

BRIEFLY

Gerry Adams to get US visa:

Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein, will be granted a visa for a 14-day visit to the United States by the American consulate in Belfast, the US embassy in London said yesterday. Reuter reports from London.

The visa will be issued on condition that Adams does not engage in any direct or indirect fund-raising while on his visit from September 24 to October 7, an embassy spokeswoman said.

ASEAN seeks UNSC seat:

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations should be given a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council to reflect the region's increasing importance, ASEAN parliamentarians said yesterday. Reuter reports from Manila.

Tan Soo Khoo, speaker of the Singapore Parliament, told a news conference in Manila the regional grouping must assert its position through a permanent voice in the global forum.

Filistin hits news-stand:

The first Palestinian newspaper to be published in the self-ruled Gaza strip hit newsstands in the West Bank and Gaza yesterday. Reuter says from Gaza.

The tabloid weekly Filistin (Arabic for 'Palestine') is published by Reuters Gaza correspondent Taher Shritih, who said he hoped this was the start of 'a truly free press'.

6 peasants held in Beijing:

Police in Beijing have arrested six peasants involved in a novel racket as fake policemen selling fake cigarettes. Reuter reports from Beijing.

The market newspaper on Friday reported that last August the six came from a village in Henan province to Beijing to seek their fortune but found slim pickings.

Mandela to visit US:

President Nelson Mandela made it clear Thursday he is going to the United States next month to seek help in solving his own country's formidable problems, not to take on US foreign policy, AP reports from Cape Town.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Mandela said he would encourage American aid donors and potential business partners to follow through an old promise to help post-apartheid South Africa.

3m die from smoking annually:

The world death toll from smoking is expected to triple to 10 million in 2025 from the current three million annually, a World Health Organisation (WHO) official said yesterday. Reuter reports from Kuala Lumpur.

WHO western Pacific Regional Director Sang Tae Han said the concentration of tobacco-related deaths, now largely in developed countries, would shift to developing nations.

Quake shakes E Japan:

A moderate earthquake, measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale, rocked large areas of eastern Japan yesterday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the Meteorological agency said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The epicenter of the quake, which struck at 11:38 am (0238 GMT) was located some 200 kilometres (124 miles) northeast of Tokyo in the Pacific, the agency said.

Liberian army seize Taylor's HQs:

A 'coalition' of four Liberian armed groups 'completely control' Charles Taylor's headquarters town of Gbarnga, a minister in the transitional government said Thursday. AFP reports from Monrovia.

'The coalition forces have finally captured and occupied Taylor's mansion in Gbarnga,' said Justice Minister Lavelle Supwood, a senior member of a dissident faction within the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), of which Taylor is nominal head.

Former hostage sues US govt:

Terry Anderson wants to see the files federal agencies compiled about him during his seven years as a hostage in Lebanon, but says some bureaucrats won't do it without permission from his terrorist kidnappers, AP reports from Washington.

He named 13 US government agencies as defendants in the suit he filed Thursday in federal court, seeking to get documents he says are his by right under the Freedom of Information Act.

AIDS increases in Asia:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has detected a dramatic increase in new AIDS cases in Cambodia, Malaysia and Vietnam amid rising drug addiction in those countries, the UN agency's western Pacific headquarters said yesterday. AFP reports from Manila.

'The role of drug-injecting practices in the transmission of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), which causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is becoming increasingly prominent in some countries,' the WHO regional office said here in an annual report.

McCurry to replace Myers:

In a long-anticipated White House shakeup, press secretary Dee Dee Myers is expected to be replaced by State Department spokesman Michael McCurry, officials said on Thursday. AP reports from Washington.

Mudflows claim 14 in Philippines:

Steaming mudflows from the Philippines' mount Pinatubo Volcano killed 14 people and buried at least 500 houses yesterday, officials said. Reuter reports from Porac, Philippines.

