

New French law to grill illegal immigrants

PARIS, Oct 16 : The French National Assembly voted by 309 to 260 on first reading Tuesday a tough new law to combat illegal immigration and unlawful labour practices, reports AFP.

The right-wing opposition voted against the law, saying it backed the labour part but found the sections on illegal immigration too lax.

The new legislation is the first step of a government project announced in July to try to bring under control France's immigration problem which has fuelled an ugly political debate over the past few weeks and appears likely to be a major campaign issue in regional elections next March.

The new law says all persons convicted of helping foreigners illegally enter, reside in and around France will face prison terms of up to five years.

People who hire illegal labour in addition to a possible two year jail term and a

200,000 France (34,500-dollar) fine, can see their professional activities suspended and if they are foreigners themselves, be temporarily expelled from France.

Any foreigner who tampers with his papers to avoid expulsion could be jailed for six months to three years and be barred from entering France for 10 years according to the law.

The legislation panes off, however, on the double punishment system of legal sanction plus expulsion for some illegal immigrants including those who have particularly close family ties with France.

It also provides for transit visas to nationals of countries that are not European Community members and seeks ways for a more efficient application of court expulsion orders of foreigners.

Official statistics show that only about 35 per cent of such expulsion orders are actually carried out.

Plea to seize assets of Pak PM Sharif, Interior Minister borrow \$500m from cooperatives : Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16 : Pakistani opposition demanded here Tuesday the seizure of the industrial wealth of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's family to pay back public deposits allegedly embezzled by Cooperative Credit Societies, reports AFP.

The two-month old scandal involves nearly 700 million dollars in deposits collected by scores of cooperatives in Punjab province, Sharif's power base.

Opening the debate in the national assembly, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto accused Sharif's family and the relatives of his Interior Minister (Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain of having borrowed about 500 million dollars from some cooperatives.

The societies collapsed because the members of the ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI) took big loans from them without collateral, Bhutto said.



Benazir Bhutto

Bhutto said the "richest families" received loans from the cooperatives which were meant to take from small depositors and lend to small investors.

Calling the scandal "the biggest bank robbery in Pakistan," the former Premier, who herself faced a similar crisis during her rule, said the assets of the two families should be confiscated to pay back life savings of 2.1 million



Nawaz Sharif

groups have badly suffered," people.

She demanded that a commission probe the alleged "embezzlement" to unveil those who created a crisis of "far-reaching economic consequences" that would increase unemployment, raise inflation and discourage investment.

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Cooperates Majid Malik said the collapse of the cooperatives was a

"national calamity" as it hurt hundreds of poor families.

He said he hoped the opposition would present positive suggestions to resolve the crisis instead of merely hurling accusations.

Erosion of the credibility of financial institutions would harm the country, said Law Minister Chudhry Abdul Ghafoor, urging the opposition to suggest ways for "speedy return" of the depositors' money.

IJI Deputy, Liaquat Baloch, said the opposition was exploiting the situation by making baseless charges as IJI leaders had paid back loans totalling some 30 million dollars to the cooperatives.

Baloch charged that top opposition leaders themselves owed more than 40 million dollars in loans from cooperatives.

He demanded that a high-level judicial commission be set up to fix responsibility, lamenting that "low-income

Thomas confirmed as judge : 'God got the last word'

WASHINGTON, Oct 16 : The US Senate on Tuesday confirmed Clarence Thomas as a Supreme Court justice by a 52-48 vote, ending one of Washington's most bitter political dramas, reports Reuter.

Eleven Democrats joined with 41 Republicans to approve Thomas's nomination despite sexual harassment charges by former aide Anita Hill, which delayed the vote for a week.

Thomas, a black conservative Federal Appeals Court Judge, replaces retired Justice Thurgood Marshall, the only other black to serve on the US High Court.

Thomas, 43, will serve for life as one of nine justices who decide whether laws passed by Congress or the states violate the US Constitution. The court rules on a wide variety of issues from abortion and the death penalty to nude dancing in night clubs.

A report from Pin Point

(Georgia) adds : Clarence Thomas's mother said "God got the last word" when her son won confirmation as a US Supreme Court justice on Tuesday and advised Anita Hill, who accused him of sexual harassment, to pray.

Leola Williams, 62, said Hill, who charged that Thomas bombarded her with coarse remarks when she worked for him in two government agencies in Washington, should ask God's forgiveness.

"I'd tell her to pray. She need God bad. That's the only one that's going to help her... I pray God that that woman will get her life together. She's hurt my child," Williams said. She added : "I feel someone put her up to it."

An expectant crowd of about 75 people, including Mrs Williams, had gathered at the home of Abraham Fambole, a family friend.

Shouting, "Thank you, Jesus," she waved her arms in victory and embraced jubilant

family members when the television set in the poor coastal Georgia hamlet of 300 flashed the news that her embattled son had narrowly won.

The victory made the conservative jurist only the second black Supreme Court justice in US history.

In Norman, about 20 miles (30 km) south of Oklahoma city, Hill, who has been a teacher for seven years at the Oklahoma University Law School, finished her last class of the day just as the Senate vote on Thomas began.

