

## Jakarta denies fresh massacre in east Timor

JAKARTA, Nov 25: The Indonesian army denied today reports of fresh massacres in east Timor, where its troops shot dead protesting mourners two weeks ago.

"There is not truth to the reports," a military spokesman told Reuters, adding that his government was awaiting the conclusions of an official commission set up to probe the killings in the former Portuguese colony on November 12.

Up to 180 people were reported killed when troops fired on mourners in Santa Cruz cemetery in the east Timor capital of Dili. The official death toll is 19.

In Dili, clergymen of east Timor's dominant Roman Catholic church and a western diplomat have said they had not been able to obtain confirmation of a series of massacres reported by overseas opponents of Indonesia's rule in the territory.

Australian-based Timorese sources, quoting Catholic and civil sources in east Timor, said troops shot dead 10 people on November 17 and a fur-

ther seven, including a one-year-old boy, on November 18 on the outskirts of Dili.

The same sources said troops on November 15 executed 70 to 80 witnesses of the November 12 killing in the Dili cemetery.

The seven-man commission investigating the cemetery killings leaves on Thursday for east Timor.

But one member of the commission Hadi Wayarabi, has already blamed Portugal for killings.

"The Dili incident was created by the government of Portugal by setting up in organisation (which is against Indonesia) and pitting (east Timorese) against each other," Wayarabi, a Director in the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, said on Saturday.

Lisbon is a leading campaigner against Jakarta's rule in east Timor. Indonesia invaded east Timor in 1975 after Portugal's withdrawal of its colonial administration and annexed the territory in 1976 without gaining UN recognition.

## ULFA leaders flee Assam : 1,727 held

NEW DELHI, Nov 25: A nine-week-long army sweep of India's troubled Assam state has netted 1,727 rebels and their supporters and forced the leaders of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) to flee the state, the army said Sunday, reports AFP.

"The middle level of ULFA is totally disorganised, insecurity has crept in and they are on the run," the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted the commander of the operation, Lieutenant General Ajai Singh as saying.

Singh said however that the leadership had managed to elude the army and had fled to "neighbouring countries" from the northeastern state, which

borders Bangladesh and Bhutan and at one point is only kilometers away from Burma.

The army had arrested 979 trained ULFA activists and 748 lower level cadre in the crackdown and seized 651 weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition, the General and his staff were quoted as telling visiting Indian reporters.

PTI quoted Singh as denying allegations of army atrocities since Operation Rhino began September 15, but said he admitted there was a "fear psychosis among the people".

He said the civil administration of the tea and oil-rich state was returning to normal after being "virtually paralysed" by ULFA activities, in-

cluding a spate of kidnapping.

The claims were made as a secessionist organisation in neighbouring Manipur state, the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), Sunday called for unity with ULFA which does not recognise the Indian constitution and wants an independent Assam. The UNLF statement, released in the form of a leaflet in Manipur, also called for rebels in other rebellion-plagued northeastern Indian states and Burma to forge a united front.

The Meithei tribal UNLF and its better known military arm, the People's Liberation Army, have been relatively quiet in recent years but was active in the 1960's.

## LTTE sets up own police force

COLOMBO, Nov 25: Sri Lanka's dominant Tamil Tiger guerrillas have set up their own police force and are recruiting young women to staff the stations, local press reports here said yesterday, reports AP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) set up eight police stations in their main stronghold of the northern Jaffna peninsula recently, the Sinhalese-language 'Lankadeepa' newspaper reported.

Military officials here said they were aware of the report based on information from Tamil civilians travelling out of Jaffna, which is virtually under guerrilla control.

The rebels have asked families to send their young women to staff the police stations while schoolboys have been asked to learn the highway code and basic traffic rules to maintain road discrimination, the newspaper said.

## 'Waqf property can't be acquired'

NEW DELHI, Nov 25: Muslim scholars at a session of the Association of All India Muslim Personal Law Authority yesterday opined that the Waqf property, including any mosque, can neither be altered nor acquired, reports PTI.