They said two people were missing while one man was injured when walls of mud as high as 2.5 metres (eight feet) crashed through nine villages in Pampanga Province just north of the capital, Manila.

Iran kills 12,000 pigeons:

Police have killed almost 12,000 pigeons in the central Iranian city of Qom after seizing them from breeders because of complaints from residents, a newspaper reported on Thursday. AFP says from Tehran.

Police also seized all pigeons on sale in shops in the Shiite Muslim holy city, Abhar said, without giving details of the complaints. The birds had their throats slit.

Rebels attack US envoy's copter:

Gunshots were fired at a group of helicopters one of which carried US ambassador to Colombia Myles Frechette, in the southern province of Cauca. But no damages or injuries were reported, a military official said Thursday. Reuter reports from Bogota.

Thatcher pleads for India's UNSC seat

NEW DELHI, Sept 23: Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher criticised the United Nations on Thursday for failing to impose peace in hot spots, and called on NATO to spread its protective shield much wider, reports Reuter.

Thatcher also said that if the UN Security Council expanded its five-nation permanent membership, India, — not Germany or Japan — should have first claim to the new seat.

'Don't expect the UN to make peace,' Thatcher said in a combative speech to business leaders in the Indian capital.

The former British prime minister accused the United Nations of taking what she called the 'absurd' step of blocking arms sales to the Muslim-led government of Bosnia.

'The UN resolution denied the Muslims the fundamental right, as old as man himself, to self-defence,' she said.

'The UN could have used air power to stop massacres (in Bosnia), could have bombed (Bosnian Serb) military installations and supply lines. It didn't act quickly enough,' she said.

Thousands of Israelis stream to Golan in support of settlers

JERUSALEM, Sept 23: Tens of thousands of Israelis streamed to the Golan Heights on Thursday in support of settlers protesting a possible Israeli withdrawal from the strategic plateau, reports AP.

The demonstration came as a newspaper reported efforts are under-way to arrange an Israeli Syrian summit soon, possibly when US Secretary of State Warren Christopher visits the region in October.

About 50 Golan visitors heckled legislators from the governing Labour Party who visited a tent where eight leaders, most of them party members, have been on hunger strike for 10 days.

'Look at what you're doing,' shrieked one woman as the lawmakers entered the tent in

Gamla under a hail of invective. 'You're destroying this country, you're giving it up!'

Tens of thousands came from all over Israel to Golan to demonstrate their support for Jewish settlers there. A crowd of 4,000 milled around the tent in Gamla, including about 100 Golan cattle farmers who rode in on prize horses.

Eli Goldschmidt, a legislator who had been supported keeping Golan part of Israel, tried to defend his acquiescence to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's requests that he drop the cause for now.

'You call me a coward, and you are right,' he told the protesters in a trembling voice. 'I am afraid, I am afraid that peace will not come.'

Rabin accused the hunger-

strikers of fostering anarchy and said he could not predict when accord with Syria might be reached.

'In all the main components of a peace treaty there are still gaps,' he said, speaking at a rally in central Israel where radio reports said protesters threw an egg at him, hitting his hand, and hurled a firecracker at his aides.

Israel Radio quoted an unidentified high-ranking government official as saying that if Israel did not reach accommodation with Damascus, Syria would ally with the fundamentalist Islamic regime in Iran and try to torpedo peace with Jordan and the Palestinians.

Israel's Ambassador to Washington, Itamar Rabin-

ovich, mentioned the possible summit Wednesday after Rabin met with Christopher's peace envoy, Dennis Ross, in Tel Aviv, the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper said. Ross also visited Syria.

Rabinovich has also spoken of efforts to arrange a meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Syrian counterpart Farouk Sharaa in October at the UN General Assembly.

Peres said neither meeting has been arranged, adding: 'The Syrian position is that they don't want to meet on the political level until there has been a withdrawal or something like this.'

Syria wants the entire plateau returned before Israel's 1996 elections.

