

BRIEFLY

1500 killed in Haiti since coup: More than 1,500 people have been killed in Haiti since the bloody military coup in late September that toppled former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, a human rights group reported Tuesday, says AFP Wednesday from Washington.

'Bush not serious about arms control': Seven members of the House of Representatives charged Tuesday that President Bush is not serious about arms control in the Middle East because he is going ahead with major weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, reports AP Wednesday from Washington.

Klerk meets Mozambican rebel leaders: President F.W. de Klerk met with Mozambican rebel leader Afonso Dhlakama earlier this year in Kenya, the government said Tuesday, reports AP Wednesday from Pretoria.

US starts pullout from Kuwait: The US military began its final withdrawal of combat forces from Kuwait on Tuesday, and the Pentagon said the pullout will be completed by mid-December, reports AP from Washington.

Yeltsin's decree hits KGB: Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree Tuesday transforming the Russian KGB into a new State Security Agency, the latest in a series of moves to reorganize the secret police, reports AP Wednesday from Moscow.

AI blasts European govts for grilling asylum-seekers: LONDON, Nov 27: Amnesty International today criticised many European states for putting up what it called unfair barriers against a growing number of asylum-seekers fleeing possible torture and execution in their own countries, reports Reuter.

Corazon prefers Ramos as successor: MANILA, Nov 27: President Corazon Aquino met with key advisers for two hours Tuesday and afterward one of them said she was leaning toward former Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos as her choice for her successor next June, reports AP.

Corazon prefers Ramos as successor (continued): Apparently she is convinced of the winnability of Ramos, Pampanga Gov. Ben Guiao told reporters. He stopped short of saying Mrs. Aquino had made up her choice but said she was stressing candidate's election prospects.

Corazon prefers Ramos as successor (continued): Ramos is locked in a battle with House Speaker Ramon Mitra for the nomination of the Struggle for the Democratic Philippines Party, which is to conduct a straw poll of members Saturday on their preference.

Corazon prefers Ramos as successor (continued): Mitra, a co-founder of the party, is believed to have the backing of a majority of party members but Ramos fares better in public opinion surveys.

Corazon prefers Ramos as successor (continued): The issue of the nominee for the May 11 national election threatens to split the party. It also has led to a breach between Mitra and the Cojuangco family, Mrs. Aquino's blood relatives.

Palestinians riot against US-sponsored talks

JERUSALEM, Nov 27: Hundreds of Palestinians rioted and beat their rivals with chairs and metal bars Tuesday to show their opposition to the US-sponsored Middle East peace talks, Israel television said, reports AP.

The violence occurred in the town of Beit Jala near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank during a lecture by two members of the Palestinian delegation to the



JERUSALEM: A Muslim Palestinian shepherd prays next to his flock while on Israeli bulldozer flattens the field in front of Jerusalem's Old City Damascus Gate Tuesday.

peace talks, Ghassan Khatib and Nabil Qassis, the TV said. It said hundreds of supporters of two radical PLO factions, the Democratic and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, cursed the lectures. Signs hanging in the hall proclaimed that peace talks with Israel were 'treason.'

At least 469 Palestinians have been killed by fellow Arabs during the 4-year-old uprising against the Israeli rule, most on suspicion of collaborating with Israel.

19 killed as bandit groups clash in Sindh

KARACHI, Nov 27: At least 18 people were killed, half of them hostages, in a gunbattle between two gangs of bandits in southern Pakistan's troubled Sindh province, police and residents said today, reports AFP.

Sources said the clash took place between the gang of an infamous bandit, Liq Chaudho, and highway robbers of the Kalhoro tribe in Dadu, about 350 miles (560 kilometers) north of here Monday.

The local administration and nine bandits were killed when Chaudho's men attacked Akalhora village.

Arrest warrants against Pak editor issued: KARACHI, Nov 27: The authorities in Karachi served arrest warrants Tuesday against Sherry Rahman, Editor of the monthly Herald, for publishing a news report on a Pakistani Intelligence Agency, a spokesman for the magazine's publisher said, reports AFP.

