

Situation tense in Manipur town

IMPHAL, Oct 3: Tension gripped Manipur's sensitive border town of Moreh in Chandel district as about 1,300 Kukis including several members of the underground Kuki National Army (KNA) have infiltrated into Moreh in the recent months from neighbouring Myanmar and different parts of the state, reports PTI.

Official sources at Moreh today said Myanmar Kukis who are mostly members of the KNA had been driven out from Kabaw valley and surrounding areas by the Myanmar army personnel for attacking the Myanmar security forces in the last months.

Several Kuki villagers who were affected because of the current Kuki-Naga clashes have also gone and settled at Moreh. Besides there is continuous influx of Kuki refugees from other parts of the state to Moreh because of the violence in some hill districts, according to the sources.

As tension escalated in recent weeks, both the Myanmar and Indian security forces had totally sealed the international border between the two countries at Moreh from September 17 last, the sources said adding that anyone found infiltrating into Myanmar from across the border could be shot without warning.

Charles prays for Indian quake victims

LONDON, Oct 3: Prince Charles sent a message to Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma on Sunday saying he was deeply saddened by the earthquake that killed tens of thousands of people and was praying for relatives and survivors, reports AP.

Most of the Kukis who had fled from Myanmar, according to the sources, aspired to form a Kuki state within the territory of Myanmar by carving out Kabaw valley and surrounding areas if that country returned to democracy.

It was a part of their armed propaganda campaign that the KNA members had attacked the Myanmar forces in the past, the sources said adding that their demand had angered the Myanmar authorities. Most of the Kukis from Myanmar and Moreh area are relatives.



SHASTUR: Indian Army personnel carry a person rescued from debris on Saturday three days after a massive earthquake hit this area in Western India killing at least 30,000 people. Bad weather hampers rescue operations but the army is now said to have reached all affected areas. — AFP photo

Nivedita the youngest survivor of Indian quake

KILLARI, Oct 3: A 15-day-old girl child is perhaps the youngest survivor of the killer-quake that hit the Killari village in Latur in the early hours on Thursday last, reports PTI.

According to Dr M M Devadhar, head of the Vivekananda Hospital here, the baby was brought from a health centre at Killari by Dr G R Bardia, a physician attached to the hospital hours after the disaster.

Dr Devadhar told PTI that the baby was recovered from the debris, unscathed by the locals. There is no trace of her parents and local were unaware whether any of her family members survived the quake.

The child is in the intensive baby care unit of the hospital and is in good health, he said.

The nursing staff, who is looking after her has named as 'Nivedita,' after the famous disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

Since there is no trace of the baby's family they have decided to adopt her, Dr Devadhar said.

BRIEFLY

Arafat invited to visit London: British Secretary of State at the Foreign Office Douglas Hogg has invited PLO Chief Yasser Arafat to visit London during a meeting in Tunis on Friday, AFP reports from Tunis.

Hogg said that Arafat would be 'welcome' in London, but no date was set for a visit. He also pledged British assistance to help the PLO set up self-rule in the occupied territories during his 40-minute meeting with the Palestine Liberation Organisation chief.

14 gunned down in Colombia: Unidentified gunmen sprayed four crowded bars with machinegun fire in attacks in a working class neighbourhood of Medellin late on Friday, killing 14 people and injuring 25 others, police said. Reuter reports from Bogota.

Police said an undetermined number of gunmen in a car and on motorbikes shot indiscriminately at bars in the Jesus Nazareno district of Colombia's second city.

Police said the gunmen were likely members of organised crime or the so called popular militia, which threatens and kills suspected criminals.

Hamas-PLO faction meet Oct 10: An alliance of Muslim fundamentalist and hardline Palestinian factions will meet in Damascus, Syria, to discuss strategy to derail the Israel-PLO self-rule agreement, a spokesman said Saturday, AP reports from Amman.

Mohammed Nazzal, representative of the fundamentalist Hamas, said the October 7 meeting of 10 groups also would discuss preparations for a wider forum. That meeting would include members of Yasser Arafat's mainstream PLO faction who oppose the accord, Nazzal said.

