

International

Pak presidential polls tomorrow

Leghari, Sajjad running neck-and-neck

ISLAMABAD, Nov 11: The ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate, Farooq Leghari, and opposition nominee Wasim Sajjad are running neck-and-neck for Saturday's presidential elections, diplomats and analysts said, reports AFP.

"The race is very close," a diplomat here said today. Senior officials of both Premier Benazir Bhutto's PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) of the main opposition leader and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also admit "the

contest is delicately poised." Analysts here said none of the contestants was sure of some 100 floating votes in the two houses of parliament and four provincial legislatures which together form the 462-member electoral college for the presidential poll.

Besides Foreign Minister Leghari, 53, and acting President Sajjad, 52, there are four others in the field. Retired Air Force Marshal Asghar Khan, former Attorney-General Yahya Bakhtiar, the former governor of

southwestern Baluchistan province, Akbar Bugti and a veteran politician Nawabzada Nasrullah.

But Bugti's reluctance to withdraw from the race has made the outcome unpredictable.

The Bhutto camp is worried that the Baluchi leader could lure many votes from the smaller parties and nationalist factions.

Diplomats said both Sajjad and Leghari appeared non-controversial and acceptable to

Pakistan's powerful army, which has so far seemed neutral in the race for head of state, who is also supreme commander of the armed forces.

But some smaller party leaders lobbying for Bugti stress that a third party president would end the possibility of confrontation.

It would also eliminate fears of an autocratic one-party rule that would arise if the presidency also goes to PPP, they said.

Analysts said the election of the president of her choice was vital for Bhutto, who says her government's stability hinges on Leghari's election.

"It will be a moral defeat for her," if Bhutto's nominee lost to the opposition candidate, diplomats said.

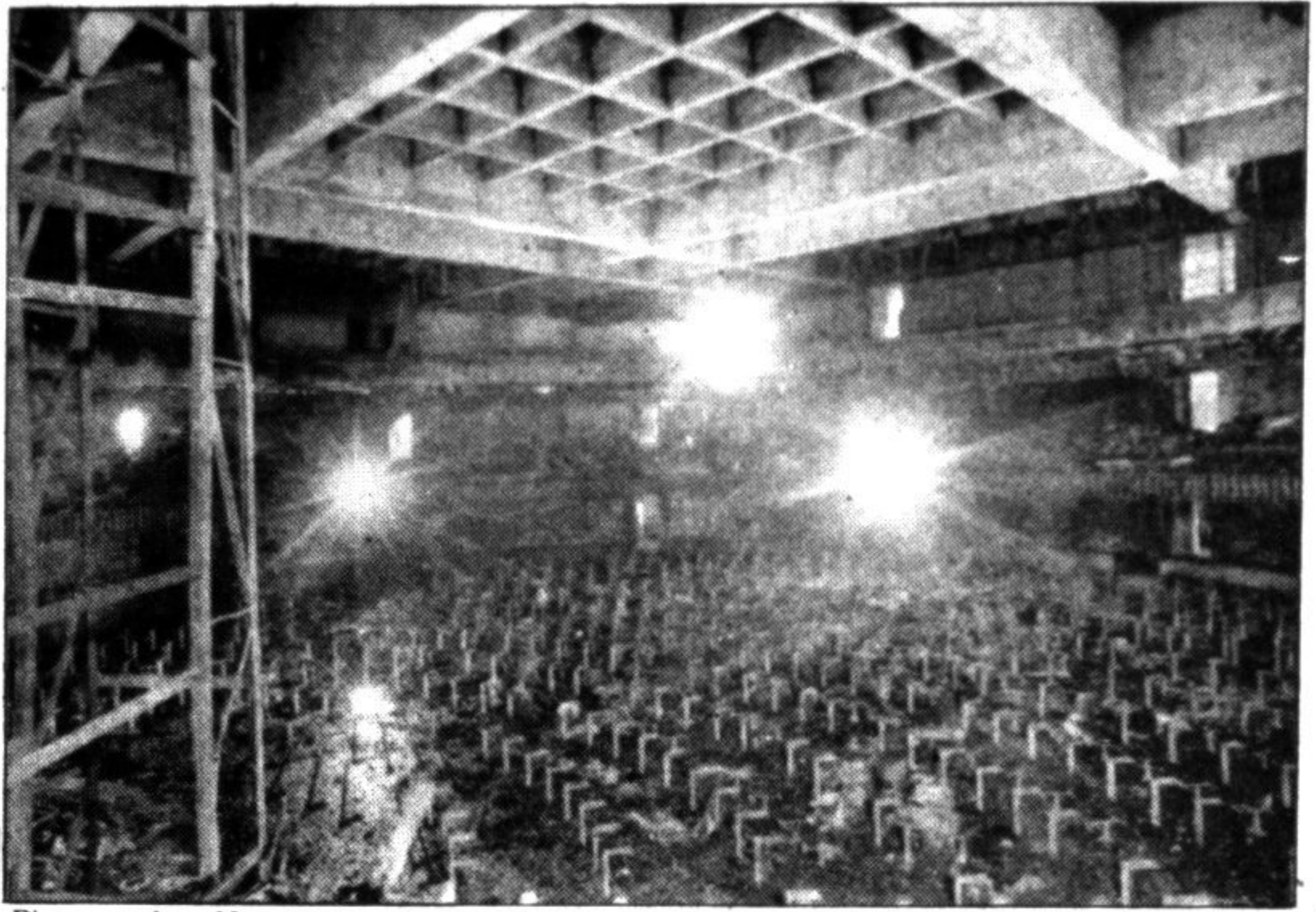
"It will be a big loss of face for her," another remarked. On the other hand, if Sajjad wins, it would give tremendous political boost to Sharif. Claiming majority in the electoral college, Sharif may appear a potential winner in the existing political game, analysts said.

