

Huge protest against coalmine shutdown

UK's political crisis deepens

LONDON, Oct 26: Britain's political crisis darkened as a huge crowd marched through London to protest against coalmine closures and Prime Minister John Major headed for a final showdown with Conservative rebels over Europe, reports Reuter.

Major, returning to Britain on Sunday from a visit to Egypt marking the anniversary of the World War Two battle of El-Alamein, found his government beset by conflicts and recriminations on the home front.

A crowd of at least 150,000 miners and their supporters marched through the rain-

drenched centre of London on Sunday to oppose the planned shutdown of more than half of the coalmining industry. It was the biggest anti-government rally for decades.

The march, which went ahead despite the government's partial climbdown on the closures, underlined the extent to which the coal crisis has focused resentment about the recession-ravaged economy and apparent turmoil in Major's administration.

In the six months since his election victory Major has had his authority rocked by sterling's withdrawal from the

European Community's exchange rate mechanism, forced concessions about the speed and scale of the mines shutdown, and a party rift over Europe.

During his Egypt trip, Major appeared to raise the stakes in his fight against "Euro-sceptics" in his Conservative Party, letting it be known he would not back down from his commitment to ratify the Maastricht Treaty on closer European union.

Officials travelling with Major said he was determined to bring the Maastricht bill to Parliament in a matter of weeks, despite the threat of an

proved were a serious threat, or just a political manoeuvre to scare off the dissenters.

But Major has signalled that he will not brook another u-turn, gambling that the sceptics will not risk bringing down their own government by voting against the Maastricht Treaty.

With an overall majority of just 21 in the 651-seat parliament, Major needs to rally most Conservatives behind Maastricht to put the treaty into law. Victory also depends on the Labour opposition not voting against the government.

Labour, seeing an opportunity for compounding Major's problems, is sending out ambiguous signals about its position.

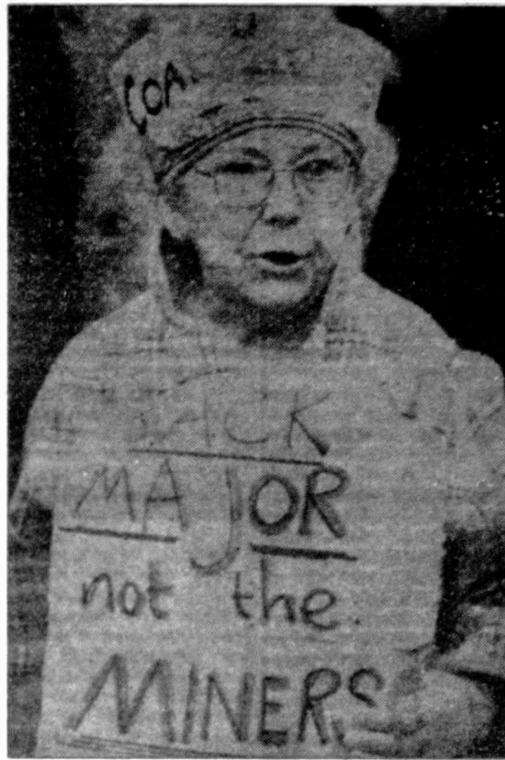
"I think it is an amazingly risky gamble he is taking. It does almost invite the Labour Party to join the Euro-sceptics in the Tory party to defeat the government on this issue," said Conservative parliamentarian Winston Churchill.

Rebels said there would be "trench warfare" in parliament if Major pressed ahead with the bill, but the Prime Minister's aides appear to think these are empty threats and that the government will emerge victorious, its authority restored.

The force of any rebellion may begin to emerge at a special pre-ratification debate in parliament on November 4.



uprising by the party rebels. A senior aide would not say whether widespread reports in the British press that Major might call a general election if he failed to get Maastricht ap-



LONDON: A supporter of the miners shows her feelings in London Sunday, as with over 100,000 others, she attended a rally in Hyde Park in support of the miners and unemployed. The British government announced that they intended closing half the country's coal mines. — AFP/UNB photo

Israel won't leave Golan: Rabin

JERUSALEM, Oct 26: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Sunday told a cabinet meeting that Israel will stay on the Golan Heights, despite his support for concessions on the strategic plateau, says the Health Minister reported, says AP.

