

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 Banyuwates, 60 kilometers (37 miles) northwest of the regency's capital of Sampang, Sampang is about 790 kilometers (494 miles) east of Jakarta. But the newspaper Media Indonesia said about 20 troops

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 Bipin 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, its 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 Kashmir, 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 converge.

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 is nuclear build-up is aimed exclusively at India. He wants New Delhi to maintain a posture of dissuasive deterrence against Islamabad, convincing it that

military adventurism cannot pay.

With China, however, the army chief is said to agree with the prevailing army view that favours a policy of "dissuasive defence." This is geared towards preventing the Chinese from crossing the line of control and fighting a defensive battle against them if the situation arises.

The military is said to believe a confrontational situation is bound to develop between India and China in the near future.

Based on many of his previous statements, Joshi seems to see China as the dominant economic and military power in Asia by the end of the 1990s, with India as the only country that can militarily challenge its status.

Joshi has recommended that India ease the situation with closer cooperation with the United States, Japan and other Asian countries.

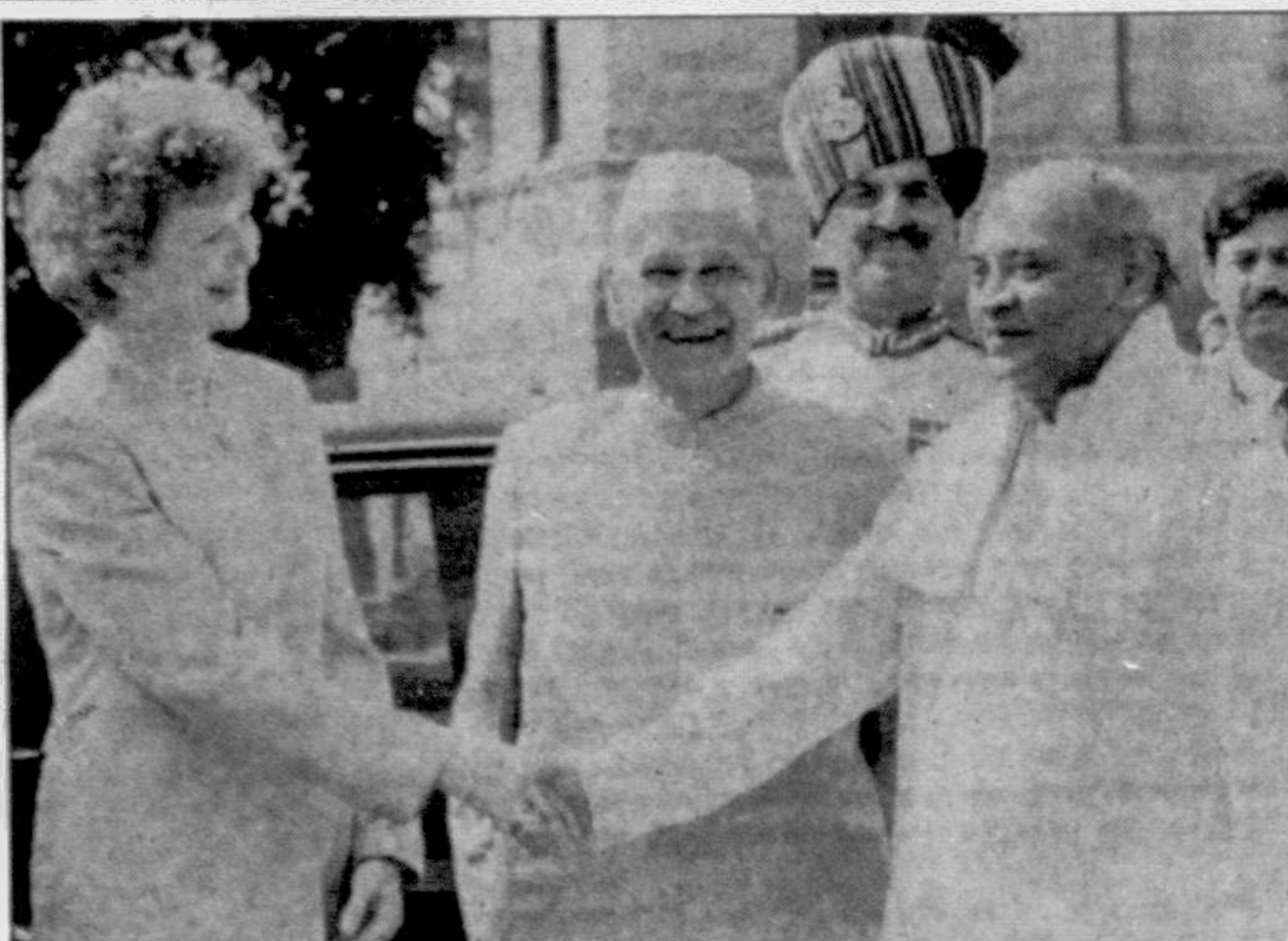
accompanying a team from the National Land Board fired warning shots from about 75 meters (80 yards) and then fired directly at farmers, some carrying traditional daggers, who forced their way close to the team.

