

52,000 from East Asia admitted into United States

WASHINGTON, Oct 12: Gunmen have shot dead five political activists in Pakistan's western city of Quetta a day after a shootout between rival ethnic groups in which seven people were killed, police said today, reports Reuter.

The five died when gunmen attacked the central office of the regional Pushtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party in the capital of Baluchistan Province late on Friday. Two people were injured.

All markets and shopping centres in the city were closed

5 political activists shot dead in Quetta

On Saturday as tension rose between rival Baluch and Pushtun ethnic groups. Seven people died and 28 were injured on Thursday when activists fought a gunbattle in a dispute over the site of an agricultural college.

The ethnic Baluch National Movement and Baluch Student Organisation had called for vehicles to block roads to press their demand for the college to be built in a Baluch area.

The Pashtuns, who dominate the Afghan border region, want the college in their area.

BRITFLY

Fire at Chernobyl N-plant

Radio Russia reported early Saturday that a fire had broken out in a generating room at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, where a massive 1986 explosion and fire spewed radiation around the world, reports AP from London.

The radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, reported from its correspondent in the Ukraine that the roof of one of the generating rooms of the atomic station was on fire. It gave no other details.

The US network CNN reported that a television station in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, had told its correspondent the fire was under control and there was no danger of a release of radioactivity.

Chernobyl is 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Kiev. An explosion on April 26, 1986, in the No 4 reactor at Chernobyl started a massive fire. Soviet authorities say 32 people died as a direct result of the explosion, the worst disaster in the history of nuclear power.

Cuban CP body to go

The Cuban Communist Party (PCC) decided unanimously Friday to dissolve its central committee secretariat, eliminating that body's supplementary role in PCC organizations, the official Cuban National Information Agency (AIN) said, reports AFP from Havana.

Five top Cuban leaders sit on the central committee secretariat, including President Fidel Castro, his brother and Armed Forces Chief Raul Castro, Carlos Aldana, Jose Machado Ventura and Julian Rizo, AIN said.

Some 1,700 Cuban Communist Party (PCC) delegates were meeting Friday in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba, 900 kilometres (550 miles) east of Havana on day two of the PCC's fourth Congress.

Ukraine to build own army

The Ukrainian parliament Friday called for the withdrawal of all nuclear forces from the republic by 1995, reports AFP.

At a closed door meeting parliament also voted for the setting up of a republican army which should be made up of professionals.

Armed forces based in Ukraine currently about 1.5 million men should be reduced to about 420,000 men by 1995 at which time the republic would become a neutral and demilitarized zone in line with its independence declaration.

Ukraine has already appointed a Defence Minister, General Konstantin Morozov.

Fire kills eight in S. Korea

Eight South Koreans, including three members of one family, died when fire swept through a flat in the southeastern city of Ulsan on Saturday, Yonhap news agency said, reports Reuter.

Six people suffocated and two died in hospital after they leapt from an eighth-floor balcony to escape the early morning blaze, it said. The cause was unknown.

Pope leaves on trip to Brazil

Pope John Paul II leaves Saturday on a 10-day, 10-city pilgrimage through backroads of Brazil, the world's largest Roman Catholic country, currently in the throes of a crumbling economic crisis, reports AP from Rome.

Since the Pope's first there in 1980, Protestants and evangelicals and African cult sects have made dramatic inroads in Brazil, eroding Catholicism to just over 75 per cent of the population, down from around 90 per cent.

The gap between rich and poor has widened. Raging hyperinflation of more than 600 per cent annually has brought depression to Latin America's largest economy.

Brazil's 289 bishops have been sharply critical of the "recessive" policies of the government.

UNHCR to repatriate Vietnamese

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata said Friday the organisation would assist in the repatriation of Vietnamese boat-people notably from Hong Kong, reports AFP from Geneva.

Addressing a news conference here Ogata said 1992 would be the year of repatriation for refugees, adding that with the end of the cold war, perspectives for negotiated returns looked good.