A resolution adopted at the session held here today said since any mosque cannot be sold or purchased in order to respect divine dignity no action should be taken to demolish, shift or acquire the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya.

The convenor of the session, Syed Ahmad Hashmi, told PTI the resolution urged the centre to ensure the protection of Muslim personal laws in view of the reported move of the Uttar Pradesh government to enact a law for compulsory registration of marriages in the state.

## Off the Record

### US Senator invites Madonna to dinner

EVANSVILLE, (India): An Indiana senator has offered to take Madonna to dinner in hopes of persuading her that Evansville isn't as boring as she thinks, reports AP.

Madonna, in an article in the November 23 TV Guide, compared her three-month stay in the area during the filming of the movie 'A League of Their Own' with a visit to Prague, Czechoslovakia.

The pop singer and actress complained she didn't get MTV, the cable video channel, at the house she rented.

There was no word on whether Madonna would accept the invitation.



### 'Don't take a close look'

NORFOLK: About 400 people got a glimpse of screen legend Dorothy Lamour, but she discouraged them from taking too close a look, reports AP.

"It's really something pretty awful to have me appear here just before they're showing a movie I made when I was 19, or something like that," said Lamour, who is 78.

"It's cruel, I haven't had my face lifted — mainly because there isn't a derrick big enough."

It seems her admirers at the Naro Theater on Saturday disagreed. "Dorothy, you're still pretty!" one shouted after a standing ovation subsided.

The movie shown was 'The Fleet's In', a 1942 musical in which Lamour is pursued by William Holden. Lamour introduced the movie before attending a dinner-dance marking the 50th anniversary of the United Service Organizations.

### Pen traded for a paint brush

ASPEN, Colo.: "Gonzo" journalist Hunter S. Thompson traded his pen for a paint brush — as well as firearms and explosives — to create a 12-piece series of artworks including a poster of former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover riddled with bullets and splashed with red paint, reports AP.

Titled 'The Director', the poster is among several doctored depictions of well-known personalities Thompson has on exhibit at the Aspen Art Gallery, said gallery owner Mary Grasso.

'The Director' is adorned with gold leaf, splattered with red paint and mounted on background of barn wood and mirror. Bullet holes are figured prominently on Hoover's head, between his eyes and under his nose.

"It's very artistic," Grasso said. "He uses paints and variety of guns and explosives."

Other subjects include Ernest Hemingway, Jane Fonda, Brigitte Bardot and Ronald Reagan. Three pieces have sold for nearly \$10,000 each, Grasso said.

Thompson gained fame in the 1960s and 70s with his irreverent reporting style dubbed "Gonzo" journalism. He has written books, syndicated newspaper columns and articles that appeared in Rolling Stone and other publications.

### Rushdie's appeal to rescind death sentence

LONDON: British author Salman Rushdie, on Sunday urged the archbishop of Canterbury to ask Iranian authorities

to repeal a death sentence handed down by Iran's late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, reports AP.

Archbishop George Carey "should at once, as the head of the church of England, formally ask the religious authorities in Iran to have it (the death sentence) lifted," Rushdie said in a telephone interview to BBC radio.

Rushdie who has been hiding for nearly three years to escape the death sentence, said he was "extremely upset" by a speech made by Carey last week stating that he understood Muslim anger at Rushdie's book 'The Satanic Verses'.

Khomeini had slammed the book as blasphemous to Islam. Carey compared Muslims' reaction to Christians' anger at the film 'The Last Temptation of Christ', saying "the book contained an outrageous slur on the prophet (SM) and so was damaging to the reputation of the faith."

"I'm sure the archbishop didn't approve of the Iranian fatwa but he didn't exactly condemn it," Rushdie said, referring to Khomeini's 1989 decree to kill the author.



## Anti-immigration party wins polls in Belgium

BRUSSELS, Nov 25: The issue of immigration took center stage Monday after gains by extreme rightists shocked the outgoing center-left coalition parties in national elections, reports AP.