He denied reports by PLO officials that preparations were under way for a Palestinian reconciliation meeting to convene October 25 in Sana'a, Yemen.

10 Indian women die in stampede: Ten women were killed in a stampede at Palant in Tamil Nadu's Dindiu-Anna district Saturday night where free distribution of dhosis and sarees had been arranged by a private charity, AFP reports from Madurai.

Police said about 5,000 persons had turned up when the distribution had been arranged only for 500 persons. Police could not immediately give the figure of the number of those injured.

Palestinian woman shot dead: Jewish settlers shot dead an elderly Palestinian woman and wounded a second in the occupied West Bank Saturday, Israeli security sources said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The women were picking figs in a field near the Jewish settlement of Ofra, north of Ramallah, the security sources quoted Rifa Mahmoud Jasser, who was lightly wounded, as saying.

Three armed men whom Jasser, 52, said were settlers approached the two women and told them to leave. When the women refused, the men shot them, killing Jabra.

Ulemas want ban on alcohol: Indonesia's top Muslim authority has called on the government to ban alcohol, a press report said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The Indonesian Council of Ulemas (MUI) wants an end to the issuing of licenses for the production and distribution of alcoholic drinks as part of a national anti-alcohol campaign, the report said.

MUI Chairman Hasan Basri was quoted by the Kompas Daily as saying the council wanted the government to form an official agency to combat alcoholism.

Indonesian aid for Bosnians: Indonesia has extended some two million dollars of humanitarian aid to Bosnia, the official Antara news agency said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Antara said the aid, in the form of a cheque, was extended by Foreign Minister Ali Alatas to Bosnian permanent representative to the United Nations Mohamed Scribney in New York Friday.

Alatas said the aid reflected the Indonesian people and government's deep sympathy for and solidarity with the Bosnian people who were suffering from aggression and ethnic cleansing.

Hezbollah won't recognise Israel

BEIRUT, Oct 3: Hezbollah will never recognise Israel because the Jewish state represents a "constant danger" to the Middle East, the armed fundamentalist faction's secretary general warned here Saturday.

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah told AFP that his radical pro-Iranian movement "will never recognise Israel even if the rest of the world does because Israel poses a constant danger to the entire region. "Our position is immutable."

Israel is a foreign presence imposed on the region by force," Nasrallah added. "Instead of war, Israel (now) wants to use the economy to gain control of all the regions' resources, notably oil and water," he charged.

Nasrallah warned that if peace were "imposed" on the region, "famine economic crises (and) conflict between the (region's) countries" would result. Hezbollah opposed the Middle East peace process and described as a "trap" last month's historic accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation on limited Palestinian autonomy in the Israeli-occupied territories.

Thatcher calls for changes in Conservative Party rules

LONDON, Oct 3: Margaret Thatcher has called for a change in the Conservative Party rules that led to her ouster from the prime minister's job nearly three years ago. The Sunday Times said, reports AP.

As next week's annual Conservative Party conference approaches, speculation has increased that Tory colleagues are considering a leadership challenge to Prime Minister John Major. His popularity has plummeted in the past 16 months, putting the opposition Labor Party in the lead in opinion polls by up to 20 points for more than a year.

The Sunday Times, which begins serializing Baroness Thatcher's memoirs next Sunday, said she insisted that the first excerpts not appear until after the Tory conference. In the interview she once again attacked British and European policy in Bosnia, denouncing it as "the negation of leadership," "appeasement," and "a disgrace to humanity."

"It is terrible what has happened in Bosnia. This wasn't some country far away like Cambodia where we couldn't have got forces there. This was in Europe, in our continent," she was quoted as saying.



TOKYO: Miss International contestants from Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Bolivia and Nicaragua (L-R) Ana Galvan, Anabela Centeno, Tatiana Alves, Maria Tondelli and Ida Delaney hold a Japanese fan at a souvenir shop on Saturday. The contestants will compete in the Miss International beauty pageant on October 9. — AFP photo

Russia supports Shimla accord

NEW YORK, Oct 3: Russia has expressed full support for the Shimla agreement to solve the bilateral issues between India and Pakistan, reports PTI. During a 45-minute meeting between the External Affairs Minister, Dinesh Singh, and the Russian Foreign Minister, the two sides categorically stated that Indo-Russian friendship was unshakable.