But the 35-year-old Professor who rocked the country with her allegations displayed no emotion as a police guard hurried her past reporters.

Thomas's mother said : "Men and women can talk all they want that man's going to show them all up — that he's the best man... God got the last word. That man is going to show all of them."

Lanka to deploy 10,000 cops during SAARC meet

COLOMBO, Oct 16 : Ten thousand police will be deployed next month when leaders of seven South Asian countries meet in the Sri Lankan capital, state radio said today, reports Reuter.

Defence Ministry sources said security was a major concern because of the threat from Tamil separatist rebels.

The rebels, fighting for a homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, have occasionally staged bomb attacks in Colombo.

The meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation grouping Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives lasts from November 7 to 9.

Curfew imposed on second city in Baluchistan

QUETTA (Pakistan), Oct 16 : Pakistani authorities have imposed a curfew on a second town in the southwestern province of Baluchistan to control ethnic violence, government officials said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

They said the night curfew was ordered at Khuzdar, central Baluchistan, on Monday night after continuous attacks on shops and other property of ethnic Pashtuns.

A curfew was first imposed on the provincial capital of Quetta on Saturday after clashes between Baluch and Pashtun ethnic groups in which 12 people were killed and many injured.

The two groups are at odds over the site of an agricultural college to be built with help from the European Community.

The majority Baluchs want the college in their region, while the Pashtuns, who dominate northern Baluchistan bordering Afghanistan, argue that they should have it.

Baker resumes talks with Assad

DAMASCUS, Oct 16 : US Secretary of State James Baker resumed talks with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad today on plans for an Arab-Israeli peace conference after marathon discussions that extended beyond midnight, reports Reuter.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Korich said the talks were centering on letters of assurances presented by Washington to parties concerned with the conflict and how to facilitate the holding of the conference planned for the end of this month.

19m applications in US for 40,000 green cards

WASHINGTON, Oct 16 : A British man, an Irish woman and a Japanese man beat the odds and got their entries to the top of the pile of 19 million applications in the US immigration lottery, the State Department said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Spokesman Richard Boucher did not name the applicants who could win three of the 40,000 green cards that will permit them to live and work legally in the United States.

There are 12 million pieces of mail that have to be gone through, and from that

the 50,000 will be chosen. Boucher told reporters. These 50,000 will be notified they are possible winners and from them the final 40,000 will be selected.

We expect by the end of the week that we will have begun to notify the individuals whose names were selected as possible winners in the programme," he said.

The lottery was limited to nationals from 35 countries, mostly European. Irish immigrants are to get 40 per cent of the available green cards.

About 7 million applications from aliens for immigrants

visas arrived too early to be considered for a lottery programme, the State Department said Tuesday.

All applications that arrived before 12:01 am Monday morning at the designated post office in suburban Virginia were ruled invalid. There was no limit on the number of applications each individual could send.

Under the legislation, 16,000 of the winners must be Irish. Lawmakers gave preference to the Irish on grounds that previous immigration legislation had favored some other nationalities.



HARARE : Ten Commonwealth leaders pose for a group photo at the opening of an all-day meeting here Oct 15. (L-R) Indian PM Narasimha Rao, Bob Hawke of Australia, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, John Major of Britain, Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, Michael Manley of Jamaica, Secretary General Emeka Anyaoku, Brian Mulroney of Canada, Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, Goh Chok Tong of Singapore and Sir Lynden Fingleton of the Bahamas. — AFP/UNB photo

Where Americans, Soviets differ

WASHINGTON, Oct 16 : The average American eats more than twice as much meat and poultry as citizens of the Soviet Union, while an average Soviet eats nearly five times as many potatoes, reports AP.

The incites into dinner table differences between the two countries come from a new reference book published jointly on Wednesday by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Soviet State Committee on Statistics.

It's the first time the two nations' premier number-crunchers have collaborated to

produce a handbook of economic and social indicators. It's also the first time the Census Bureau has provided US data exclusively in kilometers, hectares and dekaliters rather than miles, acres and gallons.

Census Director Barbara Byaant acknowledged the Soviet half of the handbook, "USA-USSR Facts and Figures," may have been outdated by the breakup of the Soviet Union into sovereign republics.

Events are moving so fast in the USSR that it has become essential to move beyond

the USSR totals supplied in this volume," Bryant said. "We already have begun compiling information on the separate republics."

The side-by-side statistics dramatize just how different the two societies really are. Nearly three out of every four Americans are urban. One out of every three Soviets is rural.

Americans attend more than a million movies at 23,000 theaters each year. The Soviets attend more than 3 million movies at 148,000 theaters.

One out of three Soviets homes lacks running hot water. In the United States, statisticians don't bother to count.

Nine out of 10 American households had a colour television in the late 1980s. In the Soviet Union, there are only two colour TVs for every five families. US companies make four times as many colour TVs as the Soviets.

The United States made more than 40 computers for each one made in the Soviet Union.