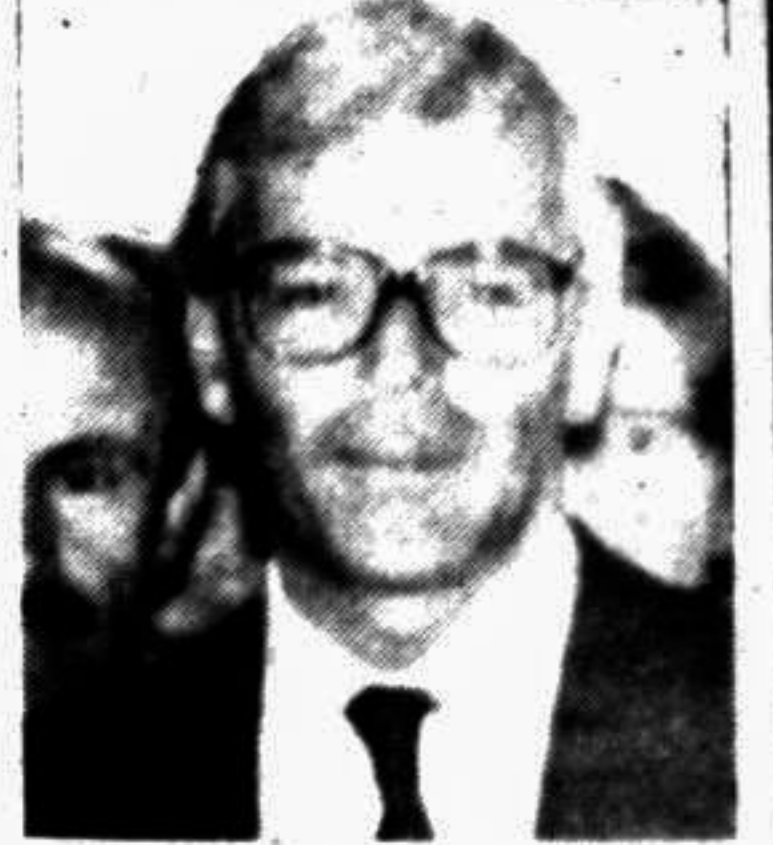
The Herald, in its October issue, had published a report which alleged serious violations of human and civil rights by the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) in southern Sindh province, the spokesman said.

The report has given rise to a defamation case, he added. The editor, along with publisher Ghulam Ali Mirza and printer Zahid Ali, have been asked to appear before a local magistrate in Karachi, capital of Sindh province, on Thursday.

Off the Record

Major the worst-dressed man

LONDON: A fashion magazine ribbed Prime Minister John Major on Tuesday for reputedly tucking his shirt into his underpants.



The suit wears him and he will never live down the underpants, Arena magazine said in naming Major 'the grayest of them all' in its league of Britain's 20 worst-dressed men.

Major, a 48-year-old who favours grey suits, is used to having fun poked at his fashion style and his office had no comment on the latest broadside. The British shops and stores association recently branded his clothes a complete bore.

They are victims of feminine violence

JERUSALEM: An Israeli association for the defence of the men's rights spoke up Tuesday for the dozens of husbands who get beaten up by their wives, reports AFP.

An average of 30 men suffer this humiliation each month and an equal number are driven out of their homes, it said. The association accused the police of discrimination, charging that they view with contempt the tragic case of these men who are victims of feminine violence.

Uri Eliahou, interviewed on the radio, complained of the powers granted to women by Israeli laws. One day, my wife hit me on the head harder than usual with an iron bar, sending me in a coma to Beilinson Hospital in Tel Aviv, he said.

'After having been treated not only was I not allowed to return home by a court decision, but police refused to accept my complaint.'

Thatcher's daughter paid back in mother's coins

LONDON: The daughter of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was ordered to appear in court this year for non-payment of her mother's hated 'poll tax' local authority officials said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Hammer Smith and Fulham Council said daughter Carol paid the annual 247-pound (445-dollar) local services charge only after a summons to appear in court on September 19.

But the West London Council said bailiffs were still trying to collect 32 pounds (58 dollars) in legal costs.

'If at the end of the day we still do not get our money, then there is the possibility of a prison sentence,' one official said.

Carol, a freelance journalist, was not available for comment. But the Daily Mirror, in a frontpage report, said it asked her what her mother would think and quoted her as saying: 'My mother wouldn't give a shit, my dear. As a matter of fact, neither do I.'

Riots swept Britain in 1990 when Thatcher imposed the tax, a flat-rate charge for community services that takes no account of ability to pay and replaced a centuries-old property tax.

The uproar contributed to a conservative party revolt that led to Thatcher's resignation a year ago.