A financial expert also feared that Sajjad's election could trigger political instability and the country's stock market could dip.

Observers, however, said that once elected, the head of state traditionally has to shun party affiliations and act according to the constitution.

Both Leghari and Sajjad have insisted they will work beyond party politics in the interest of the country and consider parliament's sovereignty supreme.

Analysts said a defeat will be a major political setback for Bhutto.



Picture taken Nov 10 showing the hall of the National Assembly in Pakistan's parliament building which was completely destroyed by a fire. Parliament will now meet at another venue for the presidential elections tomorrow. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

3 killed in US school bus crash: A school bus and a tractor-trailer rig collided, killing three children and injuring eight people, authorities said, AP reports from Okla.

Police Chief Larry Roe said he saw eight children "scattered in the ditch" after Wednesday's accident.

"By the looks of it, I believe they were all ejected. I don't see how they could have walked out," he said.

He said all the children were out of the bus. It wasn't immediately known how many children, first through eighth-graders, were on the bus.

Six cops sentenced in Peru: Six police officers have been sentenced to terms ranging from five to 18 years for the 1991 killings of three students in one of Peru's most highly publicised police-brutality cases, AP reports from Peru.

Peru has been accused of human rights violations during a 13-year-old guerrilla war, but most have been carried out by the army in remote jungle and highland emergency zones under its control.

The policemen were sentenced late Tuesday for the June 21, 1991 killing of university student Freddy Rodriguez, 26, and brothers Emilio and Rafael Gomez, aged 14 and 17 respectively.

Quake hits Japan: An earthquake registering 5.7 on the Richter scale shook northern Japan today, but there is no fear of tidal waves and no immediate reports of damage of casualties, the meteorological agency said, AFP says from Tokyo.

The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 9:06 am (0006 GMT), was located 40 kilometres (24.8 miles) under the seabed off Iwate prefecture in northern Japan, the agency said.

Rains claim 20 in Tamil Nadu: Twenty people were killed in the southern districts of India's southeastern state of Tamil Nadu due to heavy rains over the past few days, according to a report reaching here today, Xinhua reports from New Delhi.

The report said that in the coastal Ramanathapuram District, 52 fishermen who had ventured into the sea were missing and 300 houses were damaged while several other districts in the state were badly hit and crops damaged extensively.

The monsoon has been active in the state for the last few days and the local weather office said more rains were expected in the next 24 hours.

Belgium to send troops to Rwanda: Belgium decided on Wednesday to send 350 to 370 troops to Rwanda as part of a United Nations peacekeeping force, the Defence Ministry said, reports Reuter from Brussels.

