

## Rajiv's assassination India to file charges against LTTE

NEW DELHI, Sept 23: Federal investigators probing Rajiv Gandhi's assassination are on the point of filing charges against members of a Sri Lankan Tamil rebel group, newspapers said Sunday, reports AFP.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) was finalising a "voluminous" charge sheet, official sources were quoted as saying.

The SIT, headed by an Indian Tamil, has gathered "enough evidence" to prove the involvement of Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the reports added.

LTTE is fighting for an independent Tamil homeland, has repeatedly denied killing Gandhi, who as Prime Minister ordered Indian troops into the island's northeast in mid-1987 to put down Tamil separatism. Gandhi was killed when a Sri Lankan woman believed to be from the LTTE's suicide squad set off a plastic explosive strapped to her body while pretending to touch his feet in an election rally in Tamil Nadu State May 21.

The United News of India (UNI) quoted the sources as saying the job to kill Gandhi was handed over to a member of the LTTE's intelligence operation, who went under the alias Sivaraman. He and a woman accomplice killed themselves in southern India last month to avoid capture.

The (Indian) police had also intercepted vital messages exposing the LTTE conspiracy, added the UNI report.

### 6 axed to death in Bangalore

BANGALORE, Sept 23: Six people, five of them brothers, were axed to death and the hotel in which they were staying set on fire by a crowd of persons at Hippalahalli village in Karnataka's Bijapur district on Sept 21, reports PTI.

Police here today said one of the brothers had wanted to marry a girl belonging to another caste. Members of that caste were vehemently opposed to the match, leading to constant bickering between the two sides.

On Saturday last, the brothers and the sixth person, who was their friend, allegedly assaulted the girl's brother and later took shelter in a hotel. The girl's brother, along with a crowd of about 60 persons, brandishing axes, sickles and clubs, attacked the hotel.

## Yugoslav Navy lifts blockade of Croatian ports

ZAGREB, Sept 23: The Yugoslav navy on Sunday lifted a blockade of Split from two other Croatian ports that it imposed last Tuesday, Croatian media reported, says AFP.

The news agency Hina said that the blockade of Split was lifted at the same time as local authorities restored supplies of water and electricity to military establishments in the town where federal soldiers are still stationed.

Croatian television said that naval authorities late Sunday ordered the resumption of traffic in three of the seven ports it had blockaded on Tuesday in response to the encirclement of naval barracks by Croatian troops.

The port at Split was reopened at around 1500 GMT, about two hours after the start

of a new ceasefire in the conflict between Croatian and federal forces.

Power and running water were restored to military establishments in the town at around the same time, the television said.

Warships preventing movement into or out of the port of Dubrovnik were withdrawn an hour later, while the three navy vessels that were blocking the entry to the Bay of Kvarner were withdrawn around 1630 GMT, permitting the resumption of traffic in Yugoslavia's largest port.

Croatian television did not mention the situation at the four other ports affected, those at Pula, Zadar, Sibenik and Ploce.

Army troops and Serbian fighters captured the strategic

town of Petrinja, near Zagreb. Tanjug news agency said tanks relieved a besieged barracks in the town of Vinkovci in eastern Croatia.

Military experts said before the ceasefire agreement that Croatia faced a crushing defeat at the hands of the army, which Croatian leaders accused of siding with the Serbs in the rebel republic.

Kadijevic said Croatian fighters violated the ceasefire in attacks on army bases or units in the Croatian towns of Sibenik, Vukovar, Razine, Split and Vinkovci.

Croatian radio said the federal air force attacked the Adriatic Port of Karlogag, killing a child, and Croatian government sources said local commanders had reported a number of ceasefire.



VARAZDIN (Yugoslavia): Croatian civilians drive T-55 tanks out of the Kalnicki Partizani barracks after Yugoslav soldiers surrendered September 22. The last federal barracks here were captured September 22 leaving more than 30 tanks and armoured personnel carriers to the Croats. —AFP/ UNB photo.

## Yeltsin hosts talks to end war in Nagorno-Karabakh

YEREVAN (Soviet Union), Sept 23: Russian President Boris Yeltsin today hosts talks he hopes will be a major step towards ending the long and bloody conflict in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, reports Reuter.