The ruling Christian Democrats and Socialists in Prime Minister Martens' four-party coalition lost 14 parliamentary seats in Sunday's election, dropping to 120 out of the 221-seat legislature.

Big gains for anti-immigrant parties in Dutch-speaking Flanders and Brussels gave the political extremists 14 seats, up 12 from the last elections in 1987.

Several observers called it a "political earthquake" unseen since the rise of right-wing extremism in the late 1930s.

Running on a ticket to send non-European immigrants home, accompanied by crude cartoon and racist phrases, the Flemish Vlaams Blok party and Brussels Front National scored

a national breakthrough. The Vlaams Blok became the biggest party in Antwerp, Belgium's second largest city, which has 25,000 immigrants among its population of 500,000.

"It is an extreme shift to the right," Martens said on the BRT television network.

Following increased violence against foreigners in Germany and France, Sunday's vote was another indication that xenophobia was on the rise in Europe, observers said.

"If we take a step backward now, we will lose the battle for democracy," warned the government's immigration commissioner Paula D. Hondt.

But critics said the four coalition parties — Christian Democrats and Socialists, each split in Flemish and francophone camps — have done too little during four years in office.

## BRIEFLY

**Truce in Y'slavia fails:** The latest ceasefire in Yugoslavia, due to come into force at 6 pm (1700 GMT) on Sunday, was broken less than 30 minutes later, European Community observers said, reports AFP Monday from Zagreb.

After a lull in fighting around 6 pm in the region of Ostjek, eastern Croatia, the artillery opened up again about 6.30 pm said Ed Kocatal, spokesman for the EC observer mission based in the Croatian capital.

He said the EC had been informed that the ceasefire was due to start at 6 pm.

**Delhi okays Nepali envoy:** The Indian government has given clearance for Chakra Bastola to become Nepal's new ambassador to New Delhi, unidentified officials quoted by the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP from New Delhi.

Earlier press reports had speculated New Delhi was reluctant to clear Bastola's appointment before criminal charges pending against him in an Indian court had been withdrawn. PTI said New Delhi's clearance followed the withdrawal October 21 at a court in the eastern state of Bihar of charges against Bastola alleging his involvement in an aircraft hijacking.

The hijacking from Nepal to Forbesganj in Bihar of a Royal Nepal Airlines flight carrying some three million rupees took place in 1971.

**Rock star Mercury dies of AIDS:** Freddie Mercury, the 45-year-old lead singer of the rock group Queen, died Sunday, a day after he disclosed he had AIDS, reports AP Monday from London.

The rock singer had issued a statement through spokeswoman Rony Meade on Saturday saying he had been suffering from the disease.

Mercury died peacefully at his home in Kensington, west London, Ms Meade said.

A statement from his publicity company said: "His death was the result of broncho-pneumonia brought on by AIDS."

A private cremation is to be held this week.

**Major plans to meet Dalai Lama:** Prime Minister John Major plans to meet the Dalai Lama the exiled spiritual leader of Chinese ruled Tibet when he visits Britain next month, officials said on Sunday, reports Reuter Monday from London.

Major did not receive the Dalai Lama in March during his last visit to Britain in order not to endanger delicate talks then under way with China over the future of Hong Kong.

The Dalai Lama, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his non-violent campaign to gain independence for Tibet, is due in Britain early in December to deliver a speech at Oxford University on Tibet's role in Asia.

**House, Senate accord on crime bill:** House and Senate conferees have agreed to a sweeping crime bill that would apply to death penalty to some 50 federal offences and require a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases, reports AP Monday from Washington.

House Democrats said they planned to bring the 3.1 billion anti-crime package to a vote Monday while Senate Republicans vowed to fight passage and predicted a veto by President Bush if they failed.

Throughout Sunday's stormy three-hour conference, Democrats accused Republicans of trying to stall enactment of the package before Congress adjourns this week to give Bush a political issue.

