

2 Cong workers killed in Tripura bomb blasts

AGARTALA, June 9: Two Congress-I workers were killed and two others injured seriously at Jirania in West Tripura Saturday night when some unidentified persons hurled bombs at them, police report reaching here Sunday said, reports PTI.

This is the first major incident of poll-related violence after the week-long one experienced in the state following the assassination of the former Premier, Rajiv Gandhi, which claimed seven lives. Two persons were injured in a separate case of bomb blast in the town last week.

The injured have been admitted in the G B Hospital here.

Police said that bombs were hurled at the party men by unidentified persons, who came in a vehicle, when they went to the area to distribute voters' slips. The two in the hospital.

BRIEFLY

1m women die each year:

At least one million women die each year and more than 100 million suffer disabling illnesses from childbirth, unsafe abortion and pregnancy complications, a study said Saturday, reports Xinhua from Washington.

Reproductive problems are the leading killer of women of the Worldwatch Institute.

Jodilli Jacobson, Senior Researcher of the Institute, said the annual number of deaths from reproductive causes will double by the end of the decade "without a reordering of priorities in health care and family planning."

Lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes is one in 21 in Asia, one in 54 in Africa, one in 73 in Latin America, contrasting with one in 6,366 in North America and one in 9,850 in Northern Europe, the study said.

Egyptian killed:

An Islamic fundamentalist wanted in the October 1990 assassination of Egyptian parliamentary Speaker Rifaat Mahgoub was killed by police in a gunbattle on Saturday, police said, AFP from Cairo reports.

The shootout began when police attempted to arrest a group of five fundamentalists at a house south of Cairo, according to police.

A second fundamentalist also wanted in the killing was injured in the shooting, while three other fundamentalists managed to flee, including Safouat Abdel Chani, the leader of the underground Al-Jihad organization and one of the main suspects in the assassination.

Colombia rejects truce plan:

The Colombian government Saturday rejected a cease-fire proposal from a Marxist guerilla delegation at peace talks in Caracas, AFP reports.

Meeting in the capital of neighbouring Venezuela, rebel leaders proposed the bilateral cease-fire Friday to lay the groundwork for ending 30 years of civil war in their country.

But the Government's Chief Representative, Presidential aide Jesus Antonio Bejarano, dismissed the proposal as "not credible, imprecise and weak."

15 killed in Chandigarh accident:

Fifteen people were killed and 35 others injured, some of them seriously, when two buses collided head-on near Sirhind Saturday evening, police said in Chandigarh, reports PTI.

Police said a Haryana roadways bus and a private bus collided head on at Madhupur Chowk in Bhatti Majra area of Sirhind police station jurisdiction.

The injured have been rushed to hospitals at Sirhind and Patiala.

100 tribesmen held in Pakistan:

Pakistani authorities have arrested more than 100 Tribesmen in Baluchistan province after clashes in which seven people were killed and 30 wounded, reports Reuter from Quetta.

Government sources said on Saturday the arrests were made after Ghalibzai and Hamidzai sub-tribes of the main Achakzai Tribe failed to give guarantees of good behaviour.

Those arrested belonged to both factions, which have been fighting for 10 days with rockets and mortars to settle a feud. Both sides ignored government orders to surrender illegal arms.

Baluchistan bristles with modern arms flowing from the 12-year-old civil war in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Pak rly top executive suspended:

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif suspended the top executive of Pakistan Railways following a pre-dawn crash Saturday in which at least 100 people were killed, official sources in Islamabad said, AFP reports.

Sharif, who visited the crash site at Ghotki rural station in the southern province of Sindh, ordered the immediate suspension of Zafarullah Qureshi, General Manager of Pakistan railways.

Sindh Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali said the accident, which occurred when a Rawalpindi-bound express smashed into a stationary goods train, was the "result of subversive activity."

Iraq denies western reports:

Iraq Saturday denied western reports that Shiite Muslims in the south "were under serious threat from the army," Xinhua reports from Baghdad.

The denial came after the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) quoted unnamed UN officials in New York as saying 400,000 to 700,000 Shiite Muslims massed in the country's southern marshlands were pinned down by Iraqi troops in the area between Nasirya and Basra.

The Iraqi Information Minister said in a statement that the BBC report was a fabrication intended to strengthen the morale of the saboteurs.

Congo PM elected:

Former World Bank official Andrew Milong was elected Congo Prime Minister Saturday evening by a national conference meeting, an official source said in Brazzaville, AFP reports.

