

Mahathir blasts UK's stance on Bosnia

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 22: Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Seri Mahathir Mohamad on Tuesday accused Britain of standing by while Serbs conducted genocide against Muslims in Bosnia, says Reuter.

Mahathir said ethnic cleansing in Bosnia had exposed the limitations of European political cooperation and shamed "aborted western advocacy, democracy, justice and human rights."

"I sometimes wonder if I can ever adequately express the extent of Malaysia's anguish and distress at the continued genocide and ethnic cleansing conducted by the Serbs against the Bosnian Muslims," he said.

Multi-ethnic Malaysia is a former British colony where Islam is the official religion.

British officials had expected Mahathir to raise the plight of Bosnian Muslims in talks with Prime Minister John Major on

Wednesday. But his passionate outburst in a welcoming speech at a dinner took his British guests completely by surprise.

"May I take this opportunity to appeal to you Prime Minister to reconsider Britain's position before the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is forever cemented in history as the blackest catastrophe of the modern world," Mahathir said.

"Eloquent speeches, noble declarations and appeals are not enough. There must be political will translated into resolute and credible action," he added.

Britain has consistently opposed lifting a United Nations arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia to enable besieged Muslim fighters to acquire weapons illegally.

Major, in Malaysia as part of a trade mission to Asia, defended Britain, saying it had led the world's response towards Bosnia.

Yeltsin is a criminal.

Yeltsin is an enemy of the people," a bearded man in a grimy anorak boomed through a solitary megaphone. Everyone present agreed, but no one stopped to listen.

Elderly women trotted up one by one past the crowd control barriers, nodding purposefully to the watching parliamentary guards. Each carried a handbag and a brick.

Behind the barriers, near entrance no 14, the deputies' usual way to work, more bat-tling grannies swung shovels at the growing piles of bricks, breaking them into fragments so there would be enough to go round.

Younger men marched by, vigilante-style, carrying three-metre (10-foot) poles on their shoulders or stones in their hands.

Parliament later voted to strip Yeltsin off his powers and

sword in Rutsko as replacement President.

Elsewhere, thousands of Muscovites pursued their usual evening activities.

Peaceful crowds wandered through the city centre, inspecting the expansive imported goods displayed in street kiosks, the most visible evidence of Yeltsin's reformist rule since 1991.

Traffic police stopped motorists on their way home from restaurants, cinemas, theatres and parties to fine them for drunk driving.

No one stopped and stared at the six interior ministry trucks, filled with troops who had left their guns inside before taking a quiet pull at the vodka bottle, parked outside the government offices at Staraya Square.

Troops elsewhere were remarkable only by their absence.

In August 1991, thousands of Yeltsin's liberal supporters sealed off the parliament against a hardline communist coup. Army tanks circulated in Moscow then, but the barricades were never assaulted.

A couple of hundred metres (yards) down the road, beyond the parked cars of the wealthier pro-communist enthusiasts, men with jemmies levered hills of brick and masonry from a decaying wall to hand to old ladies heading for the fray.

Other men, in groups of three or four, heaved rusty radiators into low heaps near the red-and-white crowd barriers, unimpeded by the bewildered guards.

"I watched Yeltsin's speech on television, but it's hard to say what I think of it," said one guard, tugging nervously at his moustache. "I find politics hard to understand."

Off the Record

Panda gives birth to third set of twins

BEIJING: A giant panda has given birth to her third set of twins, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Wednesday, says AP.

Qingqing gave birth to the cubs Sunday at the Chengdu zoo, in the capital of southwest China's Sichuan province. One is a female, weighing only 61 grams (2.1 ounces), but zoo keepers have been unable to determine the sex of the other, which weighs 176 grams (6.2 ounces), the report said.

"Qingqing has been hugging the baby so tightly that we have had no chance to examine it," a zoo keeper said.

Both cubs weigh less than normal because Qingqing's gestation was only three months as opposed to the usual five. The panda was artificially inseminated in June, Xinhua reported.

Qingqing has given birth to seven cubs since 1989. Her first set of twins, also born after artificial insemination, both survived, a world first.

Another first was that while tending to her own twins, Qingqing nursed a cub her mother had given birth to but was too weak to feed.

The giant panda is native only to China, and only about 4,000 survive in the wild.

Harvard paying \$2.60 lakh for sex discrimination

CAMBRIDGE: Harvard Law School will pay 260,000 dollars to a domestic violence institute to settle a sex discrimination lawsuit by a former professor who says she was wrongly denied tenure, reports AP.