After a three-hour meeting with Armenian leaders on Sunday Yeltsin, who met Azerbaijani leaders on Saturday, announced that delegations from all sides would meet in the southern Russian town of Zheleznovodsk this morning.

He said he hoped the delegations would agree on a communique to be used as the basis for full negotiations organised by Russia and Kazakhstan, whose leader Nursultan Nazarbayev is acting as joint mediator with Yeltsin.

More than 800 people have been killed in clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the mountainous territory since 1988 in the longest and most violent of the numerous ethnic conflicts in the caucasia.

If leaders from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh do sit down at the same table, it will be the first time they have negotiated the issue together.

It would also be a slap in the face for the Kremlin which has tried unsuccessfully for several years to end the fighting over the enclave, inhabited mainly by Armenians but part of Azerbaijan.

And it would highlight the

increasingly central role Yeltsin and other Republican leaders have been playing since last month's abortive coup against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

But Armenian Foreign Ministry official Arman Melikyan played down the chances of a rapid peace settlement.

"I'm not a pessimist but the situation doesn't allow much grounds for optimism or for a quick solution," he said.

Yeltsin earlier told a meeting in the Nagorno-Karabakh capital Stepanakert he proposed setting up a system to censor reports out of the enclave along the lines of the US system used during the Gulf war, Radio Russia reported.

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## Rao blames Pakistan for fuelling 'terrorist activities'

NEW YORK, Sept 23: Prime Minister Narasimha Rao has charged Pakistan with fuelling terrorist activity in India, and said this was the 'main irritant' in the relations between the two countries, reports PTI.

Stating that Pakistan cannot deny this, Rao said if they continued to interfere, then we will cope with it.

Pakistan will have to decide what kind of attitude it wants to have towards the preservation of tranquility within our borders, leaving it entirely to India to deal with its own area. If they continue to do all this (interfering), then we will certainly cope with it, he said in an interview to the American news magazine 'Newsweek'.

Asked how India would respond to the mounting pres-

sure to sign the nuclear non proliferation treaty, Rao asserted, "there is no change in our views. India is not going to sign it."

Asked what role he saw the United States playing in the post cold war era, he said it could always play a role which creates conditions of stability and tranquility in the region and other regions.

We hope that it will be possible for the United States to change its policies so that each country is judged on its own performance, on the basis of policies rather than some old exigencies which it might have had it some point in time.

Asked about the relationship with the Soviet Union in the light of political develop-

ments there, Rao expressed the view that relations would not be disrupted or affected adversely.

The republics of the Soviet Union would eventually find a modus vivendi to continue their linkage.

On the Non Aligned Movement, Rao said it was inherently sound but it has to redefine its role. "It has to come out with a new role, new incarnation, new tasks and mission," he added.

Its mission, he said, by no means is complete. "It will change its thoughts and content from time to time but then Non Aligned Movement has its own validity and I don't think that will change," he added.

## Hizbollah links fate of hostages to Rushdie

LONDON, Sept 23: A leading member of the pro-Iranian Hizbollah Movement linked the fate of hostages in Lebanon on Sunday to a prize awarded to British writer Salman Rushdie, reports Reuter.

Hussein Musawi, a member of the ruling Council of Hizbollah (the party of God), told British Broadcasting Corporation radio: "The Islamic groups in Lebanon which hold some hostages are committed to the commands of the late Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini, who had issued a fatwah to kill Salman Rushdie."

Musawi said Islamic groups felt "provoked" and wanted clarification from the British

government about its role in the Writers' Guild of Great Britain award to Rushdie.

He said, "If it is proved that the British government had a role in granting an award to Rushdie this will certainly have a negative effect on the British hostages."

The Foreign Office declined to comment, but the Guild stressed Rushdie was chosen independently by its members.

Rushdie, whom Muslims across the world accused of blaspheming Islam in his book "The Satanic Verses", appeared in London's Dorchester Hotel on Sunday last week to receive a prize for his children's novel "Haroun and the Sea of Stories".

