

Nothing finalised on Tinbigha, says WB Minister

CALCUTTA, Nov 11: Nothing has been finalised on the leasing out of the Tinbigha Corridor in Cooch Behar district to Bangladesh, the West Bengal Information Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya, clarified in a statement here Saturday, reports PTI.

Seeking to allay the impression created in a section of the press on the Tinbigha issue at the official-level talks, the Minister said that the state government would chalk out its next step after ascertaining the views of the local people of the area, who had "some real problems".

Maoist rebels blow up car in India: nine troops killed

NEW DELHI, Nov 11: Maoist guerillas Sunday blew up a paramilitary vehicle killing at least nine troopers and injuring 13 in the western state of Maharashtra, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

Police, was quoted as saying. The SRPF troopers were on their way to relieve colleagues at an outpost in the region when they were ambushed. PTI said it was the third major attack by activists from the PWG the most active of Naxalite groups, on security forces in the region in two years. The PWG is split into various factions.

BRIEFLY

OIC calls for saving Babri mosque: The 46-members Organisation of the Islamic Conference has condemned attempts by Hindu extremists to demolish a Muslim mosque and urged the Indian government to protect its Muslim community, reports Reuter from Nicosia.

OIC Secretary-General Hamid al-Gabid said in a statement sent to Reuters on Sunday he was concerned by renewed efforts by Hindu fundamentalists to demolish a 450-year-old mosque at Ayodhya along the Ganges river and build a Hindu temple in its place.

Israel worries Soviet Union: The Soviet Union on Monday voiced worry over a new Israeli settlement in the Golan Heights, saying it would jeopardize progress made in the Mideast peace process, Tass news agency reported, says AFP from Moscow.

This activity is contrary to interest expressed by the Israeli leadership on confidence measures between the two sides, the Soviet Foreign Ministry said in a statement reported by Tass.

This activity does not correspond to the creation of a favourable atmosphere in the Mideast, the statement said. The Soviet Union "hopes that the Israeli government will react in a constructive way to this worry."

Mandela to visit US next month: ANC President Nelson Mandela will visit the United States next month to speak at former President Jimmy Carter's annual Human Rights Award ceremony in Houston, Carter's office said on Monday, reports Reuter from Atlanta.

Mandela, President of the black nationalist African National Congress, will give the key note address at the December 8 ceremony.

No one can convey better than Mandela a message of courage and dignity. No one could set a better standard of commitment to truth and freedom, said Houston Philanthropist Dominique de Menil, co-sponsor of the ceremony, in a statement.

The ceremony will also include a posthumous award of the 100,000-dollar Carter-Menil Human Rights Prize to six Jesuit priests murdered in El Salvador in late 1989, the announcement said.

Shamir, Herzog pay tribute to Maxwell: Hundreds of Israelis, led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and President Chaim Herzog, paid giant was buried at Mount of Olives Cemetery, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

The body, covered by the tallit, a traditional Jewish prayer shawl, was brought first to the palace of nations in Jerusalem, carried by four rabbis.

Maxwell, 68, was later laid to rest at Mount of Olives Cemetery as a rabbi read the Kaddish, a prayer for the dead. He died at sea last Tuesday off the Canary Islands under mysterious circumstances.

Mitterrand wants to reform constitution: President Francois Mitterrand said Monday he would propose a major reform of the French Constitution next year, reports Reuter from Paris.

In a television interview, he said the reform would involve reducing the presidential term of office and increasing the powers of parliament and would be submitted to a referendum.

Mitterrand also hinted that he might resign before the end of his term of office in 1995.

Iraqi troops attack Kurdish rebels: Iraqi government troops attacked Kurdish Peshmerga guerilla lines outside the Kurdish city of Irbil on Monday, reports Euter from Pir Dawud.

Fighting broke out around midday at the ruined village of Pir Dawud and continued sporadically throughout the afternoon. Three Kurds were wounded.