Meanwhile, a Senate-House conference met informally for several hours Sunday to discuss a transportation bill.

The dual question before House and Senate negotiators is how best to spend \$151 billion in federal aid to create a surface transportation system for the 21st Century, while at the same time dividing that money among a host of competing interests.

**Boutros-Ghali optimistic on ME peace:** Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Egyptian selected last week to be the next UN Secretary General, said Sunday he was optimistic about the Middle East peace process after last month's talks in Madrid, reports AFP Monday from Caracas.

Speaking on his arrival in Venezuela's capital for a meeting of the group of 15 (G-15), a support group for the Non-Aligned Movement, Boutros-Ghali said "I believe the Madrid Conference was a very important success. I am very optimistic I am sure this is a new peace process."

Boutros-Ghali, 68, is Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister and a career diplomat who took part in talks that led to the 1979 Camp David Peace Accord between Egypt and Israel.

**Libya seeks Arab League support:** Libya on Sunday sought Arab League support in the wake of charges by the United States that two Libyans were responsible for the 1988 destruction of a Pan Am airliner over Scotland that killed 270 people, reports AFP Monday from Cairo.

In a note delivered to the Arab League Secretariat here, Libya denied any involvement in the bombing of the plane and appealed to the League to adopt a unified position against the American accusation.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Megud will meet US Ambassador to Egypt Robert Mellican as part of "Arab efforts to contain this crisis by peaceful means, a League source said.

Libya, according to an Arab diplomatic source, agreed to a request by Egypt not to issue a formal appeal for an emergency Arab League ministerial session in order to allow diplomacy to resolve the dispute with the United States.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan opposition leader and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (R) meets with retired Air Marshal and political associate Asghar Khan upon her arrival Sunday in Islamabad.

## Bush considering aggressive drive for Saddam's exit

WASHINGTON, Nov 25: The Bush administration is considering a more aggressive campaign to force the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the Washington Post reported today, reports Reuter.

The Post, quoting unidentified senior US officials, said the proposals included giving Iraqi rebels military training and spare parts, or helping to protect a provisional, alternative government which some insurgents wanted to establish in Northern Iraq.

The newspaper said President George Bush, frustrated by the inconclusive end to the Gulf war now faced new criticism from congressional

Democrats and challengers in next year's presidential elections.

There were differing views among officials about whether any plan to oust Saddam was worth the effort, the newspaper said.

US intelligence experts believed the plans would fail, largely because they depended upon some degree of American leverage over internal Iraqi politics and some degree of cooperation among Iraqi rebel groups, the Post reported.

"There are lots of ideas out there — I would not rule out that we would move in more aggressive ways," said one official involved in the deliberations. "The process is very alive... and nothing has been

rejected..." Republican Party sources told the Post that Bush was increasingly concerned that his Democratic opposition in next year's election would use Saddam's continued hold on power to tarnish the Gulf victory.

Xinhua adds from Baghdad: Iraq yesterday demanded lifting of the air blockade imposed by the United Nations shortly after its invasion of neighbouring Kuwait in early August of last year.

In an appeal to 200 civil aviation companies throughout the world, Nouredin Safi, Director General of the Iraqi Airlines, called for lifting the blockade to facilitate transport

of food and medicine to Iraqi children.

In the appeal aired by state-run Baghdad Television, Safi called attention to the sufferings of the Iraqi people from acute shortages of food, medicine and medical apparatus.

An Iraqi Boeing-707 was at the Amman airport, ready to head for any country to carry relief supplies, he added.

Last week, the plane carried back a shipment of milk and medicine for Iraqi children from Europe. European airports provided free facilities for the plane and refueled it at a 50 percent discount, the officials said, without specifying what these airports were.

## House building loans repugnant to Islam, Pak court

ISLAMABAD, Nov 25: Pakistan's top religious court has ruled that a state-run organisation may not charge interest on home building loans because the practice violates Islamic principles, officials said Monday, reports AFP.