Asked about Vietnamese refugees who were not granted political refugee status in Hong Kong, Ogata said the UNHCR would seek to ensure that none of those returning to Vietnam were prosecuted.

To help the returnees settle back in their country, the UNHCR would contribute 50 dollars per person from the moment of their return and 30 dollars per month for a year.

The return of boat-people from Hong Kong, however, would be handled directly by Britain and Vietnam, she said.

Major for destroying Iraqi N-capacity

Major told the annual conference of his Conservative Party it was necessary in order to ensure the security of the world.

He said they are still trying to cling to it, still cheating, still lying.

They cannot be permitted to succeed. One way or another that nuclear capacity must go. I hope it will go peacefully, if not, it must go by force, he said.

Britain played a major role in the US led allied force that drove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait this year.

Marilyn Quayle says she was harassed in law school

WASHINGTON, Oct 12: The US Vice President's wife said on Friday that she had been sexually harassed in law school and in the work place and believed all working women had suffered some form of such harassment, ABC television said, reports Reuter.

In a telephone interview, Marilyn Quayle, wife of Vice President Dan Quayle, also said she supported Clarence Thomas, whose nomination to the Supreme Court has been held up while the Senate investigates charges

Germany to set up camps for unwanted asylum-seekers

SCHWALBACH (Germany), Oct 12: Officials at a major refugee centre expressed alarm and concern on Friday after German leaders agreed to set up large camps to house unwanted foreign asylum seekers, reports Reuter.

The plan, which calls for about 90 centres to accept or deport refugees within six weeks, conjured up embarrassing images of frightened foreigners cooped up behind fences like the Vietnamese boat-people in Hong Kong, they said.

This being Germany, the centres would also inevitably evoke parallels with Nazi concentration camps, a Protestant chaplain at the Schwalbach camp told Reuters.

"Our genuine fear is that freedom will be drastically curtailed and that civil rights could be undermined," Pastor Gerhard Mey said. "Even if this is not comparable with what the Nazis did, it is still alarming."

Government and opposition leaders, who bickered for weeks while racial violence mounted, agreed on Thursday to cut the review process for asylum applicants to six weeks.

But Bonn will have to set up large camps around the country to house and interview up to 43,000 foreigners from eastern Europe and the Third World at any one time.

Germany expects over 200,000 asylum applicants this year, about half of all the refugees pouring into western

Europe, and the hastily-drafted plan is due to start in January 1992.

Francette Gutberlet, who works at the Schwalbach centre, called the new plan a shock. The people will crack up. They will not starve, but psychologically they will have a lot of problems.

"These huge camps would be self-contained entities, complete with judges. There will be two doors — one door leading immediately to the airport and deportation and the other, through which only a few will go, to Germany."

Volker Moeser, head of the dormitory-style centre in an industrial area near Frankfurt airport, expected officials to have trouble keeping refugees in the new camps.

"The large facilities could be seen as nothing more than deportation facilities," he said. "If the camps were not surrounded with fences, the people would just disappear."

Most of the 300 asylum seekers now at Schwalbach speak no German and were unaware of the new plan, but those who knew of it were alarmed and confused.

"It does not sound good," said Ion Tup, a Romanian who was beaten by East German right wingers in April. He said he was currently more worried about skinheads.

Ali from Pakistan withdrew his asylum application and was trying to arrange travel home because of the attacks on foreigners. "In Pakistan I may have political problems but in Germany I have problems about staying alive," he said.

About one million asylum seekers are waiting for a ruling on their applications but only about five per cent will be allowed to stay. Reviews can take up to seven years.

Case worker said there were not enough staff to speed up the review process and many refugees slowed it down further by having no passports or identity papers.

Centres such as Schwalbach, a Spartan but clean camp where many asylum seekers coming to Germany each year first arrive, may be expanded to house up to 40,000 or more foreigners.

