

Perez deplors bloody incidents in Timor

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 14: The UN Secretary-General expressed profound regret on Wednesday at the shooting of civilians by Indonesian troops in East Timor and said he was seeking a report by a UN official who was there at the time, reports Reuter.

The Secretary-General profoundly regrets the events that have taken place in East Timor and the loss of innocent lives and he is profoundly disturbed by what happened," a UN spokesman said.

Diplomats and independent sources put the death toll at between 20 and 115 when Indonesian troops fired on hundreds of marchers on Tuesday in Dili, capital of the former Portuguese colony which Indonesia annexed in 1976.

Sri Lanka may be Shri Lanka

COLOMBO (Sri Lanka), Nov 14: Sri Lanka, which used to be called Ceylon may go for another name change reports AP.

The government said Thursday it may begin using Shri Lanka the country's English name to conform to the pronunciation in the island's dominant Sinhalese language.

The first sign of official acceptance of the new spelling came Tuesday when Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga presented the 1992 budget to Parliament, referring to Shri Lanka in copies of his speech distributed to reporters.

Gulf Arab states fund anti-PLO fundamentalists, says Arafat

CAIRO, Nov 14: A number of Gulf Arab states are financing Muslim fundamentalist Palestinians opposed to the PLO, the organisation's leader Yasser Arafat charged in an interview published here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Egyptian weekly Al-Mussawar also quoted him as saying that Kuwait had been worse than Israel in its treatment of the Palestinians.

"Certain Arab countries of the Gulf are financing the fundamentalists in the (Israeli)-occupied territories in a bid to counter the PLO," Arafat said, without naming any countries.

Fundamentalist Palestinians oppose the US-sponsored peace process that was launched in Madrid on October 30, accusing the PLO of selling out to Israel with its support for the Middle East talks.

Ties between the conservative Gulf monarchies and the PLO have been at a low since the Gulf War because of Palestinian sympathies for Baghdad.

After the conflict and Iraq's expulsion from Kuwait in late February, Gulf states suspended their financial support for the organisation and sought a new PLO leadership.

Arafat said some Arab countries were still paying out money in an effort to change the leadership, although he himself had been "democratically and legally



JERUSALEM: Masked Palestinian youths draw Palestinian flags on Silwan's walls (East Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhood) prior to the anniversary of the declaration of the Palestinian state by the National Palestinian Congress 15 November '88. —AFP photo

electd by the Palestinian people."

Saudi Arabia, however, released three million dollars worth of PLO funds in October.

Arafat said a thaw in relations with Kuwait was "difficult to imagine, because what Kuwait did to the Palestinian people is worse than what has been done by Israel to

Palestinians in the occupied territories."

More than 300,000 Palestinian residents of Kuwait have left the Emirate since it was liberated, following harassment of their community because of its alleged support for the Iraqi invaders.

Two thousand, five hundred Palestinians have been killed

in Kuwait and 12,000 others detained," charged Arafat. "It would be difficult for the Palestinian people to forget that."

Another report adds: Palestinians will accept autonomy in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip only if Israeli troops are withdrawn and the territories are placed

under international control, PLO Chief Yasser Arafat said in an interview published Wednesday.

"We are not just talking of autonomy for residents, We will not accept that, even if the Americans accept it," the Palestine Liberation Organisation leader said in the interview, published in the Egyptian weekly Al-Mussawar.

"If I accept autonomy as a transitional solution, it will only be if Israeli troops withdraw from the occupied territories... and if these territories are placed under the control of the United Nations or another multinational force."

Earlier this month at a peace conference in Madrid, the Palestinians embarked on negotiations aimed at Granting autonomy for the territories ahead of a final settlement of their status.

Arafat warned that the Middle East would "explode" if the peace process failed, stressing that the Palestinians wanted implementation of UN resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land.

In Jerusalem, a senior Israeli official who took part in the Madrid negotiations said his country was willing to grant "personal" autonomy to the Palestinians but not territorial autonomy.

The Palestinians would have control over social, municipal, educational, medical and cultural affairs, according to a document prepared by Israeli experts, the officials said declining to be named.