Rabin has assured US that Israel will not leave the Golan Heights but he also said he favoured concessions in the region and is therefore faithful to commitments he took before the June 23 elections, Chaim Ramon told Voice of Israel Radio.

The remarks came as dozens of Israeli settlers from the Golan demonstrated out-

side government offices here to protest an Israeli document submitted at the seventh round of Middle East peace talks in Washington.

The document contained the word "withdrawal". Rabin has repeatedly said he was ready to return to Syria part of the Golan — which Israel seized in 1967 and annexed in 1981 — in exchange for full peace with Damascus.

AP adds: Rabin facing renewed pressure from Jewish residents of the Golan Heights, furiously denied a newspaper report Sunday that Israel may yield to Syrian demands and withdraw from the whole of the territory.

BRIEFLY

**UK businessman murdered:** Marxist guerilla kidnapped and murdered a British businessman working for a banana export company in the north of Colombia, an army spokesman said on Sunday. Reuter reports from Bogota.

Soldiers pursuing the guerillas found the body of Peter Arthur Kessler, 65, on Saturday lying by the side of a path leading up to the Sierra Nevada mountain range with a single shot in the throat.

The spokesman said he believed the guerillas, fleeing before advancing troops, had decided to kill their victim to make their escape easier.

**Portugal's ex-PM dead:** Adelino Da Palma Carlos, Portugal's first head of government after the 1974 revolution ended half a century of right-wing dictatorship, died in Lisbon on Sunday aged 87, a relative said, Reuter reports from Lisbon.

Palma Carlos was appointed Prime Minister in May 1974 by army generals three weeks after they staged a bloodless coup. He resigned after 56 days saying elections should be held.

**Blast kills one in Philippines:** An explosion killed one person Monday near Davao international airport during a transport strike called to protest increases in electricity rates, police said, AP reports from Manila.

A report from the Philippine National Police said three other bombs exploded Sunday night in Davao, 960 kilometers (600 miles) southeast of Manila, on the eve of the strike by leftist and moderate drivers' groups.

Police said no one was injured in Sunday's blasts. Police said the explosion Monday took place when a man found a small bomb along the road near the airport and picked it up.

Investigators are looking into the possibility that the bombings were timed to coincide with the strike that completely paralyzed the city Monday, police said.

**4 protesters held in Taiwan:** Four protesters have been arrested after a radical group demanding Taiwan's independence clashed with police in central Taiwan, police said Monday, AP reports from Taipei.

Police in Taichung, about 180 kilometers (112 miles) southwest of Taipei, said four members of the outlawed Taiwan Nation-Building Organization were detained Sunday for attempted murder and assaulting the police. Six others were released after questioning.

About 50 members of the group demonstrated outside the city's Justice Building Sunday to demand the return of the organization's nameplate, which was confiscated by the police last year.

The protest turned violent when Chen Wan-chen, chairwoman of the organization, threatened to remove and vandalize all signs inscribed with "Republic of China," the Taiwan government's official name.

**Storm floods Manila:** Tropical storm Colleen dumped heavy rains on the capital Monday and threatened to unleash volcanic avalanches as it churned toward the Mount Pinatubo volcano, AP reports from Manila.

The Manila weather bureau said Colleen, which was downgraded from typhoon status late Sunday, struck Luzon island about dawn Monday about 110 kms (60 miles) east of Manila, and was headed toward the area of the volcano.

The storm brought heavy rains to the Manila area starting Sunday night and continuing past dawn.

Schools, some government offices and many businesses in the capital were closed because of the flooding.

**Typhoon claims 13 in Vietnam:** A typhoon killed at least 13 people, injured 12 and left four missing in central Vietnam, the Communist Party newspaper Nhan Dan said yesterday, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

Typhoon Angela, the worst typhoon to hit Vietnam this year, brought heavy rains to six coastal provinces between October 21 and 23 and destroyed crops and many homes, the paper said.

