

BRIEFLY

19 die of diarrhoea in Jalpaiguri:

At least 19 persons died of diarrhoea in Alipurdar subdivision of Jalpaiguri district during the last fortnight, according to the district magistrate Dilip Rath. PTI reports from Jalpaiguri.

A high-level meeting was held at Kalchini Tuesday to chalk out an action plan to combat the spread of the disease.

Abiola's trial adjourned:

The treason trial of Nigeria's presidential claimant Moshood Abiola was Tuesday adjourned indefinitely. Reuter reports from Abuja.

Palestinian shot dead in Hebron:

An Israeli soldier shot dead a Palestinian man in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron today. Palestinians and Israeli security sources said. Reuter reports from Hebron.

Ukraine to shut Chernobyl N-plant:

Ukraine's new government has agreed in principle to close the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant — scene of the world's worst nuclear accident to date — European Union diplomats said today. Reuter reports from Luxembourg.

12 armed tribesmen killed in Iran:

Security forces have killed 12 armed tribesmen implicated in drug trafficking and wounded several others in southeastern Iran, a newspaper said in Tehran yesterday. AFP reports from Tehran.

Quake jolts Taiwan:

An earthquake of preliminary magnitude 5.8 jolted Taiwan on Wednesday, breaking windows and loosening roof tiles on the east coast, authorities said. No casualties or major damage were reported. AP says from Taipei.

HIV carriers may rise in Malaysia:

The number of HIV carriers in Malaysia is expected to rise to 30,000 from 9,000 estimated for this year. Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayob said yesterday. Xinhua reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Jiang Zemin greets Kim Jong:

North Korea's heir-apparent Kim Jong-il received a message of greeting from China's President Jiang Zemin yesterday on the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two nations. AFP reports from Tokyo.

Egypt to open mission in Sarajevo:

Egypt has decided to open an embassy in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo and a charge d'affaires will be posted there soon. Foreign Minister Amr Mussa said Tuesday. AFP reports from Cairo.

US Treasury Secy in S Arabia:

US Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen arrived in Jeddah yesterday for talks that western diplomats said would focus on Saudi Arabia's cash flow problems. AFP reports from Jeddah.

Chinese trade union leader jailed:

The voice-president of a provincial trade union in China's northeastern industrial province Jilin, has been given a life prison sentence for corruption, the procurator news received in Xue Jinguang had been accused of embezzling 140,000 yuan (16,500 dollars) and accepting 18,000 yuan (2,120 dollars) in bribes between 1990 and 1993 while he was also director of a large factory in Changchun.

Assad must compromise for peace, says Peres

WASHINGTON, Oct 5: Syrian President Hafez Assad must compromise in order to have peace. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Tuesday. reports AP.

Peres called Assad's demand for all of the Golan Heights, a strategic enclave Syria lost to Israel in the 1967 Six-Day war, only an initial move in the negotiations to be resumed this weekend through Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

He has his opening position," Peres said at a news conference. "We have our opening position... If the Syrian leader will not compromise, he will not have peace."

Israel's opening position was to offer Syria a phased withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for diplomatic and economic relations, but without any promise to give up all the land. The area serves as a military buffer and home to 13,000 Israeli Jews.

Christopher will travel to the Middle East this weekend, his fifth trip to the area since May, mostly to try to hurry a peace accord between Israel and Syria.

The two sides have been negotiating through their ambassadors in Washington, but Assad has refused to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin or to resume direct, formal peace talks.

As a result, Christopher has shuttled between Jerusalem and Damascus, carrying proposals and counterproposals. A senior aide said last Friday that there were still major gaps between the two sides positions.

4 killed in Paris shootout

PARIS, Oct 5: Three police officers and a taxi driver were killed and six other people including two more police officers — were wounded in a bloody shoot out in the streets of Paris early today, police said, reports Reuter.

A man and a woman were in custody but were refusing to divulge their identities, police said.

The male suspect wounded during one of two gunfights with police that took place during the night, was in hospital, a police spokesman said.

The shootings brought to five the number of police officers killed in France so far this year.

Indo-Pak heated debate at UN over Kashmir issue

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5: Representatives of India and Pakistan engaged in an angry exchange in the General Assembly late Tuesday about their decades-old dispute over Kashmir, reports Reuter.