Milong, 56, from Boko in the southern part of the country, was elected on the fourth round of voting the source said. He does not belong to any political party.

Rival Pascal Lissouba was defeated by a few dozen votes after the elimination of the other 17 candidates in the race at the outset.

Milong will lead a transition government under the supervision of a council of the republic. The government will carry out the duties previously performed by President Denis Sassou Nguesso.

2 killed in US violence:

Two people were stabbed to death on Saturday in what police said were separate random acts of violence, Reuter from New York reports.

One of the victims, Alexis Welsh, 30, a former dancer for the radio city Music Hall Rockettes, was slain by a man with a butcher knife as she walked her two dogs on a street near central park early in the day.

Several hours later, a man police described as homeless was stabbed to death with an ice pick at a times square subway station. He remains unidentified.

Probe into Rajiv's assassination in progress

Accomplice of assassin arrested, photographer had LTTE links

NEW DELHI, June 9: A young Sri Lankan Tamil militant arrested in India has identified a mystery man believed to be an accomplice of Rajiv Gandhi's assassin as a "hardcore" Tamil rebel, newspapers reported today, says AFP.

Newspapers said a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) group, Guerre Shankar, had told police in southern India that the man hailed from Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna peninsula.

The United News of India (UNI) also quoted official sources as saying in Madras, capital of Tamil Nadu state where Mr Gandhi was killed on May 21, that Shankar had seen the bespectacled man

"from close quarters" in Jaffna. Jaffna is now under the virtual control of the LTTE, Sri Lanka's dominant Tamil militant group. Almost all senior LTTE leaders are from Jaffna, which is separated from Tamil Nadu by a narrow strip of sea.

The UNI report, carried in national newspapers, said Shankar, in his early 20's, was arrested in Tamil Nadu for not possessing travel documents and had admitted to being a LTTE member.

"It was not immediately clear whether the arrested militant formed part of the killer gang," newspapers said, adding that investigators were "checking the testimony of Shankar."

The LTTE, which fought Indian troops despatched to Sri Lanka by Mr Gandhi in mid-1987, has denied involvement in the Gandhi killing, and instead tried to pin the blame on others, including rival groups and the Colombo government.

But the Hindu newspaper said that "senior government sources" in New Delhi believed that the mystery man was

"Mathimagan, a very senior operative of the LTTE intelligence, possibly its head."

The newspaper added that Mr Mathimagan was known as an "one-eyed jack (who) has been in and out of Tamil Nadu under various guises and aliases."

Mr Gandhi was killed when a young woman, widely suspected to be a Sri Lankan Tamil, detonated a plastic explosive strapped her while pretending to touch his feet at an election rally in the town of Sriperumpudur.

Indian investigators later released photographs of the dark-skinned bespectacled as-

assin, holding a sandalwood garland, and the mystery man with a notebook in his hand who was initially thought to be a journalist.

The woman, apparently on a suicide mission, died in the blast, while the man escaped.

Both snapshots, the most crucial evidence of the Gandhi assassination, were taken by a freelance Indian photographer, Hari Babu, who was hired by the mystery man but was killed in the explosion along with 15 others.

Mr Babu's family has denied he was linked to the LTTE, but a newspaper reported from Madras that Mr Babu had gone

to Jaffna to cover the LTTE May Day rally this year.

The Sunday Observer, in a front-page report, quoted an official of the federal Central Bureau of Investigation as saying that there was "enough evidence to prove that (Mr Babu) had links with the LTTE."

But it added that Mr Babu, an Indian Tamil, might not have known May 21 that Mr Gandhi was to be assassinated. Otherwise he might have taken steps to ensure his own safety.

"The killers probably took him along to ensure easier access to a vantage point at the meeting venue. Being familiar with the killers, Hari Babu appears to have initially taken a few pictures of them."

The Sunday Observer did not say how Mr Babu visited Jaffna, but the LTTE is known to routinely ferry men and material by boats between Tamil Nadu state and Sri Lanka.

Lankan engr knows accomplice of Rajiv's assassin

COLOMBO, June 9: In a dramatic development, a Sri Lankan engineer from Jaffna has said he knows the 'kurta pyjama' clad accomplice of the assassin of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, reports PTI.

The 27-year-old engineer, Amuthalingam Mathimagan is reported to have told his colleagues in his office here that 'the man in kurta and pyjama holding a notebook' in a much publicised photograph was known to him.

On seeing a report in some Indian newspapers reproduced here yesterday naming him as the suspected accomplice, Mathimagan gave an affidavit in a Colombo court that he had been staying in Colombo for the past one year and that he had not left the country during that period, Indian High Commission officials here said.

