

Pan Am bombing: Libyan plea to drop extradition warrants

CAIRO, Sept 27: Libya wants the United States and Britain to drop extradition warrants for two men suspected of blowing up Pan Am 103 before they would be allowed to surrender, their lawyer said Monday, reports AP.

Demands by Washington and London for unspecified prior compensation payments to family members also must be scrapped, attorney Ibrahim Legwell said. Up-front compensation implies an assumption of guilt, he said.

But Legwell, speaking in a telephone interview from Tripoli, reported some progress in negotiations at the United Nations seeking a way to try the pair in the West, even in Scotland or Washington.

He said a Libyan envoy had given UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali a letter. "There is now a possibility for negotiations and for reaching a compromise solution acceptable to all parties," Legwell said without elaboration.

3 killed as farmers clash with soldiers in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Sept 27: Farmers angered by plans to build a dam in their area clashed with soldiers on Madura Island, leaving three people dead and three injured, news reports and the local military office said Monday, reports AP.

The identities of the victims and the causes of the deaths and injuries still were not clear, said a sergeant at the military command in Sampang regency, speaking on condition of anonymity.

News reports said the clash Saturday erupted from protests by about 500 farmers against authorities setting out to mark the location of a dam.

The sergeant refused to provide details of the clash, but said no arrests had been reported from the scene. In Banyuans, 60 kilometers (37 miles) northwest of the regency's capital of Sampang, Sampang is about 790 kilometers (490 miles) east of Jakarta.

But the newspaper *Media Indonesia* said about 20 troops

BRIEFLY

32 more executed in China:

Thirty-two common law criminals have been executed in China's southwestern province of Sichuan, the official Xinhua news agency said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The 32 men, 18 of them peasants, were put to death Saturday following sentencing at a large public meeting in the provincial capital of Chongqing for crimes ranging from robbery to rape and murder.

Some 3,600 arrests were made during a month-long anti-crime campaign in Chongqing from August 15, Xinhua said.

Eastwood honoured: Clint Eastwood was made a fellow of the British Film Institute Sunday in recognition of his success on both sides of the camera, AP reports from London.

The 63-year-old Eastwood, star of big Hollywood action movies like "Dirty Harry" and "Magnum Force," and a film director, was cited for his "unique contribution to moving image culture".

Indo-Israeli accord: S K Mahapatra, the director-general of India's Culture Ministry, signed Sunday a two-year cooperation agreement with Israel in the fields of education, science, youth and culture, officials said. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The 1994-1996 accord fills in details on an outline initially by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres when he visited New Delhi in May following up the launching of ties between the two countries in January 1992.

One shot in Florida: A New York City man visiting family in Florida was fatally shot in the head Sunday night in an apparent drive-by shooting, police said. AP reports from Miami.

The 40-year-old victim was in his car with two relatives, going to a restaurant, when another car pulled up beside theirs on the highway and the driver opened fire, authorities said.

The name of the victim, who lived in the New York City borough of the Bronx, was not immediately released. The shooting occurred shortly after 8 pm on the Palmetto Expressway north of downtown Miami.

Indian made Bolivia's president:

Aymara Leader Victor Hugo Cardenas became the first Indian to rule Bolivia since the Spanish conquest when he took over as acting president on Sunday. Reuter reports from La Paz.

Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada handed over to Cardenas, the country's vice president, in a simple ceremony at Santa Cruz airport in central Bolivia early on Sunday.

Ramos ready to testify in Aquino killing

MANILA, Sept 27: President Fidel Ramos said Monday he would be willing to answer questions from a Senate committee looking into the 1983 murder of former President Corazon Aquino's husband, reports AP.

Sen Blas Ople said last week the committee plans to submit written questions to Ramos, who was military vice chief of staff and commander of the Philippine Constabulary when Benigno Aquino Jr was murdered.

Aquino was killed moments after returning from the United States to challenge President Ferdinand Marcos. Public outrage led to the mass uprising that ousted Marcos three years later and installed Mrs Aquino as president.