Diplomats attending the meeting said the Russian Minister fully understood the Indian point-of-view on Pakistan and the resolution on Kashmir for which Islamabad was seeking support. Bilateral issues, situation in west Asia and problems of central Asian republics came up for discussion during the meeting which was held in a "warm and cordial" atmosphere.

Dalai Lama wants PLO-Israel type accord to end Tibetan crisis

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: The Tibetan problem should be solved on the lines of the pact between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Dalai Lama said today, reports AFP.

The Tibetan spiritual leader told reporters in Calcutta that the PLO-Israel accord "could be an example for solving the Tibetan issue," the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported. "Even the Palestinians and Israelis had shed decades of hatred and violence and made peace in a spirit of reconciliation," he added, calling his proposal a "middle path" between independence and limited autonomy. The Dalai Lama said he was not demanding Tibet's independence from China, "but autonomy in Tibet within China... the so-called autonomy granted to Tibet by China was meaningless."

Off the Record

'Holy' murder!

GRANTS PASS: The woman accused of shooting a doctor outside his abortion clinic said in handwritten letters that she pulled the trigger and feels no remorse about it, according to a report published Saturday, says AP.

The Grants Pass Daily Courier said Rachelle "Shelley" Shannon admits in the letters to shooting Dr. George Tiller on August 19 in Whitchita, Kan. leaving him wounded in both arms.

The newspapers said the 37-year-old Grants Pass woman justified the attack in a detailed account of the shooting also contained in the letters, which were seized by Wichita police and used to support a search warrant served at her house last week.

"I'm not denying I shot Tiller," Shannon wrote in one letter. "But I deny that it was wrong. It was the most holy, the most righteous thing I've ever done. I have no regrets."

Although the letters are signed either with "mom" or "wifey," rather than Shannon's name, Oregon State Police Detective Randy Becker said the letters tie Shannon directly to the shooting.

Shannon a longtime anti-abortion protester, is being held on 1 billion dollar bail at the Sedgwick County Jail in Kansas pending a December 6 trial on attempted murder and assault charges. She has pleaded innocent.

I just can't stand it any more

NEW YORK: First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said on Saturday she was prepared to target the 'sick, sick symptom' of violence in America once her crusade for a universal health plan had paid off, reports Reuter.

"I just can't stand it anymore. I cannot bear to pick up another newspaper and read about another baby shot, Clinton said on CNN's "Larry King weekend" programme.

"I'm really committed to doing something about violence in this society... I think it is a sick, sick symptom that we are out of control at so many levels of our society." Mrs Clinton, whose appearances before Congress on health reform concluded this week with testimony before the Senate committee, said she would focus on the heart-breaking effect of spiralling violence.

"It breaks my heart to think that here, at the seat of our government just block from where we sit, children are shot in drive by shootings."

"People can't venture out of their houses. They live behind 10 dead bolts on their doors."

"I don't know how much longer we can live with this without putting our foot down collectively and saying enough is enough," she said.

Fossilised dinosaur eggs found

BEIJING: Thousands of fossilised dinosaur eggs have been found in central China, and scientists believe the area contains tens of thousands, an official report said Sunday, according to AP.

Residents of Nanyang prefecture, in Henan province, began finding small numbers of the eggs in 1974, but last December a farmer digging an irrigation ditch discovered a large group, the Xinhua News Agency reported without giving details.

Since then, archaeologists have found seven sites containing several thousand dinosaur eggs, ranging in size from four to 50 centimetres (1.6 to 20 inches).

Xinhua said experts believe there are tens of thousands of the 100 million-year-old fossils.

Dinosaur eggs have been found in 14 Chinese provinces, but the Nanyang ones are the oldest, it said.

'Great Singapore workout'

SINGAPORE: Led by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, about 21,000 Singaporeans put on a mass display of aerobics Sunday to mark "Healthy Lifestyle Day," reports AP.