About 160 asylum seekers arrive at the airport each day and pass through this camp. A U S Army Base across the street is being vacated and may be used if the facility is expanded.

But officials said problems would multiply in enlarged camps — heightened psychological problems as well as increased aggressiveness are likely.

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Bush okays fund-raising campaign for re-election

WASHINGTON, Oct 12: President George Bush on Friday approved the start of a re-election campaign fund raising effort, a clear indication he will seek a second term in 1992, reports Reuter.

He also made clear he will keep Vice President Dan Quayle as his running mate.

The White House released a letter from Bush to Federal Election Commission Chairman John Warren McGarry that said the fund-raising committee would be known as "Bush-Quayle 92-primary committee INC."

Although I am not yet formally declaring my candidacy for the Republican nomination for the office of President of the United States, I am hereby authorising this organisation as my principal campaign committee, bush wrote in the letter.

White House Spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the first two fund raisers would be in Bush's adopted homestate Texas. The first will be on October 31 in Houston, the second November 1 in Dallas.

The committee is expected to try to raise 26 million dollars for the election run-up beginning with caucuses in February.

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BJP govt acquires land in Ayodhya, communal violence feared

NEW DELHI, Oct 12: An Indian state government controlled by a Hindu party has acquired land at a holy site claimed by Muslims and Hindus in a move that other parties said might spark a resurgence of communal violence, reports said Friday, reports AFP.

The Uttar Pradesh state government, which is controlled by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party, said in newspaper advertisements that it had acquired 2.14 acres

(0.8 hectares) of land at the disputed site in Ayodhya for the development of "tourism and pilgrimages."

Newspapers here said the land covered about half of the disputed area, which Hindus say the site of a temple demolished by a Muslim ruler to make way for a mosque in the 16th century.

The revivalist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP; World Hindu Council) has been spearheading a campaign, with the active BJP backing, to demolish the mosque spearheading a temple for the Hindu God Rama in its place.

"The notification (of the Uttar Pradesh government) is nothing but an arbitrary misuse of executive authority and amounts to coloured exercise of power..." said Syed Shahabuddin, Convener of a Muslim group seeking to protect the mosque.

Newspaper reports said there was no information from the authorities to back up the government claim to have plans to develop tourism at the site.



HONOLULU: Defiant stand: Imelda Marcos, the former first lady of the Philippines, declaring at a press conference in Honolulu her intention to return home with the body of her husband, Ferdinand Marcos, after winning an extension of her travel documents from the Philippines' government. Franklin Drilon, President Aquino's chief aide, extended Mrs Marcos's one-way travel permit.

Sikhs threaten to kill Romanian envoy

NEW DELHI, Oct 12: Four more Sikh militant groups Friday claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of Romania's Charge d' Affaires Liviu Radu, and threatened to kill him if three jailed Sikh guerrillas were not released, reports AFP.

The joint claim was made by Gurjant Singh Budzighwala, Chief of the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), in a statement delivered to the office of the Press Trust of India (PTI) in Ludhiana city.

A PTI spokesman said by telephone from Ludhiana an industrial city in the Punjab, that the statement written in Punjabi and signed by Gurjant Singh "was put in our mailbox this afternoon."

The spokesman added that the letterhead of the KCF was "genuine" and that the letter had been delivered in the normal way.

Alfonsin to step down as party chief

Buenos Aires, Argentina, Oct 12: Former president Raul Alfonsin said Friday he won't seek re-election as leader of Argentina's second biggest political party, the Civic Radical Union, reports AP.

In a two-page "open letter" handed out to reporters, Alfonsin said he steered the party to stability following a lopsided defeat in the national elections of 1989, and the time had come for him to step down.

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Off the Record

It's a hi-tech lynching, fumes Clarence Thomas

WASHINGTON: Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas denounced the graphic sexual harassment accusations against him Friday night, and said the hearing in his confirmation was "a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks," reports AP.