But Ghassan al-Khatib, a Palestinian delegate to Madrid, insisted that the Palestinians must exercise authority over their ownland.

"In the framework of this autonomy, we must be able to have free access to our land and use it as we want, and to be able to set up a legislative body, such as a council or parliament, to establish our own laws," he said.

While the Palestinians see the final outcome of negotiations as leading to an independent state, Israel has emphasised that it is only offering the Palestinians control over their administrative affairs.

Islamic leader involved in sex scandal resigns from IJI

ISLAMABAD, Nov 14: A prominent religious leader Senator Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, resigned Wednesday as Vice President of Pakistan's ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI), after being named in connection with a sex scandal, his party sources said, reports AFP.

Sami-ul-Haq, 55, had slammed the government's failure to move while religious personalities were being targeted in what he described as a campaign of vilification, the sources said.

He also ordered all his party leaders to quit IJI portfolios.

they said. In a statement released to the press, Sami-ul-Haq, who is chief of the fundamentalist Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI), said the party's general council would meet soon to decide whether to stay in the alliance.

He said the office of IJI Vice President had become a "stigma" for him after the alliance came to power. "I can no longer hold this post which was a mere burden on my shoulder," he said.

The sex scandal erupted after Islamabad police reportedly unearthed a top class brothel, allegedly run by a

woman identified as Madame Tahira.

Press reports said Tahira had named Sami-ul-Haq, together with several other politicians, senior government officials and theologians, as regular customers.

The JUI chief has vehemently denied the reports, which were also denounced two days ago by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Party sources said Sami-ul-Haq, who was defended by some opposition leaders also, was unhappy over the Prime Minister's belated denunciation.

BRIEFLY

**New govt formed in Madagascar:** Madagascar Prime Minister Guy Razanamasy announced a new government on Wednesday, aiming to prepare the Indian Ocean island for constitutional and electoral reform after months of political protests, reports Reuter Thursday from Antananarivo.

He announced a 24-member team mixing politicians — including some opposition figures — technocrats and military men in line with an agreement on October 31 to form a broad transitional government of national unity.

But key members of an opposition movement which has led a five-month campaign for political change have rejected the power-sharing scheme and analysts said the political crisis was not yet over.

Bush invites Shamir to meet him:

President Bush has invited Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to meet with him at the White House on November 21, an administration official said Wednesday, reports AP Thursday from Washington.

The meeting will come during a previously scheduled private visit by Shamir to meet with Jewish Federation officials in Los Angeles, Boston and Baltimore.

US officials want to take advantage of Shamir's trip to further discuss with him the progress of the Middle East peace process, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

It will be Bush's first meeting with Shamir since they attended the historic Middle East peace conference in Madrid three weeks ago.

OAS, Haiti agree on peace meet:

The Head of the Organisation of American States (OAS) mission to Haiti late Wednesday said negotiators and the Haitian parliament had agreed to a peace meeting outside Haiti, reports AFP from Port-au-Prince.

The OAS mission Chief, Augusto Ramirez Ocampo, said Haitian legislators had agreed "on the urgent necessity for all the concerned parties to meet outside Haiti" under OAS auspices.

The former Foreign Minister of Colombia said that the meeting would be held in respect of Haiti's constitution and of OAS Resolution D-91, which demands the reinstatement of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Two US copters collide, 2 killed:

Two US military helicopters collided near South Korea's northeastern town of Kosung, killing at least two US officers, reports AFP Thursday from Seoul.

The two officers aboard one of the helicopters died instantly, while a second helicopter went missing with its crew members, the national news agency, Yonhap said.

It was not immediately known how many people were aboard the helicopters. The helicopters were on a training mission at the time of the accident, Yonhap said.

IRA kills four:

IRA gunmen shot dead four men and badly injured a baby on Wednesday in one of the bloodiest nights of violence in northern Ireland this year, police said, reports Reuter Thursday from Belfast.

The Irish Republican Army launched a string of carefully coordinated attacks across Belfast, including car bombs and sledgehammer attacks on houses in Protestant strongholds.

Two men were killed and a six-week-old baby girl suffered gunshot wounds to an arm and leg when IRA guerrillas blasted their way into a house in the Protestant Donegal area of south Belfast, police said.