Shortage of military spares: Many tanks, infantry fighting vehicles out of action

International

Indian army is in a vulnerable position

NEW DELHI, Sept 27: India's 1.2 million-strong army is the world's third largest, but continuous underfunding and little restructuring has left the army in no shape to fight a major war, reports IPS.

And while General Bipan Chandra Joshi, the new chief who assumed command of the Indian army in July, has grand plans for the country's military, he has inherited a fighting force that many say is at its most vulnerable ever.

Joshi's foremost problem is a lack of operational readiness due to a shortage of military spares as a majority of the army's hardware is from the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Half the tanks in the Indian army, is infantry fighting vehicles and two-thirds of its artillery pieces are of Soviet origin, many of which are out of action today because of lack of spares.

Soldier-training schedules too are suffering as troops are frequently deployed to maintain

law and order across the country. Last year the army was called out every sixth day on internal security duties across India.

Presently, nine of the 33 Indian army divisions are deployed in the four states of Kashmier, Punjab, Assam and Manipur to contain secessionist movements.

Confronted with these problems, Joshi faces not only the formidable task of restructuring the army during his 30-month tenure, building up its quota of spares, ammunition and equipment but also of redefining its role as a force for the country's external and internal defence.

Joshi is said to believe the army's primary task is to protect India's national sovereignty from internal and external threats and creating an infrastructure where the two roles coverage.

In a recent interview, Joshi defended its use in internal se-

curity deployment on grounds that, as an instrument of the state it follows the government's orders. "We are ready to undertake each and every task," he said.

But he has made it clear he wants a fighting force that is capable of handling both internal and external security.

Joshi has said he would like to see India as a major player in South Asia with influence extending from the Malacca Straits to the Horn of Africa.

But army sources admit he is aware that to bring about major changes, both in attitude and functioning he will have to operate within a politically weak system and an insensitive bureaucracy.

Still, as the ex-director general of perspective planning, head of military operations and army commander of the southern and western armies, Joshi brings considerable experience to counter these problems.

On the question of improving

the "teeth-to-tail" ratio of the army to increase efficiency, he has said a resource crunch had already helped cut the fat. This, in turn, had led to innovative solutions that may have been "rejected in an era of plenty."

But more cuts will only affect the muscle and bone, with the general indicating that an increased budget for acquiring hardware would then be called for.

Joshi reportedly backs prevailing assessments at army headquarters that an additional 16 million US dollars are needed to resurrect India's operational capability to what it was before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when acquiring defence hardware was no problem.

The army also wants another 40 million US dollars to initiate basic modernisation plans.

Although Joshi is against slashing the army's size, he says: "If we are to reduce the size of the army, it must have

greater mobility, greater early warning for mobilisation and investment in vehicles, tanks, helicopters and intelligence-gathering capabilities."

To counter the spares shortages, the Indian military now favours strategically based force structures, with fundamental assets like maintenance crews, workshops and transport facilities shared equally between the army, navy and air force.

The general perceives Pakistan as India's main enemy till the year 2000. By then, he believes New Delhi will have to deal with China's military and economic might looming menacingly on its northern and north-eastern borders.

In an interview, Joshi said Pakistan's aim was to destabilise India by low attrition warfare in Kashmir and in nuclear build-up is aimed exclusively at India. He wants New Delhi to maintain a posture of dissuasive deterrence against Islamabad, convincing it that

Defeat in Tamil Nadu by-election a major blow to Congress

5 Lankan troops

killed in clash with Tigers

COLOMBO, Sept 27: Security forces clamped indefinite curfew and launched a fresh offensive in northern Sri Lanka today of dismantling rebel fortifications outside military camps, defence officials said, reports AFP.

At least five soldiers were killed and one other injured during the initial phase of the offensive in the coastal Mannar district shortly after the region was brought under curfew, a defence official said.

He said ground troops exchanged fire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as soldiers moved to destroy Guerrilla positions outside army bunker lines both in Mannar district and the neighbouring Mullaitivu district.

"We now have confirmation of five of our soldiers getting killed at Wankalai (near Mannar)."

Curfew announced over state radio Monday was to facilitate what the military described as a "limited operation against the LTTE." There were no immediate reports of rebel casualties.