Thousands of hectares (acres) of rice and vegetable crops were damaged, communication lines were broken and road and rail links between North and South Vietnam disrupted, it added.

Earlier this month, floods killed 37 people in central Vietnam and caused millions of dollars worth of damage.

**Bomb explodes in London:** A bomb exploded in a residential street in central London late Sunday, shattering windows but causing no injuries, police said, AP reports from London.

A number of people were treated for shock after the blast at an apartment block close to the Rochester Row police station and Victoria train station at around 9:15 pm (2115 GMT), said a spokesman, requesting anonymity. He said damage was slight.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the blast, the 14th in the British capital this month.

Press Association, the British national news agency, reported the apartment block where Sunday's blast occurred is home to lawmakers and staff at the House of Commons, 3/4 mile (1.2 km) away.

Asia may become the world's biggest source of acid rain

SYDNEY, Oct 26: Asia is likely to become the world's biggest source of acid rain as acidic gas emissions double over the next 15 years, an Australian scientist warned today, reports AP.

"There is an urgent need to establish accurately the current situation," said Greg Ayers of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), who conducted tests on rainfall in Malaysia and Indonesia.

"China and India are seeing the sort of levels that have caused problems in Europe and North America, where there are now thousands of lakes with no aquatic life".

Acid rain is caused when acidic gases — notably sulphur dioxide — dissolve in the atmosphere: The gases come mainly from industrial smokestacks, motor vehicles and domestic fires.

Japan, the greatest economic power in Asia, has made "dramatic" strides towards cutting acidic gas emissions over two decades, Ayers said, but he warned that the problem cannot be tackled in one country alone.

"This is a regional-scale problem," he said in a tele-

phone interview from the CSIRO's centre for atmospheric research in Melbourne.

"It takes from one to three days for atmospheric chemistry to convert the sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide into the sulphuric and nitric acids which do the damage," Ayers said, adding: "In that time, if the winds are right, the clouds can blow hundreds if not thousands of kilometres".

Yeltsin may postpone ROK visit

SEOUL, Oct 26: Russian President Boris Yeltsin may postpone his planned visit to South Korea in November because of domestic political tensions, a newspaper reported Monday, says AP.

There was no immediate comment from the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

Yeltsin had cancelled his plan to visit South Korea and Japan in September because of Moscow's territorial dispute with Japan. He later rescheduled his Korea visit for November 18-20.

Rabbani steps down tomorrow

KABUL, Oct 26: Interim Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani said on Sunday he would step down on Wednesday as scheduled, ending weeks of rumours that he wanted to stay on, reports Reuter.

"I will hand over to the leadership council, and there must not be a power vacuum, Rabbani told reporters in the Afghan capital.

Several other Mujahideen leaders in the uneasy alliance that makes up the leadership council had voiced fears in recent weeks that Rabbani wanted to stay on beyond his allotted term.

"I am not thinking about a coup d'etat," Rabbani said.

Rabbani is due to step down on October 28, four months after he was appointed to lead an interim administration following the toppling of the former communist government of President Najibullah in April.

It was unclear who would replace Rabbani but it will probably be up to the leadership council to select a president to lead the Afghan government until a permanent administration can be put in place.

Liberian rebels free captives

ABIDJAN, Oct 26: Liberian rebels who on Thursday took 14 people hostage, four of them UN officials and most of the others aid workers, freed all of the captives on Sunday, diplomatic sources said here in neighbouring Ivory coast, reports AP.

A UN official in Monrovia, the capital of the strife-torn west African state, had earlier said that the four UN officials had been freed, and diplomatic sources there had said the other 10 would be released in the next few hours.

The 14 had been seized Thursday by rebels of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) at Gbarnga, 160 kilometres (100 miles) northeast of here, after warplanes of the west African peacekeeping force bombed the rebels' headquarters there.