The exchange was prompted by a speech earlier in the day by Pakistan Foreign Minister Asif Ahmad Ali, who said Kashmiris were waging a "just and legitimate" struggle against an Indian occupation force which now numbers 600,000 and proposed a substantial enlargement of a 35-member UN observer force which has been monitoring a 46-year-old ceasefire.

Militant groups in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, are in the fifth year of an uprising in which some seek reuniting with the one-third of Kashmir under Pakistani rule and others are campaigning for an independent Kashmir.

India's deputy UN representative, ambassador T P Sreenivasan, exercising his right of reply at the end of the day, said: "For Pakistan, India is an obsession. For India, Pakistan's histrionics are merely an annoying distraction."

He said the "territorial ambitions Pakistan in Kashmir are overt and blatant" and that Pakistan wants "to grab territory which legally and constitutionally belongs to another country."

Referring to three wars fought between the two countries, he added: "its armies having been beaten, Pakistan is now arming and training terrorists against India."

He also accused Pakistan of using illegal narcotics trafficking to finance arms purchases and clandestine terrorist activities against other countries, and of practising bigotry as state policy and systematically discriminating against religious minorities.

Sreenivasan said India's offer of talks with Pakistan on all subjects, at any time, had remained unanswered for many months. "Let Pakistan answer this instead of seeing alibis," he said.

Responding, Pakistan's alternate Foreign Secretary, Munir Akram, said he was "constrained to respond to the string of falsehoods which have been mouthed" by his Indian colleague, whose "biggest falsehood was that Kashmir is a part of India."

According to Security Council resolutions, the final disposition of Kashmir should be decided by its people through a UN supervised plebiscite, he said.

"Above all, the people of Kashmir do not consider themselves as part of India," he said.

Defining terrorism as the use of indiscriminate force against innocent people, he said that by that yardstick alone, "India is the biggest terrorist state in the world."

Akram said Pakistan had tried for 22 years to promote a dialogue with India, but it had been a dead end.

India said it wanted talks, but only when "it is afraid that the international community will censure its violation of human rights."

"India cannot talk peace with Pakistan and make war on the Kashmiri people," he added.

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US President Bill Clinton (2nd R) and President of South Africa Nelson Mandela (R) stand at the north portico of the White House on Tuesday before the start of a state dinner given in honour of Mandela. Zinzi Mandela-Hlongwane (L), Mandela's daughter and US First Lady Hillary Clinton (2nd L) accompany.

Saudi Arab. Blasts UN decision EU FM's welcome lifting of sanctions against Belgrade

LUXEMBOURG, Oct 5: European Union Foreign Ministers gave a guarded welcome on Tuesday to the limited lifting of sanctions against rump Yugoslavia, but warned vigilance would not be relaxed, reports Reuter.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said the next six months would be a decisive time in Bosnia, requiring "active and imaginative" diplomacy to exploit the pressure which Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic is putting on the Bosnian Serbs.

Hurd said the six-month postponement of action to lift the international arms embargo against Bosnia, as agreed last week by the Bosnian government, had averted a potentially serious problem in the

alliance seeking to end the Bosnian war.

He said the challenge now was to ensure the same kind of disagreement did not occur again in six months' time. He was referring to tension between the United States and its European allies over moves to lift the arms embargo.

Washington wants to fix a date for lifting the embargo after the six month delay agreed by the Bosnian government, but the European allies with peacekeeping troops on the ground are reluctant to set any firm deadline.

Tuesday's EU Foreign Ministers' meeting heard a report from peace mediator Lord Owen on how Belgrade's trade embargo against its former Bosnian Serb allies appeared to

be working on the evidence supplied by international monitors.

AFP reports, Saudi Arabia has criticised the UN Security Council's decision to ease sanctions against the former Yugoslavia, saying it would send the wrong message to Serb forces in Bosnia.

The move will "prevent a just settlement and will reward aggression" against Bosnia-Herzegovina, Saudi Prince Saud Al-Faisal told the UN General Assembly Tuesday.

He termed the September 23 security council as "premature," and called on the international community to lift the arms embargo to allow the Bosnian Muslim forces the right to legitimate self defence.

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The original report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said India imported arms worth 12.2 billion dollar between 1988 and 1992.

Singh said while completely accurate figures were impossible to come by, the real sum was probably around only 3 billion dollars.