In a judgement, the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) said the fee charged by the House Building Finance Corp (HBFC) for loans to build homes is a substitute for interest and hence repugnant to Islam which forbids interest in any form.

The court directed the government to make suitable amendments in the law governing the functions of the HBFC, with a deadline of June 30.

The FSC has already ruled that 22 other fiscal laws covering a wide range of activities including insurance and banking violate the Islamic ban on interest and directed the government to amend them.

## Abida's appointment as Pak envoy to US under fire

ISLAMABAD, Nov 25: Fundamentalist Islamic clerics are bemoaning the appointment of Abida Hussein as Pakistan's newest ambassador to the United States, reports AP.

Her drawback they say is her sex-female. She should be at home, not jaunting off unchaperoned to the United States to take over one of the nation's most critical foreign missions, say Pakistan's hard-line mullahs or Islamic priests.

On Saturday, Ms Hussein boarded the plane for Washington via London. She is expected to present her credentials on Wednesday.

"It's clear that the present government in Pakistan is a moderate government and her appointment is one expression of that moderation," she said.

Ms Hussein replaces Najmuddin Sheikh, a seasoned diplomat, who had been Pakistan's ambassador to Washington less than a year.

Her appointment has drawn mixed review at home.

Some say Ms. Hussein, a veteran politician who lost the 1990 elections, is liberal window-dressing for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Islamic conservative government.

Pakistan's Prime Minister is hoping foreign investment, much of it from the industrialized West, will fuel his self-styled industrial revolution.

Observers say he hopes Ms. Hussein will project Pakistan as a moderate, egalitarian Islamic state.

Ms. Hussein takes over in Washington at one of the worst times in Pakistan-US relations.

## 8 mine workers killed in S Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 25: Eight employees were killed and 10 wounded in renewed fighting today at South Africa's President Steyn Gold Mine near Welkom, where 76 people died in clashes earlier this month, reports Reuter.

The deaths, reported by the South African Press Association, pushed the death toll from political violence in South Africa since Friday to at least 22.

The mine, in orange free state province, is owned by the country's biggest conglomerate, Anglo American corp of South Africa.

Anglo American blamed the first round of fighting at the mine, between Xhosa and Sotho tribal factions on November 3, on men trying to force colleagues to observe a two-day general strike due to begin next day.

After renewed fighting a week later, the company sent many workers home to cool tempers.

Pakistan denies the charge.

## Imelda faces 400 years in jail

MANILA, Nov 25: The Philippines filed new corruption charges today against former first lady Imelda Marcos and state lawyers said she could face nearly 400 years in jail if convicted on all 66 criminal cases so far lodged, reports Reuter.

In its latest battery of accusations, the government said Marcos violated the anti-graft law by leasing state property to a private foundation she had set up and incurring losses for the government amounting to 18.4 million Pesos (680,000

dollars).

Solicitor General Francisco Chavez said the transaction took place in 1982, four years before a "people power" revolt toppled President Ferdinand Marcos and forced him and his family to flee to Hawaii. The former president died there in 1989.

The government accused Imelda Marcos of leasing property owned by a government railway firm which she headed to a hospital foundation which she chaired.

sub-leased the property to a Marcos "crony" for up to seven times more than the amount of the original lease, Chavez said.

Marcos was charged with violating the anti-graft law on 12 counts which carry a maximum penalty of 15 years in jail each, or a total of 180 years, Chavez said.

Marcos, in theory, also faces jail terms of more than 200 years for 54 other graft charges previously filed against her by the government.

Marcos and her only son Ferdinand Jr returned to the

Philippines earlier this month from nearly six years' exile in the United States and vowed to clear their family's name.

The government has accused the Marcoses and their business associates of looting up to 10 billion dollars from the economy.

AFP adds: The son of the late deposed president Ferdinand Marcos said here today that his family was willing to comply with government conditions in order to bring his father's body back to the Philippines in about a month's time.