Sources close to the kidnap groups have been saying the release of World War II fighter pilot Jack Mann is imminent for several days but specific predictions have turned out to be premature.

Hizbollah is close to the kidnap groups but says it does not have any of up to 10 Westerners held in Lebanon. The other British hostage is church envoy Terry Waite.

The late Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a religious decree sentencing Rushdie to death for "The Satanic Verses" in February 1989. Iranian hardliners have not accepted Rushdie's apology for the book. Iran broke relations with

## Premadasa vows to remain in power

COLOMBO, Sept 23: Sri Lanka's beleaguered President Ranasinghe Premadasa rejected dissident demands for his resignation ahead of impeachment proceedings and vowed to remain in power, press reports here said today, reports AFP.

Premadasa told a group of his United National Party (UNP) officials that he had done "no wrong to deserve impeachment," and said he would stay in office for his full term which ends in four years.

"My conscience is clear," he said. "May I reassure our party men and innocent people who elected me with a sense of self-sacrifice that I will never quit. It is those who conspire against me will have to quit."

His remarks were published in the state-controlled daily news a day after dissidents within the ruling party asked Premadasa to resign saying he had violated the Constitution by his own admission of arming Tamil separatists.

## Hunger strike threat to bring Sonia into politics

NEW DELHI, Sept 23: A group of Indians threatened today to fast indefinitely unless Rajiv Gandhi's widow Sonia enters politics, the Press Trust of India said, reports Reuter.

It said the group, supporters of the ruling Congress party, want the Italian-born widow to stand in Amethi, her husband's former parliamentary seat.

Rajiv Gandhi, a former prime minister, won the seat in polling on May 20, the day before he was blown up by a woman suicide bomber in southern Tamil Nadu state as he campaigned in a three-stage general election.

Congress formed a minority government after the polls.

The news agency quoted Prem Kumar Singh, leader of the Congress Farmers' unit in the northern state of Bihar, as saying he had met Sonia to urge her to fight a by-election in Amethi in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh state.

Singh said he and more than 20 other Congress workers were prepared to fast indefinitely outside Sonia Gandhi's New Delhi bungalow if she said a firm "no" to Amethi.

No date has yet been set for the by-election. Sonia Gandhi, 44, has maintained a studied silence in response to a chorus of Congress pleas for her to enter politics.

## PLO leaders begin debate on US plans

ALGIERS, Sept 23: Palestinian leaders start a crucial debate today over US plans for a Middle East peace conference which has uncovered bitter discord between moderates and hardliners, reports Reuter.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat, undermined by the failure of the United States to give full assurances on Key Palestinian demands but encouraged by some progress from Washington, will put his case for pursuing efforts towards the talks.

He faces strong opposition from Old Guard leaders of radical groups within the Palestine Liberation Organisation and others who have emerged from the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories.

Pictures of victims of the Intifada line walls in the conference center where the 480 members of the Palestine National Council (PNC) are meeting.

Algeria has thrown tight security around the seafont club Des Pins, 25 km (15 miles) west of Algiers, with police on roofs and armoured vehicles at strategic points.

Arafat and other moderates have agreed in principle to a Middle East peace conference but want US guarantees on its framework in advance.

## Off the Record

### Lenin's statues too common to be of real worth

LONDON: London auction house Christie's said it had been offered two 10-metre (30-foot) statues of Lenin by the Soviet Communist Party, but experts fear they are too common to be of real worth to international art buyers, reports Reuter.

"It's not clear whether this approach is the first of many," Christie's managing director Dermot Chichester told Monday's Daily Telegraph newspaper.

He said he could not say which Soviet city now had the statues or where they came from, to save embarrassment.

Talks between Christie's and the vendor apparently focus on how much statues of the founder of Soviet communism are really worth at a time when they are being taken down all over the country.

"There are more statues in existence of Lenin than of Buddha. There is no obvious market for them anywhere," London-based Russian art dealer Roy Miles told the Telegraph.

### Body of escaped prisoner recovered after 5 centuries

ITALY: A German tourist has found the body of a man who died almost five centuries ago on the Similan Glacier in Austria near the Italian border, informed sources said in Bolzano Sunday, reports AFP.

