, although speculation persists he could stay on if the council is unable to decide on his successor.

The primary contest is unfolding between African candidates, among them Boutros Ghali of Egypt. African nations say it's their turn because there never has been an African secretary-general, but Western nations oppose a geographical rotation.

Gharakhhan, India's permanent representative, emphasised that the selection is "a very sensitive matter and requires utmost confidentiality among members of the council." He implied that a news blackout would go into effect.

The five permanent council members, later consulted privately about selection of the

world's top diplomat. The Council President will begin bilateral consultations with the other 14 council members on Tuesday to discuss their views on selection and their preferred candidates.

They also said that the council might decide on an informal, anonymous balloting in which council members would identify the candidates they could support and those they reject.

"The idea is to avoid a bruising battle and to avoid a contentious vote in which one of the permanent members would cast a veto," said a diplomat, speaking privately. He said the favored scenario

calls for decision by consensus in a single vote, without several ballots.

The officials list includes six African candidates put forward by the Organization of African Unity, including Ghali and Zimbabwe's finance minister, Bernard Chidzero.

Other contenders include Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, a UN relief official with Pakistani, Iranian and Swiss passports; Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and foreign ministers Ali Alatas of Indonesia, Raul Manglapus of the Philippines, Krzysztof Skubiszewski of Poland, among others.