After taking an engineering degree from Madras, Mathimagan is reported to have worked in India for some time before taking up his present job in a construction firm here.

Mathimagan left his office yesterday on seeing the news-

paper reports, saying he was going to consult his lawyer and then present himself before the Indian High Commission.

"He appeared to be highly excited and frightened," said the Colombo lawyer adding that Mr Mathimagan met him on Saturday morning.

The Managing Director of the firm employing Mr Mathimagan was quoted in the 'Sunday Observer' today that Mr Mathimagan hailing from northern Jaffna was working with his firm since May this year.

A special investigation team headed by the CBI director Mr Vijay Karan had visited Colombo last week and returned without making much headway in the probe.

The main clues so far have been the picture of the suspected woman assassin with a garland waiting for Mr Gandhi and another of her suspected accomplice wearing kurta and pyjama and holding a notebook.

While the woman assassin perished in the blast that killed Mr Gandhi, there was no trail of her accomplice even after both the photographs were widely published.



GOTHKI (Pakistan): Damaged coaches of the Rawalpindi bound Tsegam Express curl' up skywards after having collided with a stationary freight train in a Southern Pakistan rural station Saturday. —AFP photo

Armed men destroy customs posts in Latvia, Estonia

MOSCOW, June 9: Armed men destroyed two customs posts set up by the separatist governments of Latvia and Estonia early on Saturday, the Baltifax news agency said, reports Reuter.

It quoted Latvian Deputy Interior Minister Zenon Indrikov as blaming the elite Omon police, responsible for a dozen such raids in the past few weeks, for one attack. The incidents were the first reported for several days.

Another breakthrough republic, Moldova, protested to President Mikhail Gorbachev on Saturday at the appearance of Omon "Black Beret" units on its territory and demanded their withdrawal.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which do not recognise their incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940, set up customs posts to lend weight to their declarations of independence last year. The Kremlin says they are illegal.

Heavily-armed Omon units have staged a dozen night raids on them since May 22, disarming the guards and destroying the posts. Some attacks appeared to be put on specially for a right-wing Soviet television programme. Indrikov said Omon troops

burned down a post at Grebnovo on the Latvia-Russia border after removing money and documents.

Baltifax said unidentified men in civilian clothes struck a few hours earlier at Luhamaa, about 100 km (60 miles) to the north, on the Estonia-Russia border.

It quoted an Estonian border guard officer as saying they

came in a car used two weeks ago by Soviet military officers.

A Byelorussian policeman and Lithuanian border guard were shot and killed last month in two incidents on the frontier between the two republics.

Soviet television said on Saturday an investigation found the killings were for personal, not political motives.

Nepal greets Pak plea for N-free zone

KATHMANDU June 9: Nepal has welcomed the Pakistani proposal for a joint meeting with India, China, the US and the Soviet Union in an effort to rid South Asia of the threat of nuclear proliferation, reports PTI.

In an editorial "Pakistan's proposal" the government-owned English daily 'The Rising Nepal' said New Delhi exploded a nuclear device in 1974 and Islamabad, too, was widely believed to have made considerable headway in this regard, thus fanning speculations that the world's most populous region might danger-

ously be pacting towards manufacturing nuclear weapons. Ever since the first atomic bombs were exploded over 45 years ago, the editorial said, the nuclear club members had increased in number. Today, there were several nations, not formally in the club, but were widely believed to have the eligibility to obtain its membership.

While a nuclear-free world would be the most ideal prospect, the paper said such a situation did not appear to be realistic within the foreseeable future.

Off the Record

Soviets keep sense of humour in trying times

MOSCOW: As the Soviet economy crumbles, shortages get worse and people join lines without even knowing what they're for, one thing remains plentiful: political humour, reports AP.

Telling jokes about Kremlin leaders used to be subversive, but under Glasnost, the sharper the quip the better. One comedian defined Glasnost as "a time when anything can come out of your mouth, but you've got nothing to put into it."

Soviet law makes it a crime to insult the "honour and dignity" of the President, but comedians mock Mikhail Gorbachev with impunity, their derision waxing as his popularity wanes.

On May 13, the new Russian Television channel's first night of broadcasting, millions watched comedians subject Gorbachev and his chief rival, Boris Yeltsin, to scathing imitations and one-liners.

In one skit, satirist Anatoly Trushkin mocked Gorbachev's provincial accent, deliberately mispronouncing words as he pretended to lead the national Congress of People's Deputies in a discussion of whether to start work or take a break.