The United Nations had asked for 800 soldiers, but Belgium had already said it could provide only 300.

Close to a million people have been driven from their homes by a three-year-old civil war between the government, formed by the majority Hutu ethnic group, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), composed of exiles from the Tutsi ethnic group.

Off the Record



Top American model Cindy Crawford in a pose from the new 1994 Pirelli calendar which was launched in London Tuesday. — AFP photo

Husband captures wife's illicit act on video

MINEOLA: A 41-year-old woman was arrested on charges she had sex with her daughter's 16-year-old boyfriend in the back seat of a car while her husband videotaped them, reports AP.

Marion and William Frankson, of the New York suburb of South Farmingdale on Long Island, were charged with sodomy and endangering the welfare of a child. Nassau County police said Wednesday.

Police said the couple propositioned the boy when their daughter brought him home to meet her parents. There was no indication the daughter was involved, police said.

Mrs. Frankson was accused of having sex with the boy in August and September as her husband, a 42-year-old warehouse worker, videotaped them from the front seat.

The boy apparently insisted on wearing a mask so he would not be recognised, police said.

The couple were arrested September 30 after he bragged about sex acts to his friends, police said.

Mrs. Frankson's attorney Fred Braverman, said she was a "victim" and would be cleared.

Couple seeks divorce after 12 hrs of marriage

LONDON: Twelve hours and 34 minutes of married life were enough for two Britons who have contacted their lawyers to sue for divorce, reports AP.

Greta Jones, 42, married Malcolm Sloman, 44, at 2:00 PM on Tuesday in the little church at Thurmsco, in northern England, at a ceremony attended by 60 guests.

But at midnight, the celebrations in the local pub were interrupted by a dispute between the bride and groom who found that his new wife was showing too much interest in one of the best men.

Police were called in at 2:34 AM to put a stop to the brawl.

Greta said afterwards that they both agreed it was better to find out after 12 hours that they did not get on, rather than after 12 years of marriage.

Sex triggers heart attack risk

ATLANTA: Sexual activity slightly raises the risk of a heart attack, but is far less dangerous than getting out of bed the next morning, according to a study presented Wednesday to cardiac specialists, reports AP.

In a study of 1,712 men and women recovering from heart attacks, Dr Jams Muller found that 1 per cent of the heart attacks were triggered by sexual activity. In comparison, 10 per cent were triggered by awakening.

But the Harvard Medical School researcher isn't advising people to give up sex and stay in bed.

"These data shouldn't be used to scare people, to say that sex is a dangerous activity," Muller said.

The findings underscore the importance of research into other heart-attack triggers, such as cigarettes and stress, he said. The results of the study, reported Wednesday at the annual meeting of the American Heart Association, conform less rigorously to studies that had suggested a link between sex and heart attacks. "But more importantly, they demonstrate that the absolute risk is extremely low," Muller said.

New way to make rats bisexual

AMSTERDAM: Dutch scientists said on Wednesday they had discovered a way to make rats bisexual by injecting them with the hormone-like substance ATD, reports Reuter.

Masculine sexual behaviour by laboratory rats included frequent mountings and ejaculations, while feminine behaviour comprised hopping and darting, presenting and ear-wiggling, the researchers at Rotterdam's Erasmus University wrote.

The researchers said that after implanting ATD into newly-born male rats the animals tried to mate with both sexes when they reached sexual maturity.

Lockerbie suspects want to be tried in Switzerland

CAIRO, Nov 11: The two suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 told a Libyan government newspaper that they want to be tried in Switzerland as soon as possible to prove their innocence, reports AP.

An interview with the two men was published in the Al-Shams daily Thursday just before the UN Security Council was to vote on tougher sanctions against Libya for failing to surrender the suspects.

On Sunday, Libya's government raised anew the idea of a Swiss trial in an apparent effort to skirt Western demands for a trial in Britain or the United States since the American-flagged jetliner was bombed over Scotland.

US and British officials have already rejected any other solution, and Swiss diplomats also said they could see no reason for holding the trial in their country.