Off the Record

Kennedy's right to speak for women challenged

WASHINGTON : In a bitter exchange on the Senate floor, Republican Arlen Specter on Tuesday challenged Edward Kennedy's standing to speak out for women, saying "we do not need" the Massachusetts Democrat's views on what constitute shameful behavior, reports AP.

As the debate over Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas moved toward a climactic roll call, the two Judiciary Committee members went at one another.

"The women of America should not listen to the senator from Massachusetts, who is trying to arouse passions on the generalised subject of sexual harassment," Specter said following a 15-minute floor speech by Kennedy. "When the Senator from Massachusetts seeks to terrify the women of America that they cannot be properly treated, he is wrong."

Kennedy spokesman Paul Donovan said Specter's remarks were not taken as a reference to Kennedy's personal history. But outside the Senate, conservative groups and individuals have been making the connections.

As the day-long Senate debate continued, one of the pro-Thomas demonstrators outside the Capitol carried a sign with the message: "Senator Chappaquiddick, You're All Wet," a reference to Kennedy's being in a car in which a young woman drowned in 1969.

The Conservative Victory Committee earlier aired a TV ad attacking Kennedy and other Senate Democrats saying, "How many of these liberal Democrats could themselves pass ethical scrutiny?" The ad mentioned Chappaquiddick and the Palm Beach, Fla. case in which Kennedy's nephew, William Smith stands accused of rape.

During the Judiciary Committee's hearings over the weekend, Specter, of Pennsylvania, had drawn attention to what he characterized as Kennedy's comparative silence on sexual harassment issues.

"Are we an old boys' club insensitive at best, and perhaps something worse?" Kennedy said. "Will we strain to concoct any excuse, to impose any burden, to tolerate any unsubstantiated attack on a woman, in order to rationalize a vote for this nomination?"

Kennedy said there was no proof that Hill had lied at any point during the hearing. "And shame on anyone who suggests that she did," Kennedy said.



YORK, England : Auctioneer Helen Apple by displays two paintings by Adolf Hitler which are going under the hammer in Ilkley, Yorkshire. The small still life watercolours depicting clusters of flowers were painted in 1901 and 1911 before Nazi leader rose to power. — AFP/UNB photo

70 defiant Saudi women rejoin jobs

MANAMA : Seventy Saudi women, arrested for driving cars, have returned to jobs they lost in a highly publicised incident that occurred during the Gulf crisis, one of the women told AFP.

Contacted by telephone from Bahrain, she said Saudi authorities in July allowed the women to return to work and return their passports, which were seized after the protest in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

The woman requested anonymity. The women on November 6, 1990, deciding to brave the Saudi taboo against females driving vehicles, entered 12 cars and drove them away in a protest to demand driving licences for women.

Saudi police and Mutawa, or moral guardians, stopped the motorcade a few minutes later.

The drivers were released after Saudi jurists said no civil or moral law had been broken. Their husbands were required to sign statements guaranteeing that their wives would never try to get behind the wheel again.

Saudi Arabia then passed a law to enforce the custom against women driving cars.

At long last!

MADRID : Santiago Carrillo, legendary leader of Spain's communists for nearly 30 years, spread his age-freckled hands expressively and admitted he saw no future for Communism, reports Reuter.

The man who led the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) from 1956 to 1982 and brought it into the political mainstream after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 looks to social democracy to spearhead the struggle for a just society.

Carrillo, a stocky 76-year old with thinning white hair and thick-lensed glasses, expanded on his now mellow political philosophy at a recent dinner with foreign journalists.

"After the events of August in the Soviet Union I do not think the Communist system has any reason to continue to exist," he said, wrinkling his eyes against the smoke of his habitual cigarette.

Japanese husbands rely on spouses

TOKYO : Japanese husbands in their 40s depend on their spouses for simple personal needs, such as having their shoes cleaned and doors opened, according to a survey published by a government funded institute, reports Kyodo.

The study, compiled by the Leisure Development Center, affiliated with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), also found nearly 60 per cent of husbands are reluctant to share the burden of domestic chores, such as shopping, bathing children, and preparing meals.

The survey was conducted on 200 middle-aged couples in Tokyo and Ishikawa prefecture, on the Japan sea coast, to discover the lifestyles and sense of values of the average Japanese couple.

Plea to set up Army Corps in Europe

BRUSSELS, Oct 16 : France and Germany have proposed setting up a European Army Corps that could give the European Community a defence role for the first time in its history, Belgium said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens said that Paris and Bonn had appealed to other members of the nine-nation Western European Union (WEU) to create an army corps a proposal that is likely to fuel a fierce debate over who has responsibility for defence.

He said in a statement that the idea followed previous Belgian national forces. "A

corps is usually between 70,000 and 100,000.

The proposal is to be formally unveiled on Wednesday by France and Germany, who have called repeatedly for a common EC defence policy as the 12-nation trading bloc moves towards greater political and economic integration.

The initiative is aimed at giving a new impulse to a common foreign and security policy which is at the heart of the future EC political union treaty. "French Presidential spokesman Jean Musitelli told Reuters in Paris.