Mandela accorded reception at White House

WASHINGTON, Oct 5: Nelson Mandela got an effusive White House welcome Tuesday night as nearly 200 guests at a sumptuous state dinner heard President Clinton toast him as "a genuine inspiration to the American people," reports AP.

Mandela seemed delighted by the festivities, hugging and kissing many old friends like Coretta Scott King and Nobel Prize-winning South African writer Nadine Gordimer, and stressing in his toast to Clinton an "enduring partnership" between South Africa and American.

He invited Clinton on a formal state visit to South Africa, and while thanking America for helping end apartheid, he pointedly urged Americans not to think the struggle was over yet.

Mandela, who came to the United States in search of desperately needed aid and capital for his country,

India denies Swedish report on arms import

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: India's top defence analyst on Tuesday vehemently denied a Swedish report that said India was the world's biggest arms importer, reports Reuter.

"These figures were used in a 1994 UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) report and have been very widely quoted since," said Jasjit Singh, a former air commodore who now heads the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses.

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Quake kills 16 in Kuril Islands

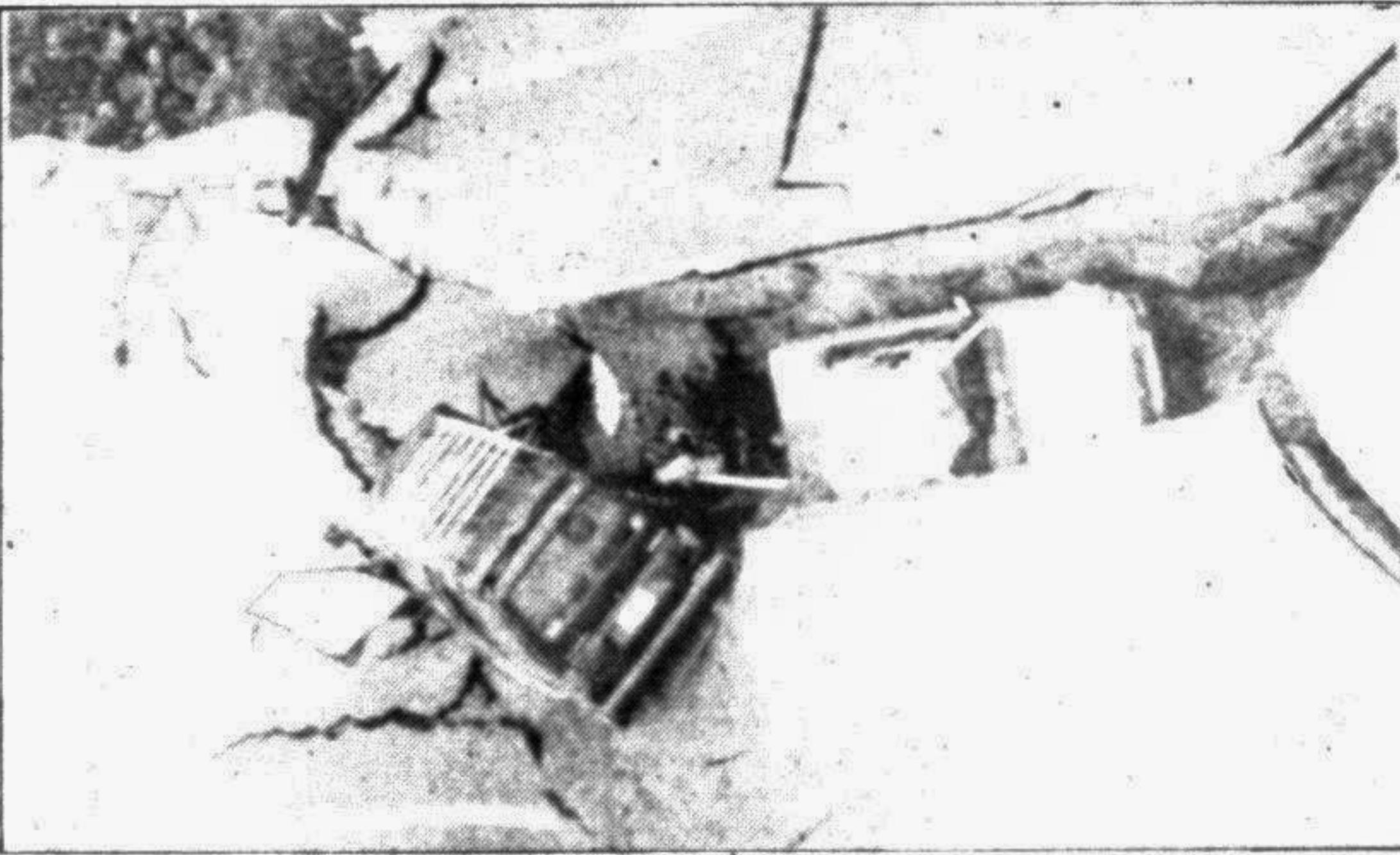
MOSCOW, Oct 5: A huge earthquake struck the Pacific Ocean north of Japan late Tuesday, killing at least 16 people in the remote Kuril Islands in Russia's Far East, authorities said, reports AP.