In the interview, Abdel-Basset Ali al-Megrahi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah said that if there is enough evidence against them, it should not be important where the trial is held.

"If there is real evidence that incriminates us they are sure that it will do so in any third country and even in Libyan courtrooms," the newspaper quoted them as saying.

The two suspects have been indicted for the December 1988 attack on the Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

The interview, carried by Libya's official JANA news agency, did not provide quotes from each defendant but said both expressed the same views.

"If there is evidence against a defendant, then what is the difference if the trial is held in Libya or Malta or anywhere else?" the defendants were quoted as asking.

Libya has been under UN

arms, air and diplomatic sanctions since April 1992 for refusing to deliver the two.

On Monday, after weeks of delay, the UN Security Council postponed until Thursday a vote on a resolution to tighten sanctions against Libya to include an embargo on import of some oil equipment and freezing Tripoli's financial assets abroad.

UN sources said that the Russian delegation had still not received the final approval from Moscow to vote for the resolution.

Russia has objected to the new measures fearing that they will block Libya from paying off its foreign debt. Moscow says Tripoli owes it US 4 billion dollars.

Ibrahim Legwell, who heads the suspects' 12-member defence team, said the suspects have no faith that they will have a fair trial in Scotland just as Britain has no confidence a just trial could be held in Libya.

Gayoom begins fourth term

COLOMBO, Nov 11: Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom today began a fourth term as leader of his tiny Indian Ocean atoll nation after his sweeping victory in a referendum for the presidency last month, reports AP.

Gayoom, 55, took his oaths as President in a ceremony held on Republic Day.

Gayoom has remained in power since 1978 when he was first nominated as President. He polled 92 per cent of the popular vote at the October 1 referendum which saw unprecedented political campaigning in the country.

He narrowly won a citizens majlis or parliament vote in August to be the sole candidate at the referendum. Under the constitution, Maldivians have to cast a Yes or No vote to a single candidate chosen by the 48-member majlis.

Shortly after his October 1 re-election Gayoom vowed a complete transformation of the political system and promised to give young people a greater say in running the administration.

Fighting in Afghanistan continues

KABUL, Nov 11: Guerilla forces fired on a residential district northeast of Kabul, killing civilians and inflicting damage, according to broadcast reports, says AP.

There were no other details in the state-run Radio Afghanistan report Wednesday, but Iranian television said the guerillas claimed to have captured 28 government soldiers the day before in clashes around Tagab. Both reports were monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp.

Tagab, 60 kms (40 miles) northeast of Kabul, has been the scene of intense fighting recently that has killed at least 200 people.

President Burhanuddin Rabbani's militia and guerillas loyal to his rival, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, have both claimed advances.

Jordan's fundamentalists to block deal with Israel

AMMAN, Nov 11: Muslim fundamentalists Wednesday played down their election losses and vowed to form a coalition to block any Jordanian-Israeli peace deal, reports AP.

However, it was not clear who, if anyone, would join them after Monday's polls gave King Hussein broad backing for a peace overture toward the Jewish state.

Israeli news media Wednesday reported that Israel and Jordan had agreed on a draft treaty, which some reports said would be signed Friday in Washington.

Ishaq Farhan, secretary general of the Islamic Action Front, political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, said the group was adamant in its opposition to a peace accord. But he said it would not go so far

as to seek a serious confrontation with the popular king.

The front, he said, "will oppose the signing of a peace treaty with Israel but our defiance will be within the framework of the constitution."

Under the constitution, the king has the final say over Parliament, which he is not expected to convene until later this month.

In Monday's elections, pro-government conservatives and Bedouin tribal leaders won 54 of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, or lower house.

The fundamentalists, who want to see Israel's destruction, lost six of the 22 seats they held in the previous Parliament.

Unlike their violent counterparts in Algeria and Egypt, Jordan's fundamentalists remain largely loyal to the government.