An Italian mountain climber, Reinhold Messner, went to the site and photographed the body, discovered by the unidentified German at 3,200 metres (10,400 feet) altitude, within meters (yards) of the frontier.

There were signs of wounds on the corpse back, possibly burns or scars from a whip, as well as an injury to the head. The corpse was holding a hatchet in one hand and wore leather leggings. It was thought the man might have been an escaped prisoner.

### 70 girls stripped for \$ 5.70

NEW DELHI: Police arrested two New Delhi teachers Sunday and launched a hunt for a school principal who stripped 70 girls to search for 150 rupees (5.70 dollars) reported missing by a student, officers said, reports AFP.

Police arrested two women teachers of the private Laxmi Devi Jain Girls' school and sent officers to the adjoining town of Sonapat where Principal Shalibala Gupta was reportedly hiding, they said.

The arrests followed a demonstration outside the school Sunday by angry parents of grade 10 students who were forced to undress by the three teachers.

The teachers have said they were only looking for the missing money.

Police said Gupta ran away Saturday to evade arrest and said they would slap criminal charges after tracing her.

The two teachers already held have been released on bail by a court which ordered them not to leave the city pending an investigation into the mass stripping.

The girls, mostly 15 years old, complained that the three teachers told them to take off their clothes when the missing money was not found in their schoolbags, and then later ordered them to dress outside the classroom.

Ruchi, who reported the loss of her money, also told police that she too was stripped. The school management suspended the three teachers after the incident Saturday.

Former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh in a statement Sunday condemned the teachers and urged New Delhi to take "stern action" against them.

### Diana's longest trip without Charles

ISLAMABAD: Britain's Princess Diana will make her longest official trip abroad without husband Prince Charles when she visits Pakistan this week, reports Reuter.

The Princess of Wales, whose husband is heir to the British throne, begins the four-day trip Monday nearly a year after it was first scheduled.

Diana was first invited as the personal guest of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. But the trip was postponed after the Bhutto government was ousted from power in August last year.

Princess Diana will visit Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Chitral, British High Commissioner Sir Nicholas Barrington told reporters.

Describing the trip as her longest solo visit abroad, he said she would view a drug detoxification centre and a school for the disabled — projects close to her heart — and visit the Khyber Pass on the border with Afghanistan.

In Chitral, Diana will watch dancing by Pagan Klash, mountain people whose lifestyle in remote valleys is slowly being eroded.

## BRIEFLY

**CP banned in Tadzhikistan:** The Communist Party has been banned and its property nationalised in the republic of Tadzhikistan, the official Soviet news agency Tass said Sunday.

Similar action was taken at federal level and in a number of republics in the aftermath of last month's abortive hardline coup in Moscow.

**Mujahideen planning assault:** Afghan guerrillas are planning a major assault on the city of Gardex, home town of President Najibullah, a guerrilla news agency said on Sunday, reports Reuter from Islamabad.

Infantry forces backed by tanks are ready to move at any time towards the provincial capital of Paktia province, the Afghan News Agency (ANA) of radical guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said.

Other Mujahideen sources said guerrilla and government forces had exchanged artillery fire around Gardex, 100 km (60 miles) south of Kabul, since last Wednesday, but they could not confirm that an assault on the heavily-defended city was imminent.

Gardex has often been cited as the next target of Pakistan-based guerrillas who have rejected ceasefire offers from Najibullah.

**Siege in Algeria to be lifted Sept 29:** Algerian authorities announced that a state of siege, imposed on June 5 to curb Muslim fundamentalist street violence, would be lifted from next Sunday, the official APS news agency said, reports Reuter from Algiers.

President Chadli Benjedid said in a statement on Sunday night the state of siege would be lifted from September 29 because of "the positive result in terms of restoring public order and security."

The agency said Chadli made the announcement after a meeting of his higher security council. The state of siege was due to end on October 5 but the authorities had said it could be lifted earlier if calm was returned to the streets. A curfew has already ended.