The victims' bodies were found on three islands of the southern Kurils — Shikotan, Kunashir and Iturup — spokesman Anatoly Streltsov of the Ministry for Emergency Situations said in Moscow.

Most were killed by falling debris, he said early Wednesday.

Seismologists registered the quake's magnitude as 7.9 to 8.0, making it the strongest tremor to hit the region in 26 years.

It was centered deep under the Pacific, some 150 kilometers (100 miles) southeast of Kunashir Island in the Kurils.



Cars fall in a crack on a road in Nemuro, in Japan's northern Hokkaido Prefecture yesterday near the epicenter of a strong earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale which struck Monday. Around 200 people were injured in the quake.

Off the Record

White House no place for stereotype spouse

WASHINGTON: Barbara Bush, speaking from experience, said Tuesday night that it's better for a president's spouse to be more interested in literacy than gun control, reports AP.

The former first lady defended her own refusal to differ publicly with George Bush on controversial issues such as abortion and gun control when he was in the White House.

"I felt strongly and still feel strongly about illiteracy. Ninety million Americans cannot read, write and comprehend well enough to have a job," said Barbara Bush, whose autobiography is on the best-seller lists.

Delivering a lecture at a George Washington University series on presidential spouses, she said, "had it been gun control or any other issue that I was interested in, I would have taken it up."

"But it certainly is better if you're president, if your husband or wife is more interested in literacy than in gun control — trust me," she said.

She disputed a suggestion by the host, historian Carl Siffranza Anthony, that Hillary Clinton might be the first in a new mold of first ladies who were also professional women.

"It isn't a time of change. Eleanor Roosevelt literally made Hillary look like a stay at home," Barbara Bush said. "She was out there, she was active and she went to the coal mines and the civil right marches and she really chose very controversial things that she cared about."

Lufthansa considers Rushdie a security risk

BONN: Germany's Lufthansa Airline refused to carry British author Salman Rushdie because it considered him a security risk, the Tageszeitung Daily said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Lufthansa spokesman Peter Hoebel neither denied nor confirmed the report, saying that data protection laws prevented the airline from commenting on specific passengers.

But he added: "Lufthansa only flies when the safety of its passengers can be guaranteed."

The Tageszeitung said the airline refused to carry Rushdie, who has been in hiding since a 1989 death edict passed by the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, when the author visited Germany in August last year.

In October 1993, the airline again refused to have Rushdie as a passenger when he came to Bonn for talks with Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, the Daily said.

Both visits were widely publicised. British Airways has a standing ban on carrying Rushdie as a passenger for security reasons.

Gandhi's ashes — a 'safe deposit article'

CUTTACK: Few people are aware that the sacred ashes of Mahatma Gandhi are kept inside a dark locker room of the State Bank of India here for the last 44 years, reports PTI.

The urn containing the ashes stored in a sealed wooden box was kept in the form of a "safe deposit article" on November 29, 1950 by the then secretary to the chief minister.

The state capital was then at Cuttack and the bank was called the "Imperial Bank of India."

Even as the nation celebrated the 125th birth anniversary of the Mahatma, nobody asked or enquired about it. "No one even came for its verification ever," the assistant general manager of the main branch of the SBI, A Ramesh Kumar told PTI.

Int'l tribunal will try Rwandan war criminals

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5: The Security Council has reached a board consensus to quickly set up an International Tribunal to try those responsible for the killings of an estimated 500,000 people in Rwanda, diplomats said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Sir David Hannay of Britain said the council hoped to take a decision on setting up the council before the month is out, but noted it may take longer because tricky legal questions remain to be settled.