After a day of testimony in which a woman who worked for him a decade ago leveled lurid charges against him, Thomas returned to the witness chair to tell the senate Judiciary Committee that its proceedings were "disgusting."

Thomas and Anita F. Hill provided contradictory testimony, forcing the Senate to decide their credibility in weighing Thomas confirmation vote next Tuesday. Thomas testified bitterly but with composure, calling the testimony against him sledge, dirt, gossip, nonsense, garbage and trash.

"This is a circus," Thomas said of the riveting, televised hearings. "It's a national disgrace, and from my standpoint as a black American, as far as I'm concerned, it is a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks."

"It is a message that unless you kowtow to the old order, this is what will happen to you," said Thomas. "You will be lynched, destroyed, caricatured by a committee of the United States senate rather than hung from a tree."

"I felt that implicit in the discussion about sex acts was the offer to have sex with him," Hill, a 37-year-old black woman, testified.

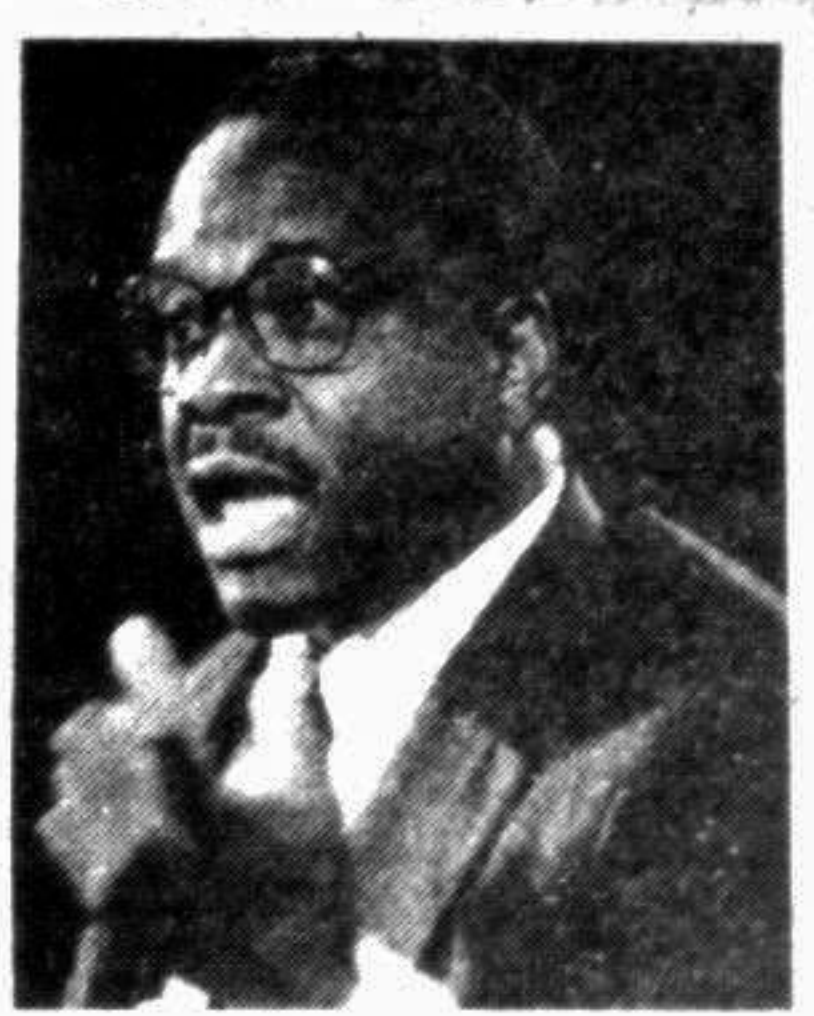
"I think the one that was the most embarrassing was his discussion of pornography and engaged in a variety of sex with different people or animals," she said.

When she was done, many committee members said they admired her courage in going public, 10 years after the episodes she described.

Thomas said he had not listened or watched Hill's testimony.