"We regret the recklessness of the farmers," it quoted Lt. Col. Siswanto, chief of the regency's police office, as saying. "We had to shoot for the sake of the team's safety."

The report said some people, including those fired into the mob, have been detained for interrogation.

The paper said the farmers feared that the dam, to be built on 175 hectares (430 acres) of land, would overflow on to neighbouring villages.

An informed source in Sampang, also insisting on anonymity, said the dead included a 12-year-old child and a 55-year-old woman, neither of whom were protesters. In Jakarta Friday, police and military authorities seized 17 human rights activists



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

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

NEW DELHI, Sept 27: An opposition party on Sunday won a crucial by-election for the Indian parliament, dealing a major blow to the Congress (I) Party of premier P V Narasimha Rao, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party wrested from the Congress the Palani seat in the southern state of Tamil Nadu where balloting was held on September 20, the news agency said.

The AIADMK's P Kumarasamy bagged more than 265,000 votes in a mainly three-way contest, defeating nominees of the regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party and the Congress party.

The Congress, which had held the constituency since 1977, finished third.

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 pollsters 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.



Miss Belgium Christelle Roelands wins the Miss Photogenic contest as part of the Miss International beauty pageant during a photo session yesterday at a Tokyo hotel. Forty-eight contestants will be vying for the crown on October 9 in Tokyo. —AFP photo

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 3,000 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 initiated 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 Corason 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.

Chretien creeping up on Campbell in campaign for Oct 25 polls

STEPHENVILLE, Sept 27: Jean Chretien, leader of Canada's Liberal Party, is running a dead heat with Prime Minister Kim Campbell in the campaign for October 25 parliamentary elections, but he is leading the race for human being, reports AP.

In the first two weeks of the 47-day campaign, the Conservative prime minister has come off as rather stiff, sometimes insensitive, competent but not always likeable.

Meanwhile, although Chretien can seem bumbling and mangles his native French as well as English with equal abandon, he has the ability to charm audiences and push all the warm, human buttons.

The gravel-voiced Quebecois with the off-centre smile is taking his message of jobs for Canadians 11.3 per cent unemployed and a rejuvenated economy across the country, carrying with him a slim red book containing all his promises.

Here it is, all written down, he tells audience after audience. Read it, keep it. Vote for us. And the next time an election comes around, pull it out and challenge us on any promise not kept. Incidentally, he adds, you might ask Ma-

Campbell where her programme is.

Some critics call the 59-year-old Chretien "yesterday's man," a politician clinging to 1980s-style big spending ideas, a leftover from the Pierre Trudeau years who refuses to slide quietly into the museum of politics. That's not entirely true.

No new taxes, Chretien says, visibly moving his lips. All new spending outlined in the red book is balanced by specific cuts. Ma Campbell is vague about how she will meet her pledge to eliminate a budget deficit of 35.5 billion Canadian dollar (26 billion US dollar) in five years.

On the other hand, Chretien has vowed to abolish the thoroughly hated 7 per cent federal sales tax, which is tacked on to provincial sales taxes that range as high as 9 per cent. But when you ask him what he will replace it with, his footwork would dazzle Michael Jackson.

The Liberal and Conservative parties are running neck-and-neck in most polls. But Ma Campbell, 46, who has been on the national political scene for only five years, is a fresh face and leads surveys that ask voters which of the two they would like to see as Canada's national

leader.

The prime minister has impressed many Canadians as intelligent and energetic. But she also has come across as hard, arrogant, ambitious and distant. Her campaign bus is a grim affair, any those who have ridden it.

The polls show Chretien creeping up, particularly when respondents are asked who is the best person for dealing with unemployment and the economy.

Chretien is a man without pretension and easily laughs at his own gaffes. A French-speaker by birth, he mangles both of Canada's official languages with equal alacrity.

"We realise all the sacrifices of our fishermen because in the nose and the tail of the Grand Bank they pick up the fish there," he said during a campaign stop. He was trying to sympathise with fishermen faced with a moratorium on cod fishing on the Grand Banks, southeast of Newfoundland, while foreigners catch cod at will in two small areas just outside Canada's 200-nm (320 km) limit.

At a one campaign stop, he intended to hammer Ma Campbell again on her lack of a plan for cutting the deficit.

Chernobyl rescue workers go on hunger strike

MOSCOW, Sept 27: Forty-two rescue workers who were exposed to radiation during the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster went on hunger strike Monday to protest their poor living conditions, reports AP.

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.

The explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine was the worst nuclear accident in history. According to official Soviet figures, it killed 32 people. Ukrainian doctors now say, however, that hundreds or even thousands of people have died from radiation-related illnesses, including cancer.

11 killed in Rio violence

RIO 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, says AP.

TV Globo, the nation's largest network, reported that drug traffickers halted a street dance 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 Sunday. Police didn't enter the district, saying they were out-gunned.

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