US-DPRK talks resume

GENEVA, Sept 23: US and North Korean officials resume high-level talks in Geneva today to try to hammer out a settlement over Pyongyang's disputed nuclear programme, reports Reuter.

Both delegations said they hoped to make progress in resolving the nuclear issue which stoked tension on the last Cold War frontier dividing North and South Korea earlier this year.

'We are hopeful we can make some progress, and we will try and reach a settlement,' US ambassador-at-large Robert Gallucci said on arrival at Geneva Airport on Thursday.

North Korea's delegation chief Kang Sok-Ju said his side would 'make every sincere effort to achieve a substantial resolution of the nuclear issue' during the talks, expected to last for up to a week.

The talks were scheduled to start at 10 a.m. (0800 GMT).

Syria rejects Israeli call for high-level talks

DAMASCUS, Sept 23: Syria on Thursday rejected an Israeli call to hold high level talks and accused Israel's leaders of trying to postpone peace settlement with Damascus, reports Reuter.

'The call to raise the level of negotiations is another step within the framework of procrastination and the postponement of the achievement of the aspired results of the peace process,' Damascus government radio said.

The radio repeated Syria's readiness to meet what Damascus termed the requirements of a just and comprehensive peace but said Israel should first withdraw fully from the Golan Heights, captured by the Jewish state in 1967.

Malaysia won't televise Ashaari's confession

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 23: In an unexplained change of plans, the government has decided not to televise the confession of Al Arqam sect leader Ashaari Muhammad, reports AP.

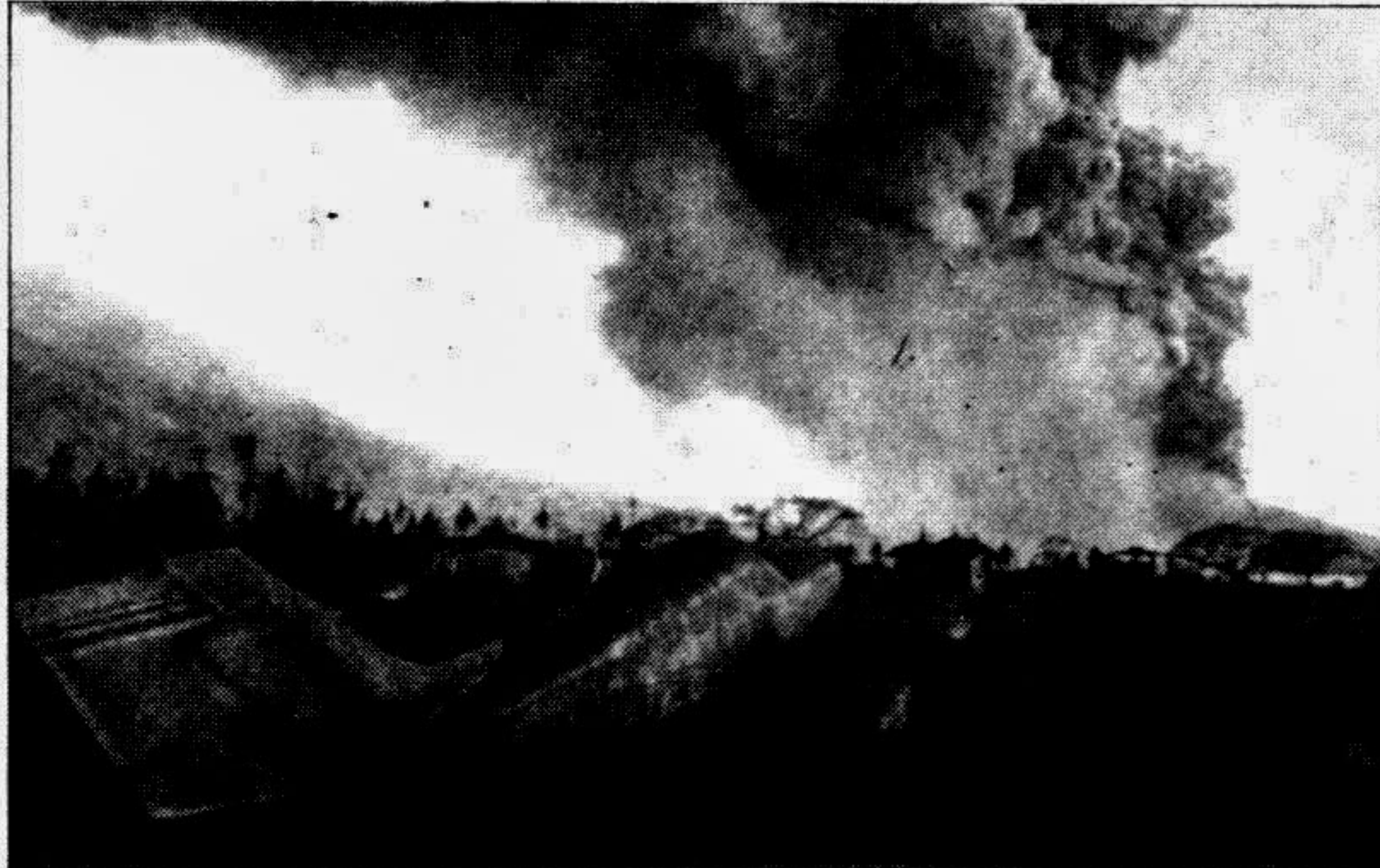
In a brief statement on Thursday night, Acting Information Minister Sanusi Junid gave no reason for the cabinet decision.