United Nations representative Ross Mountain said in the Liberian capital that the four UN employees, three Liberians and a Dutch national, had been "properly treated" and returned to their Gbarnga office.



DARWANDI, Pakistan-held Kashmir: Pakistan army personnel wait behind a bunker Sunday to deter marchers attempting to cross the control line into India-held Kashmir protesting alleged Indian atrocities against Kashmiris. — AFP/UNB photo

Canadians vote to resolve dispute with Quebec

OTTAWA, Oct 26: Canadians vote today on controversial reforms meant to resolve a longstanding dispute with French-speaking Quebec that threatens to split their nation apart, reports Reuter.

Over 80 per cent of 18.5 million registered voters were expected to turn out at 59,170 polling booths in the nationwide referendum on constitutional amendments that grant Quebec special status but have deeply divided Canadians.

Voters will say "yes" or "no" to reforms that guarantee the survival of Quebec's language and share of political power, reform the senate and redistribute federal powers.

"If this agreement fails, I think the chances of Canada staying together are poor," Alberta Premier Don Getty said.

Heterosexual intercourse main reason for rapid AIDS growth

TOKYO, Oct 26: Of Japanese men who contracted AIDS through sex with women, 60 per cent caught it overseas — but that fact is doing nothing to stem the flood of sex tours to Asia, reports Reuter.

Last year, nearly two million Japanese men went to Thailand, South Korea or Taiwan and many of them visited prostitutes.

Worried about the growing number of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) victims in Japan, the government is stepping up education about the disease. But women activists argue the target should be the sex tourists themselves and not simply the unsafe sex they promote.

Latest official figures show three new victims and 97 HIV virus carriers were detected in July and August, against 238 for the whole of 1991 and a

cumulative total of 2,866. Heterosexual intercourse is the main reason for the recent rapid growth.

According to the Health and Welfare Ministry, of men infected with the virus through heterosexual intercourse, 60 per cent caught it overseas, against 20 per cent for women.

The fast growth in the number of Japanese men infected with the virus abroad is closely related to the AIDS explosion in Thailand since the late 1980s, experts say.

Government figures show 253,084 Japanese men visited Thailand last year, 593,311 went to Taiwan and 1,064,420 to South Korea, more than three times the number of Japanese women tourists visiting these three destinations.

Companies arrange sex tours as recreation for their workers or as a reward for

employees with excellent business performance.

The tours are arranged mainly by small and medium-size firms, but also sometimes by major corporations.

A group of 10 to 30 men typically go on a three-day tour, seeing sights and playing golf in the daytime, visiting restaurants or bars in the evening and choosing their partners at a cost of 30,000 to 40,000 yen (dollar 250-330) for one woman per night.

The strong yen has made such tours even cheaper. "In addition, they are attracted by the kindness, devotion and respect for men of local hostesses which modernised Japanese women have lost," said an official at a major tour company.

Responding to growing fears of AIDS, the Tokyo chamber of commerce and in-

dustry this month issued its first company manual to prevent the killer disease.

"AIDS is already a serious issue in company management because Japanese companies dispatch their employees and families to every corner of the world, including countries where they are exposed to a high risk of being infected with AIDS," it said.

It calls for company managers to start in-house AIDS education so their employees will not catch the deadly virus and to prevent discrimination against AIDS victims in the office.

The manual points out the dangers of high-risk behaviour, but says labelling those who have contracted AIDS via sex as "immoral" would drive victims underground and lead in the end to AIDS becoming even more widespread.

Feminist groups argue that such anti-AIDS propaganda aims to promote safe sex rather than go to the root of the problem — the sex tours themselves.

"AIDS prevention is discussed on the assumption Japanese will keep buying prostitutes and the assumption itself is never questioned," said Yoshiko Hasegawa, a member of women's action group.

"If they really want to stop AIDS, they should be serious about eradicating the sexual exploitation of women."

The Tokyo-based feminist group last year protested against an anti-AIDS poster by the government-affiliated Japanese Foundation for AIDS Prevention, saying the poster was based on a concept that Japanese men enjoy overseas sex tours.