Off the Record

'Marriage is not dead'

LONDON: A stubborn economic recession has undermined marriage in Britain but most people still have faith in the institution, a new poll released on Sunday showed, reports Reuter.

Eleven per cent more people think marriage is dead than in 1989 when the economic outlook was rosier, the survey by the Times newspaper found.

Asked by opinion pollster Mori if they agreed that "Marriage is dead", 74 per cent said no, while 16 per cent said yes and 10 per cent offered no view.

The survey showed sharp differences in attitudes towards marriage in different social classes.

Only one in 10 people in professional and managerial classes said they thought marriage was dead, compared with 23 per cent of unskilled people.

John is out of favour

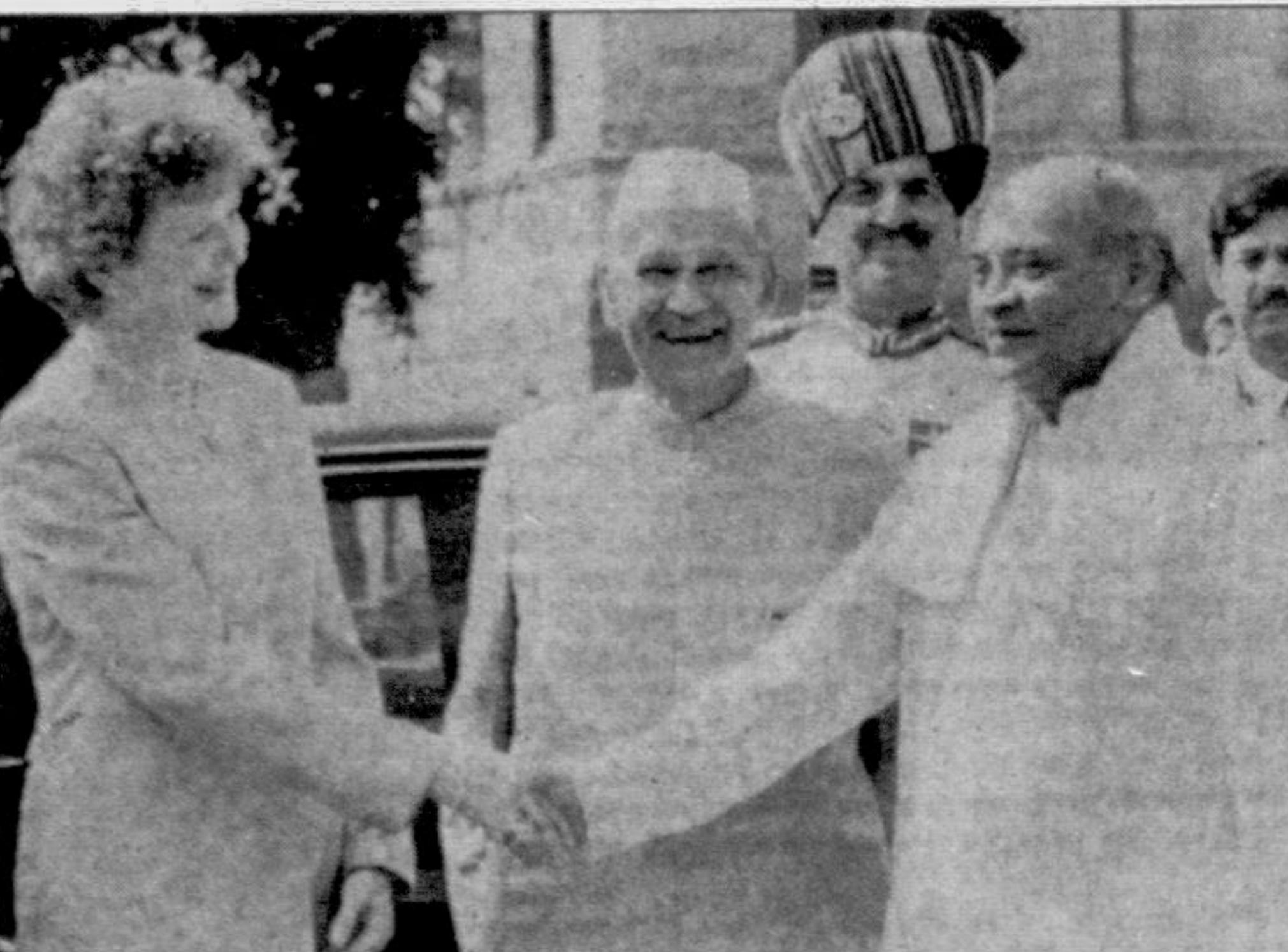
LONDON: John, the most popular first name for Britain's newborn boys for 250 years, is out of favour and in danger of slipping into obscurity, reports Reuter.