Under the settlement announced Tuesday, the school will contribute the money over three years to the Northeastern University School of Law's Domestic Violence Institute.

The settlement was negotiated on the eve of a scheduled hearing on Clare Dalton's lawsuit before the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.

Dalton, who is now a professor at Northeastern's law school, helped found its Domestic Violence Institute. The institute trains law students to represent women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

"This is a price that Harvard is paying for gender discrimination. Harvard's money is being put into resources for women who suffer, the most egregious form of gender discrimination," Dalton said Tuesday.

Her lawsuit claimed that Harvard gave tenure to five men with similar or lesser credentials than her in 1987, the same year she was passed over.

Harvard attorney Anne Taylor said the university admitted no fault in the case and was pleased with the settlement suggested by Dalton.

"It's an inventive, creative, future-looking resolution that benefits not only the immediate parties, but women and children who will have the benefit of these expanded services," she said.

Harvard Law School Dean Robert Clark said Dalton was not passed over because she was a woman, but because the faculty disagreed about her qualifications.

46.1 pc of people in Alabama risk going to hell

BIRMINGHAM: God only knows who gets to heaven, but the Southern Baptists estimate 46.1 per cent of people in Alabama risk going to hell, reports AP.

Since the figure from church research on potentially doomed souls was made public, it is Baptists who are feeling the fire, however.

The southern Baptist Convention's county-by-county breakdown of who's bound for heaven and who isn't — unless they are born again and accept Jesus Christ as their saviour — hit the Birmingham News on September 5. It's been the buzz in some Alabama pews ever since.

Under the headline: "Baptists count the lost," the front page story included a detailed map and box listing the 1.86 million "unsaved" by county in precise percentages.

The Baptists said the numbers were only a guide on where to establish new churches and find more followers.

But some of the faithful, Baptists as well as others, are incensed.

"It is the pinnacle of presumptuousness to construct a formula for quantifying the unsaved," Jack Denver of Homewood, a self-described "practicing Christian" wrote in a letter that was among about a dozen the newspaper published from state readers.

Hurricane Gert takes 10 lives in Mexico

TAMPICO, Mexico, Sept 22: Work crews struggled in the wake of Hurricane Gert to restore electricity Wednesday to tens of thousands of people, reports AP.

Gert has claimed at least 10 lives since it rumbled ashore Monday.

At least eight other people were reported missing Tuesday in floodwaters inland as 19 rivers overflowed from Gert's remaining heavy rains, the Mexican news agency Notimex reported.

Thousands of small homes were damaged Monday by 100-mph (160-kph) winds which weakened quickly into thunderstorms and heavy rain showers. Gert was downgraded from a hurricane to a tropical storm and further weakened Tuesday.

Civil defence workers helped deliver blankets and food after the storm pummeled the Gulf states of Tamaulipas and Veracruz.

Tens of thousands of people were reported forced from homes because of flooding across a wide swath of Mexico, said Notimex.

Civil defence officials said seven of the dead were killed by heavy flooding that left thousands homeless in Hidalgo, a state just inland from Veracruz, according to Notimex.

The three other deaths occurred Tuesday in the town of Palma Sola, near the center of Veracruz state, when the Palma Sola River overflowed and the victims were swept away, state authorities said.

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Discovery ends 10-day mission

CAPE CANAVERAL (Florida), Sept 22: The Discovery completed a 10-day mission early today making the first space shuttle night-landing at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, reports AP.

The Discovery's landing at 3:56 a.m. (0756 GMT) came nearly 24 hours behind schedule, as NASA was forced to cancel its first attempt early Tuesday because of bad weather.

It was the first pre-dawn landing at Kennedy Space Center. All five previous night landings took place at Edwards Air Force Base in California's Mojave desert.

For a while now, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has given preference to landings at Cape Canaveral over Edwards Air Force Base in California to spare itself the cost of hauling the shuttle back to Florida perched on top of Boeing 747.

International

Yeltsin's opponents ring parliament building

MOSCOW, Sept 22: They brought their own bricks, their own sticks, their own red flags to defend the White House, Russia's parliament, in the country's latest clash between conservatives and reformers, says Reuter.