Police Inspector General of Police Rahim Omar said earlier that Ashaari, who is being held without charge under the Internal Security Act, had confessed and repented his actions.

Information Minister Mohamad Rahmat said Ashaari's confession and those of several others would be aired over a government TV channel on prime time.

Meanwhile, police continued a crackdown on the 100,000-member movement, which has 44 communes and 237 schools, shops, factories and clinics.

Police have raided at least 15 communes so far.



An aircraft sits entombed in ash on the runway of Rabaul Airport in Papua New Guinea on Friday and two helicopters were trapped by the initial eruption from Tavorvur volcano which also covered the town of 30,000 in ash. — AFP photo

India opposes French subs sale to Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Sept 23: India today opposed the sale of French submarines and missile systems to its arch-rival Pakistan, saying the deal would fan military tensions in the subcontinent, reports AFP.

'The French deal will seriously affect the equilibrium and security, and raise tensions in the neighborhood,' Foreign Secretary Kris Srinivasan said in a statement to the press.

He said Paris had told New Delhi that the billion-dollar agreement to supply three French submarines and batch of high-technology anti-ship missiles to Pakistan was just a commercial deal.

France said the submarines would serve as replacements for obsolete Daphne-class vessels possessed by Pakistan, and believed that the sale would not affect the security envi-

ronment in south Asia, Srinivasan said.

France was 'ready and keen' to sign a similar agreement with India, the senior foreign service officer said, contradicting Pakistani assertions that Paris would not sell the same submarines and weapons to New Delhi.

India, however, did not agree with the French assessment that the deal would not adversely affect existing military equations, and had told France previously of its concern at the adverse impact of arms supplies in the region.

Srinivasan also said the international community should impose 'penalties' on Pakistan for clandestinely procuring nuclear material and technology, and allegation denied by Islamabad.

Under the deal clinched Wednesday during French

Defence Minister Francois Leotard's visit to Pakistan, France will deliver three Agosta 90-B submarines and an undisclosed number of SM-39 missiles.

It will be the first time that France will export the SM-39 — the successor to the Exocet missile used in the 1982 Falklands war.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since the subcontinent's independence from British rule in 1947, and their relations have been plagued by mutual mistrust and suspicions over each other's nuclear programmes.

Their chief bone of contention is the Himalayan state of Kashmir, held in part by the two countries. India-Pakistan tensions have increased since Muslim guerillas in the Indian zone launched a violent secessionist struggle in 1989.