The fighting began when Iraqi troops sent a truck through their lines with a message ordering the Peshmerga to withdraw towards Irbil by 11 a.m. (0800GMT)

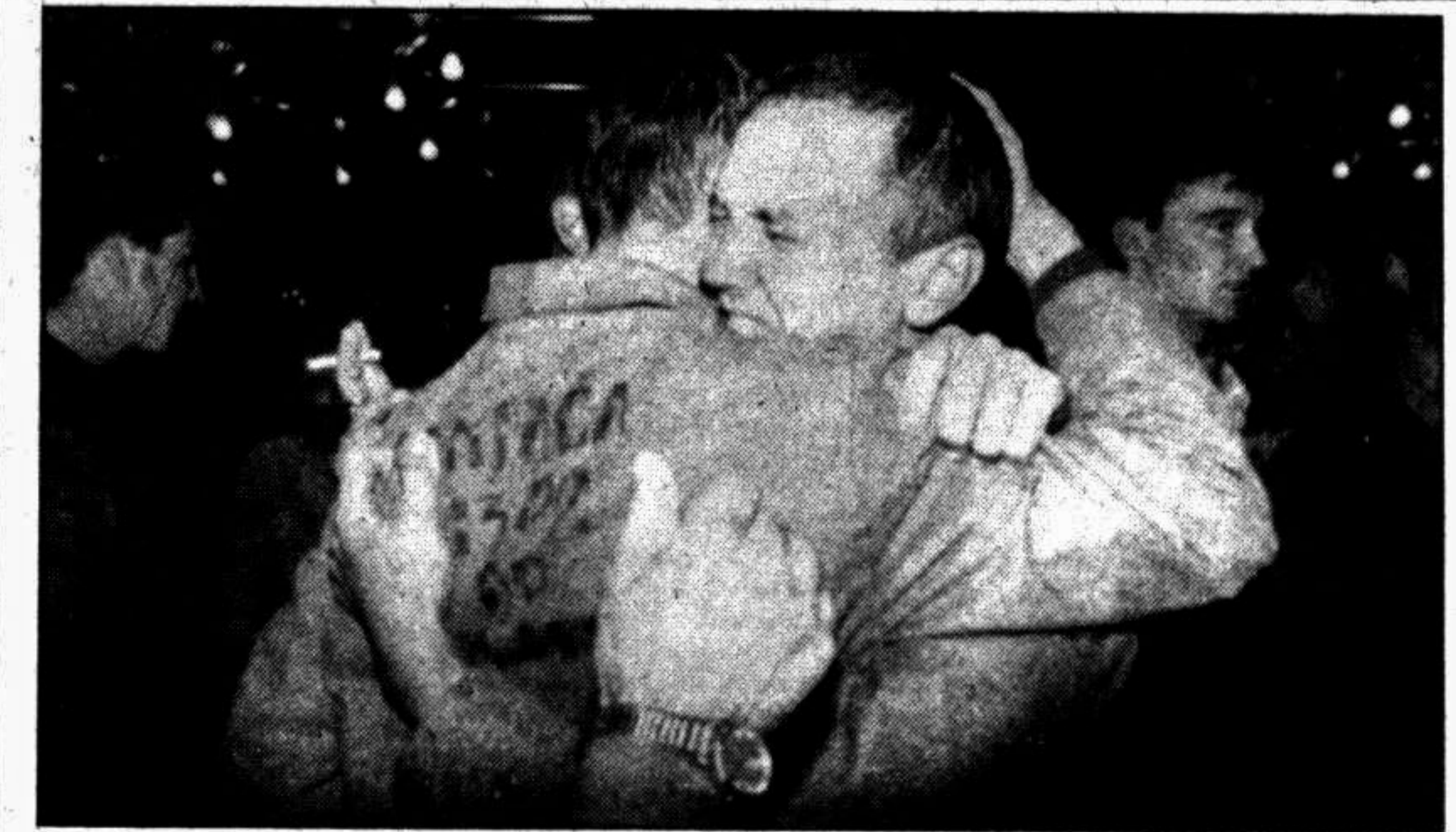
Malaysia shelve plan to deport Bangladeshis

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 11: Malaysia has shelved its plan to deport illegal foreign workers because the plantation and construction sectors would suffer big losses, Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

He said the December 31 deadline for more than 100,000 illegal workers to register and obtain work permits had been extended to June next year.