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German and French presidents Richard von Weizsaecker (L) and Francois Mitterrand (R) with Polish counterpart Lech Walesa (C) at Gdansk University where the two visitors received honorary doctorates Sept 21. Mitterrand and Von Weizsaecker attended a European unity forum of students from three countries.

— AFP photo

31 more blacks killed in S Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 22: Thirty-one blacks were killed in two highway ambushes and an attack on a hostel as South Africa's white-dominated parliament wrapped up debate on an all-race council to oversee the demise of white rule, says Reuter.

They included 18 people shot dead on Tuesday when gunmen in a mini-bus opened fire at random on pedestrians and motorists at an intersection leading to black townships south of Johannesburg, police spokesman Eugene Opperman said.

Twenty-five others were wounded in the same attack. Witnesses said most of the

victims were commuters at a busy taxi terminal who were switching vehicles on their way home.

There is a definite pattern. Everytime we take a major step towards democracy there is another of these by now quite predictable massacres," African National Congress(ANC) legislator Rob Haswell said in Cape Town.

He said the militant white right, which opposes all concessions to the disenfranchised black majority was the only group that could possibly benefit from terrorist attacks.

Tuesday's killings took the death toll to 31 in 12 hours and 87 in Johannesburg and Natal townships since Friday night.

They occurred as parliament

wound up a debate on proposals for an all-race Transitional Executive Council(TEC).

Justice Minister Kobie Coetse said during the debate that violence had reached dangerous proportions and could plunge South Africa into destructive civil war.

If violence is not curbed, the situation in South Africa could evolve into another Bosnia or Lebanon," he said.

Constitutional Development Minister Roelf Meyer, chief government negotiator at multi-party democracy talks, told parliament that white rule could not be perpetuated.

Guerillas attack SLA patrol

MARJAYOUN (Lebanon), Sept 22: Guerrillas attacked an Israeli-backed militia patrol in South Lebanon on Tuesday, wounding a militiaman, and Israeli artillery hit back, security sources said, reports Reuter.

Guerillas fired anti-tank rockets and machine guns at the South Lebanon Army (SLA) patrol in the Shoufary area on the edge of Israel's self-proclaimed security zone, they said.

One militiaman was wounded and the patrol then fought back until Israel and SLA gunners inside the zone bombarded the source of fire with 155 MM artillery shells.

The attack was launched a day after Israeli planes rocked an underground base used by pro-Iranian Hezbollah Guerrillas on the Iqlim Al-Toufah mountainous ridge facing the security zone.

This, Ramos said, will give the talks a greater probability of producing a peaceful and

Manila to start serious talks with Moros

JAKARTA, Sept 22: Philippine President Fidel Ramos said Wednesday his government will enter into more serious talks with a Muslim rebel group seeking greater self-rule in the Southern Philippines, reports AP.

After concluding his talks with Indonesian leaders, Ramos told a news conference that the next meeting between representatives of his government and the Moro National Liberation Front will shift from the exploratory stage to serious negotiations.

He said the Philippine government and the MNLF had agreed that the Organisation of Islamic Conference, of which Indonesia is a member, would monitor talks between the two sides.

Philippine government and MNLF representatives met earlier in Tripoli, Libya, in October 1992.

Two Frenchmen killed in Algeria

ALGIERS, Sept 22: Two Frenchmen were found dead Tuesday western Algeria, becoming the first foreign nationals to die in Algerian unrest, the national agency APS said, quoting official sources, reports AP.

The killings of Francois Bertelet, 32, and Emanuel Didion, 25, surveyors for the French company Herko, were immediately condemned by both the Algerian and French governments and marked a new stage in Algeria's conflict with Muslim fundamentalists.

Official sources said the men were seized Monday by Islamists who travelled to work in Ibelat, close to Oran, the capital of west Algeria, by a "terrorist group," a term usually reserved for armed Muslim fundamentalists.

Demjanjuk arrives in New York

NEW YORK, Sept 22: Seven years after he left America in handcuffs on charges that he was a notorious Nazi, John Demjanjuk arrived in New York on Wednesday morning, five of them under a death sentence.

He had been extradited from the United States and convicted in an Israeli court of being "Ivan," a sadistic guard at the Treblinka camp. He claimed he was a Soviet soldier captured by the Nazis.

Since the conviction, evidence has emerged from newly opened Soviet archives casting strong doubt that Demjanjuk was "Ivan." The Israeli Supreme Court overturned the conviction in July, but said there was strong evidence Demjanjuk had

served as a guard at Sobibor,