Kashmir dispute: Turkey backs Pakistan

ANKARA, Sept 23: Turkish President Suleyman Demirel on Thursday told his visiting Pakistani counterpart Farooq Leghari that Turkey backs Pakistan in its dispute with India over India's only Muslim-dominated province, Kashmir, reports AP.

What irks Pakistan irks Turkey, he told a joint press conference with Leghari, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Demirel said he hoped the dispute could be resolved 'quickly, peacefully and on the basis of international legitimacy.'

Turkey, a secular state, would be part of the contract group the organisation of the Islamic conference set up in Islamabad earlier this month to work for a solution to the Kashmir dispute, Demirel said.

The Muslim world intends to put up a united front on the matter during the current session of the UN General Assembly, which begins general debate on Monday.

Carter to mediate Korean talks

ATLANTA, Sept 23: Former President Jimmy Carter said on Thursday he is encouraged by the Clinton administration's endorsement of his role as a mediator in possible talks between North and South Korea, reports AP.

Robert Gallucci, Clinton's chief negotiator on suspected nuclear weapons in North Korea, said on Wednesday he supports Carter's efforts to try to foster talks between the two nations, calling Carter 'a unique asset for the United States'.

Carter, posing for photographs alongside South Korean human rights activist Kim Dae Jung at the Carter Center on Thursday, said he has no specific plans to return to North Korea but called Gallucci's comment 'another encouraging factor'.

'That has been an additional obstacle in the past,' Carter said. 'Because I understand the

extreme sensitivity of relations between our government and the two Koreas, the State Department has been quite careful about my role.'

Carter led a US negotiating team that reached agreement Sunday with Haitian leaders and averted a US invasion of the island nation. In June, Carter travelled to North Korea, where he arranged a nuclear freeze and set the stage for talks.

Carter said a return trip to North Korea will depend on the willingness of North and South Korean leaders to come to the table.

'If it becomes clear that both the North and South Korean governments want to make progress on reconciliation, if they both agree that I might play a role representing the Carter Centre in this effort, then I would certainly consider it to be a very high priority,' Carter said.

'Green card' holders choose not to be Americans!

NEW YORK, Sept 23: There are millions of longtime legal aliens out there — 'green card' holders who for years have been eligible for US citizenship but choose not to be Americans. Uncle Sam hopes to change their minds, reports AP.

The US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) recently launched a drive to woo immigrants to citizenship, believing it will help them integrate better in US society and reduce anti-immigrant sentiments harboured by some Americans.

But it could be a hard sell. Resident Alien card holders enjoy all the rights of Americans, except they can't vote or

run for office. They are subject to the same obligations, too — they pay taxes and can be drafted in wartime.

The 'green card' gives legal access to high-paying US jobs. But once they get it, many immigrants stop there.

Some would like to become naturalised Americans, but are turned off by the bureaucratic hurdles: there's lots of paperwork, they must speak English and know something about US history.

But others don't want to be American. They remain loyal to their countries or plan on returning home.

What has changed from a century ago, when most immigrants sought to assimilate?

Frenchman Antoine Blanchard, a retired New York accountant and 30-year green card holder, said with local foreign-language publications and TV and radio broadcasts, aliens can 'surround themselves with their own culture.'

'Fifty years ago, every trip was an adventure. People took all the money they had, and didn't have any way of returning. But now, with jet planes, it's no longer the same, you can return home in a day. It retains the link.'

He first came with his American wife in 1962, then stayed after they divorced. He has long been eligible for US citizenship but feels he's still an outsider here — and doesn't

mind. 'I prefer to keep my contact, my roots, the culture in which I was raised.'

In New York, French-speaking African taxi drivers work nights listening to the FM station that broadcasts Radio France Internationale's African news programme. Some say they're saving up to return home and open a business.