The Guinness book of names, published on Monday, said that between 1700 and 1950 John was always one of the two most popular names chosen by parents of boys.

Prime Minister John Major and opposition leader John Smith share the name.

But this year John is 40th on the list of most popular names and could become rare, the book said. It had no explanation for John's demise, saying other biblical names had grown rapidly in popularity.

Daniel and Matthew are the two most popular boys' names while Rebecca and Charlotte top the girls' list.



Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao (R) shakes hands with Irish President Mary Robinson at the presidential palace in New Delhi yesterday as Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma (C) looks on. Robinson is on a six-day visit to India. —AFP Photo

Accord with Israel a 'gamble': PLO 'FM'

TUNIS, Sept 27: Faruq Kaddumi, the number two in the PLO hierarchy, has outlined his objections to the Palestinian autonomy agreement signed with Israel, calling it a "gamble", reports AFP.

Kaddumi, the PLO "Foreign Minister," came out against the pact on limited Palestinian self-rule and turned down the opportunity to sign the peace deal on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Mahmud Abbas, the PLO number three, signed the agreement instead of Kaddumi at a White House ceremony in Washington on September 13.

In a wide-ranging interview

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Thirdly, I said that we should all sign and agree together, with the other Arab parties.

And finally, I said that I could not sign (any agreement) without being authorised to do so by the Palestine National Council," the Palestinian parliament-in-exile.

Asked why, if he was opposed to the accord, he had been shuttling to Arab capitals to explain the agreement on behalf of the PLO, Kaddumi said: "Because it has become a fact, a thing of the past."

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the Tunis headquarters of the PLO headed for New York, where he will lead the PLO delegation to the 48th UN General Assembly.

Kaddumi said that while in New York he might meet US Secretary of State Warren Christopher but saw "no necessity" to arrange a meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

He said immediate objectives were "to repair the damage" and "get things moving" toward the total withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state.

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The workers are at a veterans' hospital in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan. They claim that Kazakhstan's parliament has failed to provide the disability benefits promised by laws that were passed before the Soviet collapse.

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After praising his own red book, he told the audience the Campbell camp had just sent them a copy of the Conservatives' plan. He held up a blue binder. The idea was to open it and show it empty. Except he forgot, he put his speaking notes in the blue binder. So as the papers fluttered out, the audience was a bit perplexed about his point.

There are more serious missteps.

He is not afraid of the press, unlike Campbell, and the press has generally treated him well. He makes himself available two or three times a day for questions. He occasionally spends an hour in the back of the plane or bus with reporters for a chit-chat," something Campbell would never do.

And, Campbell doesn't play the "anonymous source" game. He is always on the record.

All the while, he keeps talking about bread and butter. No matter what the question, no matter what the opposition offers on any given day, Chretien keeps his focus on jobs, on human dignity, on the opportunity to work, to earn, to provide for a family.

It is Chretien's ability to be a real human being that is his strongest suit.

11 killed in Rio violence

RO DE JANEIRO, Sept 27: Four men shot dead at a street dance were among 11 people — including two children — killed over the weekend in Rio de Janeiro, reports said.

TV Globo, the nation's largest network, reported that drug traffickers halted a street dance between rival drug traffickers in the Nova Holanda shantytown, then shot dead four men the gunmen claimed were police informants.

Five men died in a shootout in the downtown Bonsucesso district between rival drug traffickers. The O Dia daily reported Saturday. Police didn't enter the district, saying they were outgunned.

A stray bullet during a separate traffickers' shootout Saturday killed a nine-year-old girl hanging out laundry in the Catumbi downtown district.