"They need not fear being trapped and deported when they come for registration... we will keep our word," he said at the end of a three day convention of the United Malay Nationalist Organisation (UMNO), dominant partner in the ruling coalition.

Ghafar said the reprieve applied to foreigners working in the construction and plantation sectors, which depend on foreign workers, and those working as domestics.



ZAGREB: Unidentified Croatian POWs embrace each other upon their arrival in the Croatian capital Zagreb. — AFP photo

Mujahideen team in Moscow: plea for installing an Islamic govt

MOSCOW, Nov 11: A delegation representing some of the main Afghan rebel groups flew to Moscow on Sunday for fresh talks on ending the 13-year old civil war, reports Reuter.

But he made clear Moscow wanted to focus too on the fate of Soviet servicemen captured during the war. About 300 soldiers remain unaccounted for after the nine-year Soviet military intervention and Moscow believes dozens may be still alive.

But concerning Afghanistan it is still supporting the mercenary government.

Delegation leader Burhanuddin Rabbani told Tass news agency on arrival he hoped the political changes in the Soviet Union would lead Moscow to help to bring about a lasting peace.

"The establishment of an Islamic government in my homeland could become a reliable guarantee of that peace, not only for Afghanistan itself, but for its neighbours," he said.

Hun Sen to escort Sihanouk from Beijing to Phnom Penh

PHNOM PENH, Nov 11: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen left for Beijing Monday to escort former monarch and guerilla Chief Prince Norodom Sihanouk back to Phnom Penh more than 20 years after he was ousted from power, reports Reuter.

on November 14. Both men have played pivotal roles in four years of negotiations to bring an end to a civil war that has raged since 1978.

three, guerilla groups fighting the Vietnamese-installed government of Hun Sen.

Sihanouk has lived intermittently in the Chinese capital during his exile which began after Vietnam's invasion in late 1978 to oust the Khmer Rouge, who had kept him prisoner in his Phnom Penh home. Sihanouk was previously toppled from power in a US-backed coup in 1970.

Beijing has long been a staunch supporter of the radical Khmer Rouge, one of the

Cambodia: peace at last?



1954	Independence from France	1989	Vietnam completes troop pull-out
1970	Civil war	1990	UN peace plan proposed and later in year accepted
1975	Khmer Rouge takes over. 1-2 m deaths from execution, starvation and disease.	1991	June: Supreme National Council meets
1978	Vietnam invades	July: Four Khmer factions meet informally in Beijing	
1979	People's Republic of Kampuchea established	Oct: UN-brokered peace treaty signed in Paris	

Read my lips, buy house or car: Bush

WASHINGTON, Nov 11: President George Bush is trying to put a good face on gloom economic news by urging Americans to go out and buy a new home or car in a bid to revive the sluggish economy of the United States, reports AP.

"Some of the liberal Democrats that control this Congress think the only chance they have to defeat me is to talk this country into hard times," President Bush charged in an interview on Friday with Houston television station.

The Bushes were only in Washington a few hours before leaving having returns after a two-day political swing through Texas, where the President raised upwards of two million dollars for his reelection drive and lashed out at his Democratic critics.

The President charged that Mitchell was trying to force him to veto a jobless benefits bill again for "demagogic" purposes.

"If he sends me down a bill that's going to bust the budget agreement, I'm going to veto it and send it right back," said President Bush. "He is not going to dish it out and then be unable to take it."

He bluntly urged the Federal Reserve of Friday to lower interest rates to boost the recovery, which Bush insisted was underway despite Friday's rise in the unemployment rate to 6.8 per cent and the first decline in eight months in the index of leading economic indicators.

Off the Record

Dong Dong does it!