The United States and New Zealand proposed a draft statute and resolution setting up the tribunal, Hannay said after an informal closed door session of the Council.

"We had an extremely good, lengthy and detailed discussion on that which revealed very broad support and broad

agreement for setting up of a tribunal," said Hannay, who chairs the Council this month.

"There are still one or two lingering doubts in one or two delegations, but the direction in which the Council is moving is quite clear and the need to move quickly is also recognised by all," he said.

Hannay noted that the Rwandan government also was "very insistent" that the council be set up, viewing it as crucial to restoring confidence and bringing about reconciliation.

The Security Council also considered a report by a UN commission of experts which concluded that deliberate acts of genocide were carried out against Rwanda's minority Tutsi tribe and recommended that those responsible be tried by an International Tribunal.

Azeri President discloses coup bid against him

BAKU, Oct 5: Azerbaijani President Geidar Aliyev early today disclosed that a coup d'etat against his authority had been launched in the city of Ganja, west of here, reports AFP.

But he assured a crowd of 5,000 people outside the presidential palace in the capital that "a civil war has been avoided."

The president said rebel forces were in control of key positions in Ganja, including the airport and security headquarters.

"Unfortunately in Ganja, armed forces have shown another face. They have taken the airport, the railway station,

the Security Ministry and other buildings. There is a coup attempt in Azerbaijan."

But the president insisted the uprising was petering out. "I can inform you that the healthy forces in Ganja have now risen to their feet and are capturing and eliminating the occupiers, the users and those who violated Azerbaijan's statehood."

"I express my respect for the people of Ganja and I want to declare that I am sure they will overcome these enemy forces."

The crowd brandished portraits of the 71-year-old president and shouted "shame shame"

Exultant Haitians await Aristide's return

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 5: Two dozen people crowded around a green wooden and corrugated metal shack erupted into cheers when their exiled president announced he would be back home October 15, reports AP.

"I am so happy," declared Paulette Dosous, 38, who kept an ear to President Jean Bertrand Aristide's speech on the radio Tuesday while watching him on a tiny black-and-white television to make sure she didn't miss a word.

"He is our president and he is the one we voted for," said Dosous, holding her 2-year-old daughter Faniane Louis, who kept trying to pull off her radio earphones.

"We're all going to have a party and dance when Aristide comes back!" she said, wiggling her hips and bouncing her daughter to demonstrate.

"Our hearts are filled with joy," added Wilkens Pierre, watching the broadcast inside the shack in a capital slum known as Tokyo. "We don't know if this will mean an end to the terror but it will mean a new beginning for Haiti."

The mood was joyous throughout Port-au-Prince on Tuesday as people crowded around the few television sets and radios to hear the voice of their popular leader, many for the first time since the coup that toppled him three years ago.

Aristide's speech to the UN General Assembly was broadcast throughout the country through a US government satellite hookup.

"Eleven days from now, I shall be there, thanks to the determination of the Haitian people and our solidarity," Aristide said to cheers at the United Nations.

News of the departure of Port-au-Prince police chief Michel Francois, a top military leader who helped orchestrate the coup, fueled the joy.

"It is an important step toward the re-establishment of democracy and peace," Port-au-Prince mayor Evans Paul told The Associated Press.

"The others should follow his example." He was referring to army leader Lt Gen Raoul Cedras and chief of staff Brig Gen Philippe Blamby.

The three top military leaders are to resign by October 15 under a last minute agreement with former president Jimmy Carter that averted a US military invasion.

In Cite Soleil, the capital's worst slum, a group of men gathered around a radio mounted on an empty gasoline drum laughed out loud when a news programme reported that Francois had fled into the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

"That is the best news of the day," said Jerudi Erner, 27.

But he was more measured

when he talked about Aristide's speech. "This is what we have been waiting for," said Erner. "But we won't believe it until we see it. He has said that he is coming back before."

Not everyone in Haiti was delighted by Francois' departure and Aristide's affirmation that he will return soon.

Angry Haitian soldiers on Tuesday demanded an explanation from Cedras.

"Our lives are severely threatened," said a statement pushed on a reporter outside police headquarters by members of the army's 30th Company. Haiti's police force is part of the country's army.

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