Members of the French Foreign Legion's 13th Armoured Brigade escort a convoy as they make their way Wednesday towards Afgoi, 30 km (18.75 miles) from Mogadishu. The French are due to turn over their part of the United Nations operation to troops from India. — AFP photo



Members of the French Foreign Legion's 13th Armoured Brigade escort a convoy as they make their way Wednesday towards Afgoi, 30 km (18.75 miles) from Mogadishu. The French are due to turn over their part of the United Nations operation to troops from India. — AFP photo

\$25m UAE aid for PLO

ABU DHABI, Nov 11: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) pledged aid worth 25 million dollars to support Palestinian self-rule under the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, a senior Gulf official said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Sheikh Fahim Al-Qassbi told Reuters that other than the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which has pledged 100 million dollars, the GCC regional alliance was also considering a contribution.

"These countries have offered individually. We expect more from the GCC itself," he said during a trip to Abu Dhabi for a GCC ministers meeting.

France vows not to let its territory become FIS base

PARIS, Nov 11: French authorities expelled a Turkish imam Wednesday and vowed not to let France become a support base for Islamic extremists in Algeria, blamed for killing two Frenchmen and kidnapping three others, reports AP.

Informed sources said police uncovered a hit list, communiques by armed groups and a crucial fax number in a Tuesday sweep of Muslim fundamentalist communities in France.

Thirteen of 88 people detained remained in custody Wednesday afternoon. A court late Wednesday ruled that at least three would be held a further 48 hours on suspicion of terrorist conspiracy.

Interior minister Charles

Pasqua, who ordered the raid, said it was aimed at uncovering eventual complicity or relations with those who committed crimes against the French in Algeria.

Two French oil engineers were among seven foreigners killed over the past month in an apparent campaign by Islamic gunmen to drive crucial foreign workers out of the country.

Three French consular workers were held captive for a week. Two were freed in a bloody rescue operation. The third was released with a warning from her kidnappers that foreigners remaining after a month face sudden death.

Pasqua, asked by journalists after a cabinet meeting on the sweep whether he feared

reprisals in France or Algeria from Islamic fundamentalists, reported.

"Don't you have the impression that there have already been some? Weren't two Frenchmen killed in Algeria? So what should we do in your opinion? Thank them?"

Earlier, Pasqua indirectly blamed the Islamic Salvation Front, the banned Algerian fundamentalist movement, for the deaths and kidnappings and said that those arrested are sympathisers. He said that some of those detained had links with the kidnappers.

Pasqua told the National Assembly: "The government will not accept that subversive actions, under any cover, develop in France and we are putting an

end to it.

The Salvation Front advocates the violent overthrow of Algeria's military-backed regime, calling action by armed groups there a Jihad, or holy war.

French authorities invoked a little-used procedure of absolute urgency to immediately expel Hussein Konus, 59, a Muslim priest, or imam practising in Nantua, in southwest France, to his native Turkey, the Interior Ministry said.

Konus was the first person subjected to an expulsion order following the pre-dawn sweep.

The government based the measure on anti-French declarations made by Konus, including a November 6 statement that the law of Allah must be

followed before French law.

The statement was made in support of four Muslim girls suspended from their Nantua school for refusing to remove traditional Muslim head-scarves in the classroom.

The mosque where he preached is said to be a gathering point for Muslim radicals.

Police, meanwhile, were combing through papers seized Tuesday that reliable sources said included a list of people to eliminate. The sources provided no names or other information.

A warning letter signed by the Armed Islamic Group carried out by hostage Michele Thevenot also was found, the sources said, along with a London fax number that matches one used to claim re-

sponsibility for the September 21 murders of two Frenchmen in Algeria.

There was no official confirmation of the find. Pasqua made no mention of the suspect documents, repeating Wednesday that large sums of money, some arms and false identity papers were uncovered.

The documents were reportedly held by four people, including the top two ranking members of the Algerian Fraternity of France, its president, Jaffar El Houari, and spokesman Moussa Kraouche, the sources said.

The association is thought to act as the legal presence for the Salvation Front in France.

Five hurt as trains collide in Britain

LEEDS, Nov 11: A passenger train collided with a freight train outside the main railway station in Leeds Thursday morning, injuring five people, British Rail said, reports AP.

Train services from this northern England city were disrupted and services to Manchester Airport and several other destinations were cancelled, said station manager Gerald Egan.

Three passengers and the driver and conductor of the passenger train were taken to Leeds General Infirmary for treatment of minor injuries, said the British Rail spokesman, speaking on condition he was not identified.