**5 killed in US prison:** Five prisoners were killed and at least two others were injured Sunday when a tactical unit stormed a cellblock where five guards were taken hostage, freeing them unharmed, officials said, reports AFP from Montana.

All guards are safe, said Curt Chisholm, the state's Corrections Director, after flying to the prison with governor Stan Stephens about four hours after the uprising began.

Prison officials employed a rapid response team and used tear gas to get the hostages out, said Chisholm.

They rushed the unit, fired gas into the unit and rescued the hostages, he said. He did not say what set off the uprising.

The prison houses 1,078 inmates but was designed to house 750 and no more than 1,135 in an emergency.

**Italian PM arrives in Moscow:** Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti arrived in Moscow Sunday for talks with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev on political and economic issues, the official Tass news agency reported, says AFP from Moscow.

Andreotti was met at the airport by Ivan Silayev, Chairman of transitional Soviet Economic Steering Committee, Tass said.

The Italian Premier was also due to meet Russian President Boris Yeltsin during his two-day working visit to Moscow.

Andreotti arrived from Beijing where he held talks with senior Chinese officials.

**Landlords kill 7 leftists in Bihar:** Seven members of a leftist group agitating for land reforms were killed by a landlord militia group in India's eastern state of Bihar, state officials said on Sunday, reports Reuter from Patna.

The seven members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninists) were killed on Saturday night in Sawan Bigha village, about 125 km (75 miles) from Bihar's capital Patna, the state Director General of police, Arun Kumar Chowdhury told Reuter.

He said they were killed by members of the Kisan Sangram Sangh, a militant group protecting the interests of landlords in the area.

The landlord group had warned that it would take retaliatory action unless the communists returned firearms which it said they had stolen, Chowdhury said.

**India's oldest actress Durga dies:** Hindi and Marathi cinema's oldest actress and noted stage personality, Durga Khote, died of old age at her south Bombay residence Sunday. She was 86, reports PTI from Bombay.

The versatile actress, who made mark in movies during the silent era in 1928, was not keeping good health for the last two years.

"Raja Harishchandra" was her first big success in 1930 followed by "Maya Machhindra" and "Ayodhya Raja". Her sterling performances in "Mughal-e-Azam" and "Bida" won her rich laurels.

## Tamil guerillas blow up Lankan gunboat

COLOMBO, Sept 23: Tamil guerillas blew up a nine-member crew Navy gunboat in northern Sri Lanka, leaving 20 survivors, as security forces, elsewhere continued a major drive against the rebels, the military said today, reports AFP.

wounded men were also found and a search is still on for the others," the spokesman said.

The surprise attack in the north came as the guerillas killed nine more soldiers carrying out a huge jungle offensive against them in the north-eastern coastal region of Mullaitivu, the spokesman said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the boat off the tiny islet of Kays Late.

He said the nine soldiers were killed in overnight hand-to-hand battles in a snake-infested jungle where Tigers were defending an army advance on their camp complex, twenty-eight personnel including three officers were wounded.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the boat off the tiny islet of Kays Late Sunday, a military spokesman said, adding that a search and rescue mission picked up two wounded crew men.

Tamil Tiger guerillas today rejected a claim by President Ranasinghe Premadasa they cooperated with Sri Lankan Armed Forces to battle a rival Tamil group.

"There were four officers and five seamen on board. We recovered the bodies of one officer and one sailor. Two

turned over the bodies of nine guerillas.

But the Revolutionary Justice Organisation, one of the Muslim fundamentalist groups holding the hostages, said Israel must release another 20 prisoners before it frees more hostages.

Hopes rose that the release of another Western hostage, probably 77-old Mann, was imminent after Israel freed 51 prisoners on Sept. 11 and

Nine Westerners are being held, five Americans, two Britons and two Germans. Another Briton and an Italian are widely reported to have died in captivity.

John McCarthy, a Briton who was held with Waite and Americans Terry Anderson and Thomas Sutherland, said on his release last month that their captors allowed them to listen to the BBC.

Waite, who disappeared Jan. 20, 1987 while trying to obtain the release of the Western hostages, was the envoy to Carey's predecessor, Archbishop Robert Runcie.