

BRIEFLY

Author Gajendra Mitra dies: Noted Bengali author Gajendra Kumar Mitra passed away early yesterday at a Calcutta nursing home. He was 86 and is survived by his wife, reports PTI from Calcutta.

He was shifted to Kothari Medical Centre for treatment of jaundice on September 20. The end came at 1am, according to Bhanu Ray, managing director of Mitra and Ghose Publishers.

5 die in UK train collision: Two passenger trains collided in dense fog near the southern England village of Cowden on Saturday, killing five people and injuring 11, officials said, AP reports from Cowden.

Both train drivers were among the dead, said Rail Track, the company which operates the single-track line. The trains, each with six cars and carrying only 19 passengers between them, should have passed each other on a loop further up the rail track.

Quake shakes Japan: A moderately strong earthquake shook Japan's western central region on Sunday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injury, AP says from Tokyo.

The quake, with a preliminary magnitude reading of 4.5, struck at 8:21 am (23:21 GMT on Saturday). It was centered about 10 kilometres (6 miles) beneath the city of Wakayama, about 590 kilometres (370 miles) southwest of Tokyo on the main island of Honshu.

Volcano erupts in Indonesia: A volcano erupted overnight on the small Indonesian island of Ternate, sending a cloud of hot ash 300 metres (1,000 feet) into the air, the government geophysical services said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

There were no immediate reports of injury or damage from the eruption of Mount Gamalama on Saturday at 8:30 pm (13:30 GMT).

26 Muslim rebels killed in Algeria: A total of 26 armed Islamic fundamentalists have been killed by security forces over the past few days, Algerian security forces said on Saturday, AFP reports from Algiers.

Six were killed on Saturday in Benzerga, near Algiers. Eleven were killed on Friday during operations in Larbaa, near Blida in the south, Bordj Menaiel, Lakhadaria, in the east, Ouled El-Abtal, in the west, the sources said.

Women varsity in Iran: Iran opened its first women-only university this week as part of a drive to segregate the sexes in line with Islamic principles, AFP reports from Tehran.

The College of Psychology in Rud-e-Hen, 40 kilometres (25 miles) northeast of the capital, is run by female staff and faculty members and admits women only.

2 Egyptian militants shot dead: Egyptian police late Saturday killed a regional military leader of the Islamic militant group Jamma Islamiya and one of his aides in an ambush near Asyut 400 kilometres (250 miles) south of Cairo, police reported, AFP says from Asyut.

They said 26-year-old Ahmad Senussi, responsible for the group's activities in the Asyut region, and his colleague, Ahmad Shawqi Mohammad, were shot and killed on a street in the town of Manfalut.

2 Palestinians shot in West Bank: Israeli troops shot and wounded two Palestinians in a pro-Hamas demonstration Saturday in the West Bank, a day after the hostage bloodbath, hospital officials said, AFP reports from Nablus, West Bank.

Soldiers opened fire as dozens of youths pelted them with stones to protest the killing of three Hamas militants in a failed bid to free the Jewish hostage, Nachshon Waxman.

Russian FM meets King Fahd: Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has held talks with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd as part of a Gulf tour to discuss Russia's plan to defuse the latest Gulf crisis, Reuter reports from Dubai.

The official Saudi press agency said Kozyrev met the King in Jeddah Saturday night and then left the kingdom. It gave no details of the talk.

Kozyrev is due to meet US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in New York today.

Algerian reporter slain: An Algerian state radio reporter was shot Sunday morning and died on the way to a hospital, his family said. He was the 21st journalist slain since a Muslim fundamentalist insurgency began, AP says from Algiers.

Armed men attacked Tayeb Boutelilif, 41, as he left his home in the southeast Algiers suburb of Baraki, said a community by security forces.

As usual, there was no claim of responsibility for the slaying. But suspicion fell on Muslim militants.

Japan won't extend aid for Rwandans: Japan will refuse a request from the UN refugee agency to extend its army relief mission for Rwandan refugees in Zaire by three months, the daily Yomiuri Shimbun said yesterday, Reuter reports from Tokyo.

The paper said the decision was based on the improved sanitary conditions and increasing violence at the refugee camp in Goma, Zaire.

Serbs allow UN convoys to enter Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Oct 16: Serbs bombarded Bosnian government territory along a UN security zone around Sarajevo but allowed significant UN food convoys to enter the city for the first time in weeks, reports Reuter.

Saturday's three UN convoys with nearly 500 tonnes of food provided a vital infusion of aid for Sarajevo's 380,000 people after weeks of virtual blockade by the Bosnian Serb forces retaliating for a punitive NATO air raid.

With the snowy Balkan winter closing in, UN food stocks had dwindled to only about two days before the new supplies sufficient for half a week reached the Bosnian capital, encircled by separatist Serbs for 30 months.

The UN was likely to try and thread more convoys through Serb lines fast in a race to stockpile aid before winter. UN aid flights have resumed after disruptions caused by gunfire.

Serbs artillery resumed pounding Muslim positions on the Cernerska Planina Plateau east of Breza some 20 km (12 miles) north of Sarajevo and skirting the zone around the city from which heavy weapons are banned by UN-NATO decree.

UN Major Koos Sol said the Bosnian Serb army was trying to take high ground there to control two key roads between Sarajevo and government held but contested land in central Bosnia.

Bosnia's Muslim-led government accused the UN Protection Force last week of tolerating Serb shelling within the exclusion zone instead of using its mandate to summon NATO air strikes against offending artillery.

Jakarta looking to Europe for weapons

JAKARTA, Oct 16: Indonesia is looking increasingly to Europe — and away from the United States — for weapons including submarines, aircraft and light tanks, foreign military sources say reports Reuter.

The shift from Washington a major supplier during the Cold War, follows moves by the US Congress to link arms sales and training with human rights in troubled East Timor which Jakarta invaded in 1975 and annexed in 1976.

Indonesia has said it will not accept any conditions for future sales from the United States.

The sources on Saturday said Indonesia had shown greater interest in the past year in buying from Europe, including Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Delhi laying groundwork for polls in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: The Indian government is laying the groundwork for elections in the troubled state of Kashmir in a gamble it hopes will help bring about an end to a bloody five-year-old Muslim separatist campaign, reports AFP.

Indian officials are pressing ahead with plans to hold the first elections in the state in more than seven years amid widespread scepticism over whether Kashmir's alienated Muslim population will participate in the polls.

In a move seen as the latest effort to create a climate conducive to elections, the Indian authorities on Friday released Sahbir Ahmad Shah, a prominent Kashmiri Muslim separatist leader from prison.

But the 40-year-old Shah, declared a "prisoner of conscience" by Amnesty International, promptly reiterated his demands for self-determination for Kashmir and said he had no faith in the Indian electoral system.

Massive fraud marred the last state assembly elections in Kashmir, in 1987, and the irregularities were seen as precipitating the armed struggle gripping India's only Muslim-majority state.

Shah said an UN-supervised polls should be held to elect representatives of the Kashmiri people who could then take part in trilateral talks with India and Pakistan on the future of the Himalayan territory.

Pakistan also lays claim to Kashmir and has been accused by India of giving support to the Muslim militants waging the separatist campaign which has left more than 10,000 people dead since 1989.

Minister of State for Internal Security Rajesh Pilot, who has been playing the role of point man in attempts to organise elections in Kashmir, said the government was aware there were a number of obstacles in its way.

"But we are determined to restore the democratic process to this part of the country," he told AFP in a telephone interview. "We know there will be hurdles but we are confident of overcoming them."

"We would have to have normalcy first," Pilot said. "Not total gun silence but we hope to reduce the level of militancy, to reduce the level of violence."

"Obviously we don't expect the militant groups to welcome elections," the minister added. "Pakistan will also not like us to hold elections and they will do their best to avoid that situation."

Pilot expressed confidence that elections will be held and dismissed fears a poor turnout in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley would prove an embarrassment to the Indian authorities.

"Kashmiri Muslims are getting slightly alienated," he said. "There is a degree of alienation between militancy and the public."

Although he declined to provide a timeframe, Pilot has been quoted as saying he hoped elections could be held within six months in Kashmir, where people are split between those who want independence and those who want to join Pakistan.

A number of Indian political parties have warned the government to drop the idea of holding elections in Kashmir in the near future, saying most Kashmiri Muslims would boycott the polls and the exercise could prove a fiasco.

The Communist Party of India said that insight of the "explosive situation" in the state it would be "meaningless" to hold elections before restoring the confidence of the population.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Robin Raphel, during a visit here last week, reportedly expressed scepticism during her meetings with Indian officials on whether credible elections could be held in Kashmir.

Another hurdle is the apparent unwillingness of the National Conference, the only political party with a presence throughout Kashmir, to take part in polls at this time.

"The ground realities do not favour elections at the present moment," said National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, a former Chief Minister of Kashmir.

SA launches campaign to fight crime

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 16: South African leaders across the political spectrum joined forces for the first time on Saturday to launch a nationwide campaign to slash soaring crime, reports AFP.

President Nelson Mandela and his political rival Interior Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi were among those who took part in the "National Day of Safety and Security" to attend a series of rallies through the day.

The special law and order day was designed to boost relations between the public and the police, whose leaders believe such events are the only way to tackle rising criminality.

Despite a recent falling-off in political felonies, South Africa has one of the highest murder rates in the world.



South African President Nelson Mandela (C), Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi (L) and Energy Minister Pik Botha wave at supporters on Saturday at Orlando Stadium in the township of Soweto where they addressed a rally to celebrate National Safety and Security Day.

Somalia may plunge into chaos after UN pullout: Ghali

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 16: The planned withdrawal of UN forces from Somalia next year could take place under "hostile circumstances" and require additional military support, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali warned on Saturday, reports AFP.

In a report to the Security Council, he said the country could plunge again into "anarchy and chaos" after the scheduled withdrawal of United Nations forces in March 1995, with Somali leaders bearing the responsibility.

The protracted political impasse has created a vacuum of civil authority and of government structure, leaving the United Nations with no function to build on in its effort to help Somalia emerge from its present chaotic situation, he said.

"The international community has provided generous assistance to help overcome the worst aspects of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. The establishment of a viable and acceptable peace can come only from the Somalis themselves."

The UN peacekeeping force is to be reduced to 15,000 by the end of October and fully withdrawn by March 1995. But Boutros-Ghali said the withdrawal "may require extensive air and sea support from member states."

He added that Italy had agreed to provide five to six ships, while diplomatic sources disclosed that a US contribution to the effort was also expected.

The pullout will take between 60 and 120 days to complete, according to Ghali.

But he said that if Somali leaders managed to create a

favourable security climate for the reestablishment of functioning government institutions, a UN presence could be maintained in the country following the withdrawal of UN troops.

A US-led force followed by UN multinational units intervened in Somalia two years ago in an effort to help avert mass starvation amid intense tribal warfare and a collapsed government.

In Somalia this week, Interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed rejected an agreement by 12 Somali clan factions, including warlord Mohamed Farah Aidid's Somali National Alliance, to hold a Somali reconciliation conference, saying the pact "was not in touch with the realities in Somalia and would lead the country into chaos and more fighting."

Hamas threatens to escalate attack on Israel

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip, Oct 16: Hamas threatened Saturday to escalate attacks on Israel and its "surrogates" unless the Palestinian self-rule authority stopped cracking down on the Muslim fundamentalist group, reports AFP.

The Hamas armed wing Ezzedin Al-Kassam, in a statement sent to news agencies, called on the Palestinian authority to free its prisoners immediately.

"If it continues its arrests, Al-Kassam units will reply by burning Gaza over the heads of the Zionists and of their surrogates, whatever the result," the group warned.

It was their strongest worded threat against the Palestinian authority whom Hamas accuses of acting under Israeli orders.

Palestinian police arrested at least 50 suspected Hamas activists overnight Friday.

Saddam losing control of internal security

AMMAN, Oct 16: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is losing control of internal security in Iraq, where armed theft and other crimes are common after four years of grinding poverty under economic sanctions, reports AFP.

Iraqis and foreign diplomats tell of fear in the streets of Baghdad and other cities, especially after dark.

"At night people stay home and do not walk the streets which have become dangerous," a manager at an Iraqi company told AFP.

"We are all armed in case our homes are burgled. It is no use calling the police who are most often in league with the gangs," he added, asking not to be named.

The gangs are mostly young people "who steal and kill without scruple," he said.

Diplomats told AFP at least two of their colleagues had been the victim of violent thefts in recent months.

"A Qatari diplomat in Baghdad was overpowered at home one evening by an armed gang which stole all his belongings and left only the pyjamas he was wearing," a diplomat said.

Burglars also targeted the Palestinian charge d'affaires in the capital, he said.

"Thieves took away all his belongings in a lorry which was waiting for them in the street in a residential street in Baghdad, without being stopped by anyone," the diplomat said.

Foreign Journalists, including this AFP correspondent, were attacked, beaten and threatened with death by armed bandits who stole all their belongings in an ambush last Monday near the southern city of Basra.

Japan to disclose plutonium stock

TOKYO, Oct 16: Japan will publicly disclose the amount of its plutonium stock annually to improve transparency in its use of the nuclear fuel, which can also be used to develop weapons, a newspaper said yesterday, reports AP.

The Science and Technology Agency will for the first time reveal the extent of Japan's plutonium reserves in a white paper to be issued next month, the Asahi Shimbun said.

Japan has basically kept figures on its plutonium stock secret, citing the need to protect nuclear-related substances.

Off the Record

Vision of Virgin Mary entices true believers

NEW YORK: For the chance of beholding an apparition of the Virgin Mary, Monika Banuelos made the long trek with eight members of her family in one of 10 buses from Juarez, Mexico, to a farm in Georgia, reports AP.

"Why?" she said of her pilgrimage. "Because we love the Virgin."

Banuelos and tens of thousands of believers from all 50 states and Europe have been drawn to the home of Kathy Fowler, a homemaker from Conyers, Ga, who claims the biblical mother of Jesus Christ appeared to her on October 13, 1990.

The vision has returned on the 13th day of most months, and Fowler said she saw the vision Thursday on the ceiling of an "apparition room."

Scores of other sightings of Mary have been reported in the United States in the past decade.

US sightings proliferated after a 1981 vision of Mary by six youths in the mountain village of Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nickell said it led to an outbreak of "Medjugorje virus" in America.

The Catholic Church, which takes an ultracautious view of such matters, is still investigating the Bosnia sighting. Church policy dictates that the local bishop conduct the first inquiry if he feels it's warranted, then a team of investigators from the Vatican authenticates any findings. The process can take decades.

Fatima and Lourdes have been authenticated by the church but no inquiry has begun yet in Conyers.

At a modest tract house in Hollywood, Fla, Rosa Lopez says Mary appears to her on the 13th of each month. She had received well water thought to have curative powers from Conyers and visited Fowler's property before the visions started.

Other sightings have been reported in Marlboro, N.J.; Denver; Cold Spring, Ky; Scottsdale, Ariz; and Emmitsburg, Md.

"We've seen a spate of these," said Charles Nuckolls, an Emory University anthropologist who studied the Hindu religion in India and has visited Conyers.

'Disgusting display'

CASERTA, Italy: The bride wore white. Lots and lots of white, reports AP.

Wearing a wedding gown weighing 218 kilograms (480 pounds) and fanning out 13 metres (39 feet) with lace and bows, 25-year-old Maria Rosaria Lembo and her father were wheeled to the altar Saturday on a platform pulled by an off road vehicle.

The spectacle — which attracted large crowds and forced police to divert traffic — was denounced as a "disgusting display" by the bishop of Caserta, a town outside Naples.

The bishop, Raffaele Nogaro, also called the event a "scandalous thing" that created "class divisions" in the church.

The Guinness Book of Records lists the world's longest wedding dress train at 157 metres (515 feet). There is no entry for heaviest dress.

Charles was forced to marry Diana

LONDON, Oct 16: Prince Charles was never in love with Princess Diana and married her under pressure from his father, Prince Philip, according to a new — and reportedly authorised — biography published in The Sunday Times, reports AP.

The biography, which the newspaper began serialising on Sunday, quotes from letters written by Charles to friends.

In one, the heir to the British throne says that by 1986 five years after the wedding, the marriage was so bad he felt "in a kind of cage longing to be free."

How awful incompatibility is and how dreadfully destruc-

tive it can be for the players in this extraordinary drama," Charles, 45, wrote to one unidentified correspondent.

"It has all the ingredients of a Greek tragedy... I never thought it would end up like this. How could I have got it all so wrong?"

The Sunday Times delayed publication of its front section until after midnight (23:00 GMT) to stop rival newspapers picking up extracts in early editions from "The Prince of Wales," by broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby.

In a lengthy television interview with Dimbleby in June, Charles acknowledged for the first time that he was unfaithful to Diana, now 33. He said he had an affair only after the marriage had broken down.

The couple, who have two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, formally separated in December 1992.

The book, published by LittleBrown, is the latest in a spate of royal books delving into the failed marriages of Queen Elizabeth II's elder sons, Charles and Prince Andrew, who is separated from the former Sarah Ferguson.

According to advance publicity, Charles gave Dimbleby access to more than 10,000 of his letters and private diaries.

Rival newspapers said on Sunday that the Conservative government was upset that Charles had cooperated with Dimbleby.

According to the book,

Prince Philip forced him to propose to Diana after newspapers reported that she had visited him at Balmoral, the Queen's Scottish castle, Philip argued that Diana's reputation would be endangered by the reports.

Diana, daughter of the late Earl Spencer, had "no past" and was young enough to be molded into the future queen, Philip argued, the book said.

"The prince, in a state of emotional confusion, clung to these calculations as beacons of apparent clarity," wrote Dimbleby. "The pressures on him began to sweep him towards his destiny."

The book said Diana could be violent and had mood swings from the time of their honeymoon aboard the royal yacht, Britannia.

A book by a former royal reporter Andrew Morton shortly before the couple separated said Diana once attempted suicide.

The Morton book said a prime cause of the trouble was Charles' continuing friendship with an old flame, army officer's wife Camilla Parker Bowles, 47. She is widely reputed to be his mistress.

Dimbleby wrote that Diana was obsessively jealous of Camilla, and also hated his enjoyment of solitude in the Scottish Highlands.

In a 1987 letter quoted by Dimbleby Charles said of newspaper speculation that he was having affairs, "I am

drammed if I am going to let all this stuff intimidate me."

Charles was also miserable at Gordonstoun, the Scottish private boys boarding school which his father had attended.

"It's such hell here," he wrote in one letter. "The people in my dormitory are foul... they throw slippers all night long or hit me with pillows or rush across the room and hit me as hard as they can



China can help solidify US-DPRK accord: Perry

BEIJING, Oct 16: China can help solidify an agreement between the United States and North Korea over nuclear arms, Defence Secretary William Perry said Sunday, reports AP.

Perry arrived in the Chinese capital for four days of talks with military and civilian leaders on arms control, defence conversion, military strategy and human rights.

The talks are a sensitive subject in Asia, where concern about China's military intentions runs high and in the United States, where concern about political repression in China still dominates.

First on Perry's agenda is a pending agreement between the United States and North Korea, the result of negotiations in Geneva, that could diffuse a long-simmering dispute over whether North Korea's nuclear technology is being used to develop atomic bombs. Perry said an agreement between the two nations could come as soon as this week.

"China can play a beneficial role," Perry said. "I do not see the discussion with the Chinese as asking them to put pressure on the North Koreans to agree... but rather as participating and helping implement the agreements whenever it is they are actually finally reached."

Perry described the negotiations with the North Koreans as moving toward a "very complicated... very far-reaching" agreement that would entail "working with the North Koreans for years and years to come." He added that China could help over the long term make the agreement work.

Communist party formed in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Oct 16: Taiwan's nationalist government, which for 45 years has stood opposed to the communists on the Chinese mainland, now is facing a challenge from some communists at home, reports AP.

A former member of Taiwan's largest opposition party said on Sunday he is setting up the Taiwan Communist Party — but it will fight corruption, not seek a socialist revolution.

"We have recruited some 20,000 members islandwide," said Wang Lao-yang, the new party's founder and chairman, in a telephone interview.

The Nationalist Chinese government, which fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war to the communists in mainland China, has never permitted any organisation with leftist sympathies to operate in Taiwan.