South African parties to talk constitution Nov 29, 30

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 14: African National Congress (ANC) President Nelson Mandela announced a date for long-awaited talks on a new South African constitution on Wednesday but was quickly rebuffed by the government, reports Reuter.

Mandela surprised members of his own movement when he said the ANC and other anti-apartheid groups had scheduled two days of talks to set the country on course for a post-apartheid era.

The all-party conference is set down for the 29th and 30th of November," Mandela told reporters during a photo session

Yeltsin misled into declaring emergency

MOSCOW, Nov 14: Russian President Boris Yeltsin has dismissed his personal representative in Chechen-Ingushetia, saying the envoy misled him into declaring a state of emergency in the rebel republic, Tass news agency reported on Wednesday, report AFP.

Meanwhile, the leader of Chechen-Ingushetia, General Dzharkhar Dudayev, said negotiations with the Russian federation could begin as soon as the Russian authorities recognised the newly-elected Chechen-Ingush parliament and his own position as president.

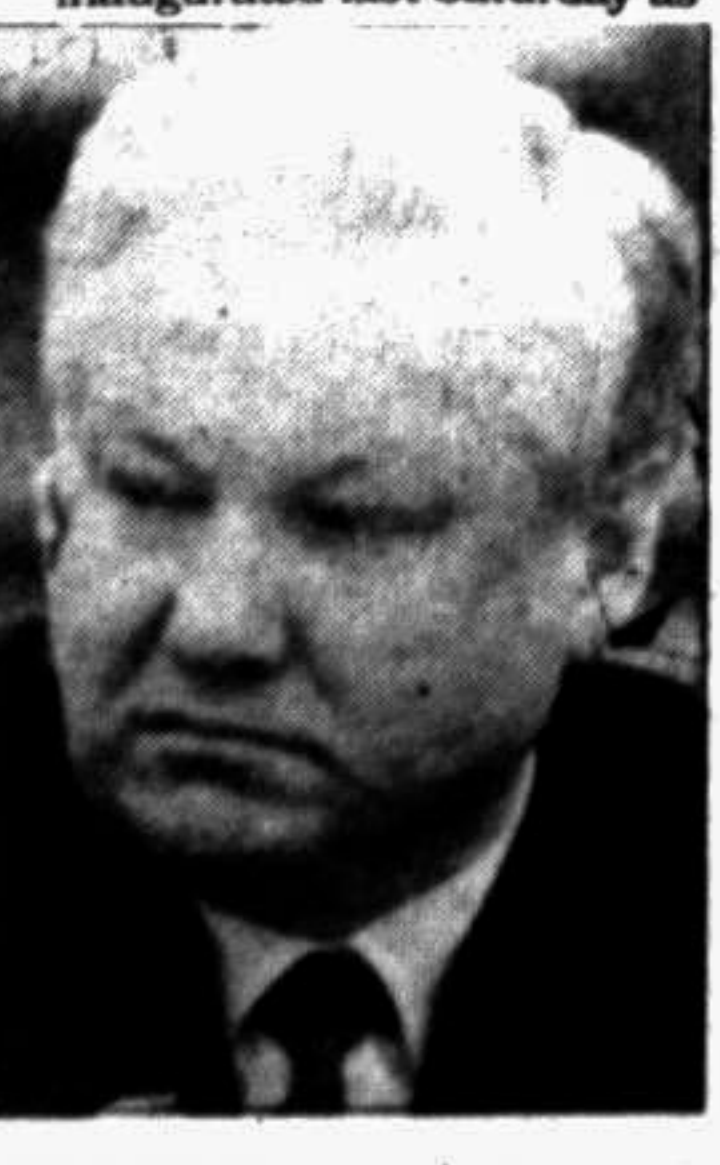
Tass said Yeltsin had issued a decree sacking Ahmed Arsanov for "presenting

faulty information" which led to the announcement of a state of emergency.

In an embarrassing setback for Yeltsin, the Russian parliament on Monday voted to overturn his state of emergency decree, calling instead for dialogue and negotiation to resolve the crisis in the autonomous republic.