Gorbachev is the butt of the most popular joke of his six years as Soviet leader. A man fed up with waiting in the vodka line announces he is going to kill Gorbachev. He storms away and returns an hour later.

"So did you kill him?" someone asks.

"No. That line was even longer than this one."

In another joke going around Moscow, Gorbachev takes his grandson to the Kremlin for all the top officials to admire.

"He's going to be a general; you can tell by the way he stamps his feet," Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov says.

"No, no, he's going to be a banker," says Premier Valentin Pavlov. "You can tell by the way he grabs with his hands."

"You're both wrong," Gorbachev says. "He's going to be president. You can tell by the way he's fouled his diapers and keeps on smiling."



Gorbachev



Yeltsin

'Discovery of one's own humanity'

BALTIMORE (Maryland): Actor and former prison inmate Charles Dutton told inmates graduating from college that the value of their education was the "discovery of one's own humanity," reports AP.

Dutton, 40, who stars in the upcoming Fox television network situation comedy "Roc," once served prison terms for manslaughter, possessing deadly weapons and assaulting a prison guard.

In a commencement address Sunday to inmates at the maximum-security Maryland State penitentiary, he recalled his "defiant attitude" as a youth growing up in a public housing project in Baltimore.

He told the 29 inmate-graduates that his turn around began when he attended Hagerstown Junior College as an inmate. He later graduated from Towson State University and Yale University's School of Drama.

The inmates were receiving degrees from Coppin State College in Baltimore.

A 7-year-old pilot

KILL DEVIL HILLS (North Carolina): A 7-year-old pilot landed here Monday after a nine-day cross-country flight that his family claims made him the youngest to fly across the United States, reports AP.

With his flight instructor at his side, Daniel Shanklin touched down and bounced twice at First Flight Airstrip, next to the Wright Brothers Memorial on North Carolina's Outer Banks.

"That was the worst landing I've ever had and I wanted it to be the best," said Daniel, of San Antonio.

About 300 schoolchildren from elementary schools in nearby Kitty Hawk and Manteo cheered as Daniel flew over before landing.

Daniel received T-shirts and commemorative pins from merchants and a birthday cake in the shape of an airplane. He turns 8 on Tuesday.

He took off from San Diego on May 26 in a Cessna 172, stopping in several cities along the way.

The boy's grandfather Dr. Ken Shanklin, 59, a plastic surgeon from Fresno, California, said he believed the flight was a record for the youngest pilot to fly coast to coast.

The Guinness Book of World Records doesn't keep such records by age. The National Aeronautics Association stopped keeping age-related flight records in the late 1980s. Two 9-year-olds completed separate flights in 1988 and 1989 before the association halted recordkeeping.

Daniel said he wasn't sure why he made the flight, except that his grandfather encouraged him to. Daniel's 9-year-old brother, Michael, also flew along in his grandfather's six-seat airplane, as did flight instructor Stuart Moon.

Both boys received flying lessons for Christmas, from their grandfather.

During the flight, Daniel sat on a booster seat and had a cushion behind his back. Blocks were attached to the rudder pedals so his short legs could reach them.

The boy was in the air an average of two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, Moon said.

Libya supplied arms to IRA guerillas

LONDON June 9: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi offered to give Britain details of Libyan arms shipments to Irish republican guerillas in an attempt to improve relations, the Observer newspaper reported today, says Reuter.

The paper said this was part of an abortive attempt to re-establish diplomatic ties with Britain, broken in 1984 after a policewoman was killed by a shot fired from the Libyan Embassy during a demonstration in London.

Conservative member of parliament Teddy Taylor returned from a 10-day trip to Libya last week carrying messages for the British government from Libyan foreign Minister Ibrahim Mohammed Beshari and other leaders. But a foreign office spokesman said "there can be no improved relations between Britain and Libya until we have convincing evidence that the

Libyans have renounced their support for international terrorism including the IRA."

The Observer quoted Libya's Ambassador to the United Nations, Ali Treiki, as saying that Libya had now broken all links with the Irish Republican Army, which is fighting to oust Britain from northern Ireland.

According to police and court evidence Libya supplied tonnes of virtually undetectable Czechoslovak-made Semtex explosives and other arms to the IRA in the 1980s.

The Observer quoted what it described as highly placed sources as saying that Libya told Taylor it would disclose full details of the IRA shipments in exchange for more normal relations with Britain.

Beshari said on Saturday that Libya had nothing to do with terrorism and assertions by Britain to the contrary were unacceptable and illogical.