Ethnic enclaves, such as where Haitians and Hispanics live in Miami and New York, are like large lumps that don't dissolve in the American melting pot. In these places, little or no English is heard in stores, on streets or car radios.

Out of the current 10 million green card holders, 6.5 million have lived long enough

Off the Record**Rabin hit by an Egg!**

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was hit on the hand by an egg thrown on Thursday by ultraorthodox demonstrators in the town of Rosh Ha Aym near Tel-Aviv, police said, reports AFP.

Rabin had come to receive an honorary citizenship in the town but about 100 radicals who follow Rabbi Uzi Mechoulam met and insulted him. The Rabbi has been in Prison for several months.

One demonstrator threw an egg at the prime minister. In the melee, a member of Rabin's entourage Shimon Sheves, director general of his office, was slightly wounded in the head by a firecracker, police said.

Rabbi Mechoulam was arrested after holding up with several of his faithful in a house in Rosh Ha Aym to call for an investigation into the disappearance of Jewish Yemenite children whom he said were kidnapped from their families in the early 1950's to be placed in the families of Jews from Europe.

The Rabbi had threatened to shoot at journalists and police approaching his house. Police finally stormed the house.

**Prostitution through dating clubs**

TOKYO: A hundred Japanese girls aged under 18 were involved in prostitution through so-called dating clubs, which introduced the students to their customers, the Yomiuri Shimbun said on Friday, reports AFP.

The newspaper, quoting a police spokesman, said police raided three clubs in Tokyo and questioned their owners on suspicion of soliciting prostitution and violating child welfare laws.

Police found 80 per cent of the 526 women registered at the clubs were students in middle and high school and almost 100 of these had engaged in prostitution.

The Tokyo metropolitan government and police are to launch a joint investigation into the unusual case.

A Tokyo government official was quoted by the Yomiuri as saying, 'This is the first we have clearly heard about high-school-girl prostitution.'

LTTE kills 2 soldiers

COLOMBO, Sept 23: Tamil guerillas killed two more army soldiers in northwestern Sri Lanka as an upsurge in fighting continued in the island's embattled regions, a military spokesman said today, reports AFP.

Guerillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Thursday attacked an army patrol in northwestern Mannar district, killing two soldiers just hours after the rebels killed five other security personnel, the spokesman said.

In separate simultaneous strikes on the same day, LTTE guerillas ambushed a group of soldiers in eastern Batticaloa district and a small army camp in the region, wounding two soldiers, he added.

There were no immediate

details of LTTE casualties in retaliatory fire by government forces in the latest incidents, the spokesman said.

The fresh bloodshed brought to 38 the number of security personnel and rebels killed since Tuesday when the LTTE attacked a navy ship, leaving more than 20 sailors feared dead or missing.

The rebels also killed five security personnel in two separate incidents in the north-east on Wednesday.

The government has said that the current violence would not deter it from pursuing plans to open up a dialogue with the LTTE in a bid to resolve the ethnic conflict in the northern and eastern provinces.



Tiger Tamil woman Chief Inspector Gowri points to Jaffna on the map of Sri Lanka leaving out areas populated by the majority Sinhalese community on September 19. Increasing numbers of women have turned into suicide bombs to carry out attacks in their struggle for a Tamil homeland called Eelam for minority Tamils. — AFP photo

41 Kurds, 4 Turks killed in clashes

ANKARA, Sept 23: Forty one Kurdish rebels and four Turkish soldiers have been killed in the latest clashes in east and south east Turkey, the Turkish regional military command at Diyarbakir said on Thursday, reports AFP.

Fighting was reported in Bitol and Tunceli in eastern Turkey, in Hakkari on the Iran-Iraq border and Sirnak on the Syria-Iraq border. Turkish authorities resisting the rebel Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) said.

This brings the death toll since Monday to 67 (60 Kurds and seven Turkish soldiers) in eastern and south eastern Turkey, where there has been a PKK-led insurgency against Ankara for 10 years.