Dudayev, at a press conference in the Chechen-Ingush capital of Grozny, said that as soon as Russia "acknowledges the legally elected parliament and president of the sovereign Chechen republic, Russia can enter into talks on an equal footing," Moscow radio reported.

The nationalist leader was inaugurated last Saturday as



president of Chechen-Ingushetia, following an election last month which the Russian federation has dismissed as illegal.

The Russian parliament, while overturning Yeltsin's state of emergency, put the blame on his aides for the debacle.

During the parliamentary debate earlier this week, several deputies had suggested Yeltsin had been the victim of "provocation" and had issued the decree based on misinformation provided by senior aides.

The parliamentary vote came after the Russian KGB chief said his forces had failed to enforce the decree, which he termed a "tragic error."

Benazir denies leaking out Pak N-secrets

KARACHI (Pakistan), Nov 14: Pakistan's opposition leader Benazir Bhutto denied yesterday giving away the nation's nuclear secrets and said she was ready to face charges of high treason, reports Reuter.

"The charge is absolutely baseless," Bhutto told a news conference after the government produced a tape recording of her talking to foreign reporters about Pakistan's nuclear capability to back claims she had broken her oath of secrecy.

"I stand on whatever I have said and I am ready to face any case of high treason." During a lunch and briefing with foreign correspondents in Islamabad on August 31, Bhutto detailed how she dealt with US concerns that Pakistan had accelerated efforts to make weapons-grade Uranium during her 20 months as Prime Minister.

Bhutto said President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the man who sacked her government in August last year, was in effective charge of Pakistan's nuclear programme.

The country never needed to exceed an understanding with the United States over Uranium enrichment, she said. Pakistan had the capability rapidly to meet any threat from India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974.

US sources say there was an understanding that Pakistan would not enrich Uranium

over a certain threshold, which they did not specify. They say that was breached in April/May 1990 when tension with India over disputed Kashmir threatened to lead to war.

Japan to put pressure for release of Suu Kyi

TOKYO, Nov 14: Japan will press Burma's military government on the continuing house arrest of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Miyazawa made the remark during an upper house plenary session in response to the questions from an opposition member of parliament.

"In response to reports that Suu Kyi has been placed under house arrest for long time, Japan will continue to press the Rangoon junta to take due consideration of her," Miyazawa said.

"We will continue working on the Myanmar (Burmese) government in various forms," he added. Japan is Burma's leading donor.

MP Tetsuzo Nakano of the Kometto party, the opposition's second largest party, had demanded the Miyazawa administration put pressure on the Burma's military government to release the Nobel Prize laureate.

Quayle cleared of drug charges

INDIANAPOLIS, (Indiana) Nov 14: An official probe in 1982 cleared Vice President Dan Quayle of charges he had connections with drug dealers while he was Indiana's senator, according to the Justice Department, reports AFP.

The Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) findings from the investigation were released Tuesday to the Indianapolis Star newspaper in order to silence rumors about Quayle's alleged drug use in the 1980s, assistant US attorney John Thar said.

Those rumors surfaced when the nationally syndicated comic strip "Doodenbury" recently began a series

Off the Record

Thousands get sterilised to get jobs

BRASILIA: More than 400,000 women die each year in Brazil from botched abortions and thousands choose sterilisation in order to get jobs, women's activist groups said on Wednesday, report Reuter.

During a congress-sponsored seminar to debate women's rights, feminist leaders said more than four million abortions were carried out every year, many of them under primitive conditions.

Rede Mulher (women's network), a Sao Paulo based activist group, said 44 per cent of Brazilian women of childbearing age have undergone operations to remain sterile.

"It is common practice in Brazil to demand that a woman, be she married or single, provides a sterility certificate as a basic prerequisite for employment," said Sao Paulo physician Lutz Viera.

Doctors and legislators said that the number of women who had voluntarily undergone sterilisation operations had increased since the new 1988 constitution had extended maternity benefits.

The seminar, called "Women's Health and Reproduction Rights", is studying 16 bills presented to congress aimed at legalising abortion.

Fifty-two per cent of Brazil's 150 million inhabitants are women and more than 40 million of them are over 16 years old.