Hill's appearance had generated speculation that Thomas might withdraw as the Supreme Court nominee, particularly after one Republican said that it might kill the nomination.

But Thomas flatly denied all of Hill's allegations.



Algerian women urged to leave jobs for men

ALGIERS: An Algerian fundamentalist preacher on Friday called on women to give up their jobs and stay at home so that young unemployed men can find work, reports Reuter.

Islamic Salvation Front Imam Abdelkader Moghi, preaching in the fundamentalist stronghold of Bab El-Oued in Algiers, said: "Women are occupying jobs for nothing — just to spend their salaries on make-up and dresses. They should return to their homes. It is not I who demand this but God."

Moghi was speaking shortly after the release of official data showing 1.15 million Algerians, 92 per cent of them men, were out of work last December. Most of these, 84 per cent, were aged under 29.

Yeltsin's book to fetch one million US dollars

FRANKFURT (Germany): The world rights for a book Russian President Boris Yeltsin is writing about the August coup in Moscow will cost publishers at least a million dollars, Yeltsin's literary agent said.

Andrew Nurnberg, Managing Director of Andrew Nurnberg Associates, told Reuter in a telephone interview that he has been inundated with bids to publish the book.

Nurnberg, in Frankfurt for the annual book fair, expected the rights to be sold in at least 25 countries.

The working title for Yeltsin's book is "Three Days," it is due to be finished in November and published in early 1992.

The book will be about 70,000 words. The US magazine Newsweek has bought rights to serialise it and talks are under way with publishers in many countries.

"It will be a seven-figure (dollar) sum for the world rights," Nurnberg said. "The bids have been really top dollar in every country."

Nurnberg was Yeltsin's agent for his first book "Against the Grain," published in 1990.

A bionic woman!

ORACLE (Arizona): "Nonaut" Jayne Pointer, one of eight environmentalists who were sealed in the "Biosphere 2" two weeks ago with the intention of staying two years, left the giant glass house on Friday for medical treatment to her finger, reports Reuter.

"It makes me look like the bionic woman," Pointer said as she showed a large metal splint on her left hand before entering an ambulance.

Pointer, 29, from Guildford in Southern England, underwent treatment at the University of Arizona Medical Center at nearby Tucson and is expected to return to the self-sustaining Biosphere 2 either late on Friday or Saturday.

"I hope to return as soon as possible," she said when she entered the hospital emergency room.

Pointer had the tip of the middle finger of her left hand cut off when she put her hand in a threshing machine on Wednesday to remove some potato. Dr Roy Wallford, the team's doctor, said.

Wallford said he recovered the fingertip and stitched it back in place, but there was a very good chance the finger would not heal without further treatment.

New UN chief must be a French-speaker, demands Paris

PARIS, Oct 12: France said on Friday it hoped an African would be nominated United Nations Secretary-General and indicated it could veto any contender who was not a French-speaker, reports Reuter.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Daniel Bernard told journalists France would like the post to go to a Third World candidate, preferably an African, he did not name its preferred candidate.

France will never agree to the future General Secretary of the United Nations not being a Francophone, Bernard said.

Javier Perez de Cuellar of Peru steps down from the top UN post at the end of the year and the Security Council opened secret deliberations on Monday to agree on a candidate who will be put forward to the General Assembly.

The council, of which France is a permanent member has the power to veto any nominee.

Among those on Monday's list were five candidates presented by the Organisation of African Unity Deputy Prime Minister, Boutros Ghali Kenneth Dadda of Ghana, Secretary General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development James Jonah of Sierra Leone, UN Undersecretary General for special political questions, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and Gabonese Culture Minister Nguema Francois Owono.

Moscow City govt for scrapping Revolution Day holidays

MOSCOW, Oct 12: Moscow City authorities, in a new assault on hallowed communist tradition, have proposed scrapping holidays in honour of the Bolshevik Revolution and giving people extra time off at the New Year, reports Reuter.