The poster shows a grin-

Five Israelis killed in Lebanon blast

JERUSALEM, Oct 26: A roadside bomb detonated by guerillas killed five Israeli soldiers and wounded five in south Lebanon on Sunday, the Israeli army said, reports Reuter.

It was the worst attack in nearly two years in Israel's self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon.

"Five Israeli soldiers were killed and five were wounded around 3 pm local time when an explosive device went off in the eastern section of the security zone in Lebanon," an army statement said.

Israeli military censors barred publication of the news for nine hours while the soldiers' families were notified.

A spokesman for Rambam hospital in Haifa said three of the wounded soldiers were in critical condition.

Off the Record

Honest soothsayer!

SEOUL: The leader of South Korea's largest doomday church has sent a letter from jail saying that his prediction the would end this week may be wrong, reports said Monday, says AP.

Lee Jang-rim, 46, who is in jail on fraud charges, wrote a letter asking followers to "restrain themselves" if the expected end of the world does not occur on Wednesday, said the Hankyoreh Shinmun, a local national newspaper.

The church's Dami Mission headquarters of Seoul acknowledged Monday it received Lee's letter but declined to disclose details. One member, who refused to be identified, said it was shocking.

Hundreds or possibly thousands of Koreans who believe the end of the world is imminent have sold property, abandoned their families, quit schools and jobs and even had abortions. Four have committed suicide.

Church members believe the faithful will be lifted into heaven in a phenomenon called the Rapture. The church says there will be seven years of war, flood and famine that will annihilate the earth and set the stage for the second coming of Christ.

Officials fear that fanatic doomday followers may commit suicide or take other extreme actions if the expected Rapture does not occur.

'America is proud of you'

BILLINGS: President Bush on Sunday congratulated the Toronto Blue Jays for winning the World Series and invited them to the White House to celebrate their victory, reports AP.

Bush called team manager Cito Gaston from Air Force One as he flew here for a campaign stop and told him "America is proud of you". Bush had made no secret of the fact that he was an Atlanta Braves fan, showing off his tomahawk chop on the campaign trail.

The president watched the final game of the series Saturday night, when the Blue Jays won title by beating Atlanta 4 to 3 in 11 innings.

Oldest human bones

DALLAS: A geologist says he has calculated a woman's remains discovered in Texas in 1953 to be 11,600 years old, making them the oldest human bones ever found in the Americas, reports AP.

Curtis R McKinney, director of geologic research at the Center for American Archeology in Kampsville, Ill., was to present his findings Monday at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting in Cincinnati.

Michael B Collins, a research fellow at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas, said McKinney's estimate was not unreasonable, but he cautioned that further research is needed.

"We've had claims of human skeletons having been dated at 20,000 and 70,000 and other ages like that based on one line of evidence or another and they end up not being corroborated, or being refuted by later and more advanced techniques," Collins said. "There's a lot more to be done to verify this age determination."

The remains of the "Midland woman" were discovered by an amateur archaeologist in sand dunes near Midland.

Trade in foreign brides

FRANKFURT: German men tired or even scared of modern, independent women can choose from an ever-growing selection of mail-order foreign brides, reports Reuter.

Favourites are South East Asians and Latin Americans. But offers include east European women described by the marriage brokers as "also good for agricultural work."

While nobody knows how many women are being traded like this, feminist groups sheltering runaways say the growing gap between affluent Germany and the Third World has produced a mail-order bride boom.

Lured by false promises of work or marriage, thousands of women are brought to Germany illegally each year from the Philippines, Thailand, Colombia or Eastern Europe.

"The trade in women is rising rapidly," Diana Hummel from the Frankfurt women's group Agaisra told Reuters.

Tighter entry laws, enacted to stem a record influx of foreigners seeking a better life, mean many of the women are now being smuggled in, she said.

"Many women have no choice but to turn to smugglers as it is becoming more difficult to find work here legally."



Braves fan, showing off his tomahawk chop on the campaign trail.