Cory a heartless woman

MANILA: A group of Philippine teachers on hunger strike to protest against their sacking by the government found a surprise ally Wednesday in Imelda Marcos, reports Reuter.

Tears rolling down her face, the flamboyant former First Lady told the 29 teachers her arch-foe President Corason Aquino was a heartless woman.

Marcos visited the teachers at the National Press Club compound where they have been staging their protest for eight days. Witnesses said Marcos embraced the teachers, saying: 'Do you think this will make Mrs Aquino listen? Do you think this will soften her heart?'

'You should realise that Mrs Aquino has no heart.' One protester said conditions for teachers were better when the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos was ruling the country.

'Neighbours can't be annoyed'

Nepal sleeping between two giant elephants, says Koirala

KATHMANDU, Nov 27: Nepal is "sleeping between two giant elephants, India and China and must therefore move cautiously in its foreign policy, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said, reports AFP.

'We want to have good friendships with both India and China and we do not want to annoy any one of them, Koirala told AFP in an interview this week.

He said that he would pay a four-day official visit to India from December 5, and would go to China if formally invited.

'I have been informally invited to visit China,' he said, 'but if I am formally invited, I will definitely visit there.'

The upliftment of the economy of the rural poor," he replied, "we have a great task to do for the improvement of the economy of the majority of the Nepalese rural poor."

On foreign relations Koirala said his talks during his upcoming trip to India would be substantive.

I will hold talks with the Indian leaders on a number of issues including trade and transit and cooperation for the development of water resources in Nepal as we are going to face a power shortage in our country from 1993 onwards, he said.

On Bhutan Koirala denied Bhutanese government allegations that the Nepali Congress had instigated dissent among Bhutanese of Nepalese origin in order to achieve the aims of a so-called "greater Nepal."

Murder of former Kenyan FM: two officials questioned: NAIROBI, Nov 27: Two former high-ranking government officials, who an investigator called prime suspects in the murder of Kenya's Foreign Minister, were detained by police for questioning Tuesday, reports AP.

The arrests came shortly after President Daniel Arap Moi dissolved an inquiry board whose judges had complained of police intimidation, and ordered a new investigation into the murder last year of Foreign Minister Robert Ouko.

Ouko reportedly had been investigating human rights activists and donor nations calling for reforms.

One diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, saw the detentions as an attempt by Moi to put the Ouko affair behind him before parliamentary elections. The government has not announced elections but it is expected to hold them early next year in response to demands for reform.

The inquiry into Ouko's death, which continued for over a year, heightened political tension in this East African nation.

Koirala, head of the Nepali congress government elected in May this year, said he has sensed a change in India's attitude towards its neighbours, judging that New Delhi wants more friendly relations.

In the same way China has also changed her attitude and now wants to improve relations with her neighbours, Koirala added.

He said it was crucial for Nepal to avoid antagonising its two giant neighbours and to maintain good relations with both of them for reasons of economic development and the elimination of poverty in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Questioned on the future of communism in Nepal, Koirala indicated that while communists made significant gains in the May elections they would not destabilise the country.

'Communism could not be a threat to the democratic government or the monarchy,' he said. 'I don't think communism is strong in South Asia and in Nepal in particular it has no future prospects now.'

Koirala added that following the political changes in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, many of the pro-Soviet communists are showing interest in joining the Nepali Congress and numbers of them have already joined our party.

The success the communists have had Koirala said is due largely to their ability to exploit the hardships of rural dwellers.

Because of the poverty of the larger number of the rural people the communists in Nepal are... making all sorts of promises to the rural poor for the upliftment of their economy, he said.

'We the Nepali Congress party, representing democracy in the country, cannot make promises which we can not fulfil.'

Asked to cite his government's main problems and challenge Koirala continued in the same vein.

Chatichai's assets worth millions of dollars confiscated

BANGKOK, Nov 27: Thailand's ruling junta, acting on accusations of graft against deposed Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan, announced Tuesday it had confiscated millions of dollars in assets acquired while he was in power, reports AFP.

The move was announced by Sithi Jararot, head of an anti-corruption committee appointed by the military after it overthrew Chatchai in a bloodless coup on February 23.

The announcement came amid heightened political tension here, with widespread accusations that the military is maneuvering to effectively retain power after promised elections to be held early next year.

Critics immediately charged that the junta was taking action new against 70-year-old Chatchai to reassert its reasons for driving him from power.