Goh wore a pink T-shirt with the words "Great Singapore Workout" and white shorts when he blew a whistle to launch the annual campaign to promote fitness in this city-state.

He headed a walk-and-jog group of some 5,000 from the National Stadium to the Padang, the showpiece sports field in front of City Hall.

Officials led thousands of others to the Padang from other starting points for the 15-minute aerobics routine set to brisk music. It was described as a low-impact workout for those aged seven to 70. Karate, roller blading, rock climbing, basketball and lawn bowls were also on display.

Once a problem is perceived in the regimented republic, it is only a matter of time before a drive is mounted to deal with it. Few nations use elaborate public campaigns as relentlessly to change behaviour and raise civic consciousness.

British Airways to introduce family seating section

DHAHRAN: British Airways plans to introduce a family seating section, from which men travelling alone will be barred, on flights serving Saudi Arabia, a Saudi newspaper reported yesterday, says Reuter.

The economic daily Al-Eqtisadiah quoted a company official as saying a section of the cabin would be restricted to women, their children and male relatives. Women would still have the choice of travelling in other sections.

He said 54 of the 350 seats on the Boeing 767 would be allocated for women.

Mexicans observe '68 uprising

MEXICO CITY, Oct 3: More than 100,000 people marched Saturday to commemorate the 25th anniversary of an anti-government uprising in which hundreds of students were massacred, reports AP.

The marchers filled six-lane downtown streets and halted traffic as they streamed from the capital's huge central plaza to the square where on October 2, 1968, hundreds of students and supporters were gunned down by army soldiers.

Grayed former student leaders of the 1968 rebellion waved peace signs and carried red carnations, chanting "We will never forget Tet."

'The Infinite Plan' a tale of Californian generation

MEXICO CITY, Oct 3: The history and geography of Latin America have shaped the life and work of Isabel Allende, who has shared her magical tales of love and longing with aficionados around the world, reports AP.

Now, with her latest novel, 'The Infinite Plan,' the most important living woman writer from Latin America shows how the history and geography of California shaped an entire generation — people now in their 40s and 50s who sought, then lost, the American Dream, and are now trying to find their way back to their roots.

"We are shaped by our times and where we live. I feel very strongly about that," Allende said in a recent telephone interview from her home in the San Francisco Bay area.

"The Infinite Plan," released in early summer, is the first of Allende's novels set in the United States and the first to feature American characters. It explores the philosophical questions of life and love through the life of Gregory Reeves, son of a traveling preacher who roams the American West during the 1940s teaching his metaphysical religion, The Infinite Plan.

The family's wanderings end when the father becomes ill and they settle in a Hispanic barrio of Los Angeles, where Gregory is introduced to a new world and a new language, Spanish.

As the only white boy in the Mexican barrio, Gregory learns about violence, discrimination, but more importantly the warmth and sensuality of Latino culture.

He also meets Pedro and Inmaculada Morales, a couple who give him the warmth and security his parents cannot, and their daughter, Carmen, who teaches him about love and friendship. He gains a sense of community.

When he leaves the barrio to attend law school at the University of California, Berkeley, Gregory is plunged into the tumultuous 1960s — radical politics, free love, the drug culture, a tour in Vietnam.

Over time, Gregory loses his way, wandering farther away from his origins and the warmth he knew in the barrio. But in the end, he reconnects with his painful past and finds his way back to his own personal infinite plan.

"He got lost and collapsed with the times," said Allende. "What happened to Gregory happened to a whole generation. They were brought up expecting the American Dream and they later found that the dream had betrayed them."

Quake hits China

BEIJING, Oct 3: Strong earthquakes hit a remote part of far western China on Saturday, but an initial dispatch from the official Xinhua News Agency said there were no reports of casualties, reports AP.

The first quake hit Ruqing county, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, at 4:42 PM (0842 GMT). It measured 6.6 on the Richter scale, and was followed by a 5.5 aftershock an hour later. Xinhua said in its report late Saturday.

Ruqing is on the southern edge of the massive Taklimakan Desert.

No one answered the telephone at government offices in Xinjiang on Sunday.

A quake of magnitude 6 on the Richter scale can cause severe damage in populated areas.