Imelda fading from headlines

MANILA: A week after her return from exile, Imelda Marcos is fading from the headlines here despite a media blitz intended to restore the former first lady as a force in national politics, reports AP.

But Filipino commentators and politicians believe the widow of former President Ferdinand Marcos cannot be ruled out as a political figure especially if she decides to bankroll a candidate in next May's elections. "It looks hopefully that the media... is growing bored with (Mrs. Marcos)," said Max Soliven, publisher of pro-Aquino Philippine Star. "However, let's not make the mistake of believing that she has been deafened and is no longer dangerous."

Waning attention is due in part to anti-Marcos sentiment among many Filipino journalists. Some prominent media figures were jailed or fired during the Marcos era, and many younger reporters were members of anti-Marcos protest groups during the final years of his administration. But declining attention is also due to the way Mrs. Marcos and her archival, President Corason Aquino, have conducted themselves since the former first lady returned November 4 to face tax fraud and other charges.

Mrs. Marcos has proclaimed herself a "poor and homeless widow." But she lives in a \$125,000-a-night luxury hotel suite, which she says is being paid for by supporters.

During a television interview with journalist Luis Beltran on November 6, she dismissed questions about alleged corruption with a spurned explanation that "Marcos was a giver, not a taker."

As the nation was reeling last week from the effects of a storm which killed 6,000 people, Mrs. Marcos was awarding a pair of her celebrated shoes to the winner of a radio contest.

Most of the deaths occurred on her home island of Leyte, but Mrs. Marcos' aides said she avoided a visit to the devastated area because she did not want to be seen as exploiting misery for public relations. She even avoided an off-camera suggestion from Beltran that she call on her wealthy foreign friends to contribute to relief for the storm victims.

Potential juror suspects Kennedy Smith is guilty

WEST PALM BEACH: Preliminary jury selection for William Kennedy Smith's rape trial neared an end Wednesday, and one potential juror said she suspected Smith was guilty but still considered himself to be impartial, reports AP.

The first phase of jury selection is limited to individual questioning on attitudes about being sequestered, pretrial publicity and the Kennedy family. Smith is a nephew of US Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

Lawyers said that as early as Monday, a pool of 40 will face group questioning on unlimited topics before a six-member jury is seated.

Court officials said 46 prospective jurors had been excused and 40 were still eligible. But defence attorney Roy Black said he believed that just 32 to 34 potential jurors remained in the pool.

Circuit Judge Mary Lupo has set opening statements for December 2. Smith, 31, denies a woman's accusation that he raped her March 30 at the Kennedy family's beachfront estate.

A prospective juror who said he works as an engineer-computer programmer told Black he thought Smith was "probably guilty," but could not preconceived notions out of his mind as a juror.

"You can change your opinion based on argument," the man said. "I do that all the time at work."

The man, described by Black as "brutally honest," was told to return next week for the jury pool questioning.

Among those excused Wednesday was a woman who said she was friends with Palm Beach police detective Christine Rigolo, the lead investigator.

The identities of prospective jurors are being withheld in an effort by the judge to reduce chances that they come in contact with reporters.

5,000 Iranians still held prisoner in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 14: Iran said on Wednesday it had strong evidence Iraq was still holding 5,000 Iranian Prisoners Of War, contrary to Baghdad's claim that all Iranians captured in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War had been repatriated, reports Reuter.

A press statement issued by Iran's UN mission said the evidence included messages broadcast by Iranian POWs over Baghdad radio, reports in the Iraqi and international media and letters Iranian prisoners sent to their families through the Red Cross.

"Substantive evidence to this effect has been provided to Iraqi officials," the Iranian statement said, adding that a

"reasonable and acceptable response" was awaited.

An Iraqi Foreign Ministry official was quoted earlier by the Iraqi news agency as having said all Iranians captured during the Iran-Iraq War had been repatriated through the international committee of the Red Cross.

The Iraqi official was responding to an offer Iran's UN representative, ambassador Kamal Kharrazi, made to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar on Monday for the release of all remaining Iraqi POWs and calling for reciprocal action by Baghdad.

A spokesman for the Iranian UN mission said that the time he did not know how many Iraqis his country was holding.