Chief among those reasons was alleged corruption by top members in the former Prime

Ministers administration. The assets were worth 266.5 million bath (10 million dollars) Sithi said, adding that Chatchai, who in August 1988 became Thailand's first elected Prime Minister in 12 years, had 60 days to appeal the ruling before a court.

Sithi also announced that assets acquired during the same period by Chatchai's wife, Boonruen Choonhavan, and Pitak Intharavrajyanon, an adviser to the deposed leader, had also been confiscated.

But the assets of Chatchai's son, Kaisak Choonhavan, also a close adviser, and his daughter, Vani Hongprasap, which had been frozen immediately after the coup, were now to be released, he added.

Kraisak reacted angrily to the ruling, describing the accusations as "trumped up charges," and counter-charging the junta with the "political assassination" of his father.

Pro-democracy groups have accused Thailand's ruling generals of attempts to retain a stranglehold on any future government through a new constitution, currently being drafted by the military-appointed National Legislative Assembly.

Clauses in the constitution, under which the future Senate, whose members will be selected by the junta, would appoint the Prime Minister and take part in key debates in parliament, have been scrapped following demonstrations by students and members of various political parties.

But the draft constitution gives the Senate the right to take part, with the elected House of Representatives in no-confidence debates against the government, leading Bangkok Governor Chamlong Srinuang, a leading critic of the charter, to say that it "gives the military a remote-controlled detonator."

"On push of the button and the government will be gone," Chamlong added.

A prominent political analyst said Sithi's announcement "was intended to muster support for the junta."

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Mao staging comeback in capitalist corner of China

SHENZHEN (China), Nov 27: Mao Zedong is making a comeback here in the most capitalist corner of China, with money-hungry entrepreneurs embracing the late great helmsman as a symbol of good luck, reports AFP.

Mao's revived popularity, 15 years after his death, is everywhere to be seen in this special economy zone bordering on Hong Kong, with street vendors hawkling laminated portraits in the shadow of newly built high rises.

Some of the pictures come fitted with red silk tassels, and the vendors - literally work miracles.

Mao pictures are everywhere, declared Richard Wang, 27, an Assistant Company Manager with a penchant for three-piece suits.

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Taxi driver Chen Huaping, 32, has a Mao photo affixed to the dashboard of his Toyota. It is very effective, he said. I have been making more money than before and I have not been robbed.

Chen admits he burns a joss stick - incense meant for good luck - and bows to Mao before cruising Shenzhen's streets, home to robbers, drug traffickers, pimps, prostitutes, beggars and money-changers, despite official efforts to wipe out such evils.

Mao Zedong has done a lot of good things to the poor people. That is why he is like a god to me, explained Chen, a former farmer from the poorer side of northern Guangdong province.

Chinese sociologists pin the phenomenon to efforts by the communist party to promote Mao and re-emphasize past glories at a time when socialism is collapsing in Europe.

Like other Chinese cities, Shenzhen has not been spared the 15 feature films on revolutionary topics released this year, including Mao Zedong and his son Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai.

It's a kind of business that someone has come up with to make money, said social researcher Qin Jinguo of Shenzhen University.

The dynamic changes in economic reforms in the past few years have resulted in some people reminiscing about the simpler times when they had job for life and never had to worry about being sacked, he said.

Qin also blamed the spiritual vacuum among the lowly educated young people to worship Mao as they were born before or after an era when religion was totally banned. It was only after China's reform an openness that religion were allowed to be openly practised, but not encouraged.

For students like Robert Hung, 21, an aspiring computer scientist, Chairman Mao is great and I admire him a leader and human being. There was no such thing as favouritism during his time.

Hung described the social order in Shenzhen, where officials and young Turks spend more on one dinner than the average Chinese earns in a month, by quoting Mao: "everything under heaven is chaos. The situation is excellent."

Private entrepreneurs, like Fabrice Vendor Wang Amen, have Mao's picture hanging side-by-side with a small Maoist altar set up in a corner of their shops.

"As long as my business goes well, Mao stays on the altar," Wang explained.

A Communist Party official.

Chairman Mao can arouse people's faith in socialism," he said.

For others, though, Mao represents a force against the corruption that was one of the sparks that ignited the student-led democracy protests centered in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

We are nostalgic about chairman Mao because there was no corruption during his time and people really cared about each other, said a 40-year-old manager of a joint venture company.