BEIJING: Dong Dong the panda, who was artificially inseminated in April, has given birth for the first time. And it's twins, an official report said Monday.

Dong Dong gave birth to the pair at the Wolong Nature Reserve in southwestern China two months ago, the Xinhua news agency reported.

Announcement of panda births are usually delayed because most cubs born in captivity die in their first weeks. Scientists are not sure why.

The Xinhua report said both cubs were growing fast. The larger cub weighs 7.5 pounds and the smaller 2.2 pounds. Xinhua said the mother favours the larger cub and has left the smaller one, but did not give details.

Chinese Zoos are increasingly using artificial techniques to reproduce pandas because the animals do not breed readily in captivity.

Pandas are seriously endangered in the wild by human settlement and logging that have destroyed their natural habitats in southwestern and central China. Poachers also hunt them for their skins. Only an estimated 1,100-1,500 pandas remain in the wild.



ZAMBALES: Imelda Marcos caresses a supporter's baby from the window of her car during her barnstorming tour through this province, which was recently affected by the eruption of Mt Pinatubo volcano. Mrs Marcos received a warm and festive welcome from supporters. —AFP/UNB photo

She likes kinky things

NEW YORK: A judge ordered fashion designer Mary McFadden for the second time — to pay her estranged husband \$600 a week in temporary support, report AP.

State Supreme Court Justice Edward Lehner on Wednesday told McFadden, 53, to make back payments plus interest to Kohle Yohannan, 23, and to pay his lawyer, Raoul Felder, \$8,500.

The couple, married in 1989, are involved in a stormy divorce. She has described him as a homosexual "toy boy" and says he abandoned her two months after the wedding. He has depicted her as an abusive drunk who liked kinky sex.

Lehner said he was ordering the interest payments because the defaults were "willful." But he denied Yohannan's request to find McFadden in contempt of court. McFadden said she would appeal.

"I'm going to fight. I don't think he deserves a penny," she said.

Former pilot giving proxy for Rajiv

AMETHI: A close friend of Rajiv Gandhi is running for Parliament in the assassinated leader's old district, portraying himself as the faithful servant of a once and future dynasty, reports AP.

Satish Sharma, who was an airline pilot like Gandhi, says he wants to preserve the Amethi seat in case the former prime minister's widow eventually decides to take it or until the next generation of Gandhis is old enough.

"I will be keeping the seat alive only for her," Sharma says in his campaign for Saturday's by-election, referring to Sonia time she decides to enter politics, I will vacate. The best way to honor and perpetuate Rajiv Gandhi's memory would be to vote for me."

Nehru's daughter, Indra Gandhi, assumed her mantle and wanted to pass it to her younger son, Sanjay. When Sanjay was killed while stunt-flying a light plane, she induced the reluctant Rajiv into the family business of politics.

His friendship with Sharma began in the 1970s, when they were pilots for Indian Airlines, the domestic air service. Sharma became a candidate after Sonia Gandhi refused the Congress Party's request to run for the seat.

"We are allowing Satish Sharma only on the condition that he will remain only until Sonia comes to us," said Zia-ur-Rahman, a wealthy grain merchant in the district.

That possibility appears remote because of Mrs. Gandhi's distaste for public life. Gandhi loyalists know this and have sought to project her daughter Priyanka and son Rahul as the future of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

Rahul, 21 and studying in the United States, is closer to the minimum age of 25, but Priyanka, 19, has shown a greater affinity for politics.

Sonia Gandhi, who is Italian, and her children lead a private life. They rarely appear in public in India and are not known to give press interviews.

7 more Kashmiri militants killed in gunbattle

NEW DELHI, Nov 11: Indian security forces shot dead seven Muslim militants in gunbattle in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir late Saturday and Sunday, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

Two militants were killed when they exchanged gunfire with security forces in Kashmir's Baramulla town Sunday, a state government spokesman was quoted as saying.

Four militants were shot dead when they tried to enter Kashmir illegally at an unspecified curfew-bound border area from Pakistan late Saturday, the spokesman said in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital.