

Lankan political parties resume polls campaign

COLOMBO, Oct 30: Sri Lanka's political parties resumed their bloodstained presidential campaign today after a national funeral for assassinated opposition candidate Gamini Dissanayake led to increased tension, reports AFP.

The ruling People's Alliance (PA) of Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga said they were recommending public rallies after a one-week break following Monday's bombing of Dissanayake's rally, where 56 others were also killed.

"We are starting our programme today because all funerals have now been concluded," a PA spokesman said, adding that Kumaratunga, the government candidate for the presidency, was due to address a few public rallies.

Kumaratunga's government granted Dissanayake a national funeral Saturday but boycotted the cremation at the Independence Square public promenade, saying they were

unable to attend due to the "atmosphere that prevailed." Angry mourners jeered as Home Minister Amarasinghe and parliament speaker KB Ratnayake failed to turn up to deliver their scheduled orations on behalf of premier Kumaratunga's government.

Dissanayake's widow, Srimala, and Kumaratunga took out full-page advertisements in national weeklies Sunday asking voters to support them at the presidential ballot.

"Sharing the vision. Fulfilling the promise," Dissanayake's declared while Kumaratunga said: "We still need to press on and work for peace, for hope, for our children for a life free of killings and acts of terror."

At the funeral itself, angry mourners chanted slogans accusing Kumaratunga of responsibility in Dissanayake's death. The opposition United National Party (UNP) has said Tamil Tiger guerrillas carried out the suicide bombing.

French peacekeepers attacked UN force threatens Bosnian army with NATO air strikes

SARAJEVO, Oct 30: The UN peacekeeping force accused government forces of a deliberate artillery attack on French peacekeepers on Saturday and threatened to call in NATO air strikes if such attacks were repeated, reports AP.

It was the most serious warning yet to the Muslim-led government army that it, too, could be hit by NATO strikes, thus far directed only at the Bosnian Serb side.

The warning came as government forces expanded their strongest offensive of the war, encircling hundreds of Serb soldiers on a northwest front and launching an infantry and artillery attack on Serbs near Sarajevo.

The peacekeeping force, in a statement, said four rounds

from a government army 122mm artillery piece landed 25 to 50 metres from a French peacekeeper observation post on Saturday near the Javorak Valley, southwest of Sarajevo.

The Bosnian army, in a statement issued early on Sunday, denied that it had deliberately targeted the UN peacekeeper observation post and said the fire was aimed at Bosnian Serb artillery positions.

The incident occurred as peacekeepers were trying to monitor a government infantry and artillery attack on Bosnian Serb positions just south of a demilitarized zone on Mount Igman, which overlooks Sarajevo.

The UN force accused the government army of using the

demilitarized zone to stage the attack on the Serbs and firing artillery from it. The government army denied this.

The United Nations, in its statement, said it cannot allow either side to violate agreements such as the one that established the demilitarized zone in August 1993.

"If UN observation posts or personnel are directly targeted by artillery or mortars, the UN will have no alternative but to request air support from NATO in self-defence," the statement said.

Meanwhile, in northwest Bosnia, troops of the mostly Muslim government force crossed the Una River and surrounded the town of Bosanska Krupa, encircling several hundred Serb soldiers, UN offi-

cials said. Government army sources said their troops had entered part of the town.

Bosanska Krupa, 210 kilometers northwest of Sarajevo, had a pre-war population of about 20,000. It would be by far the largest Serb-held town to fall to government forces since the war began in April 1992.

Bosnian Serb radio said the town's civilian population had been evacuated and that Serb soldiers were bracing for an all-out government attack.

The sweep around Bosanska Krupa and the attacks near Sarajevo came a day after Serb leaders, stung by their worst combat setbacks of the war earlier in the week, threatened counterattacks in the northwest or renewed bombardment of Sarajevo.

22 killed in Siberian air crashes

MOSCOW, Oct 30: At least 22 people have been killed in two separate aircraft disasters in remote Russian regions, Itar-Tass news agency reported today, says Reuter.

Seventeen people died when an Antonov AN-12 propeller plane crashed at a town north of Irkutsk on Saturday. Early Saturday five people were killed when a single-engine Antonov AN-2 crash landed in the far eastern region of Yakutia.

The AN-12 was approaching the airport at Ust-Ilimsk, 620 km (385 miles) north of the Siberian city of Irkutsk, when it started to disintegrate in mid-air, caught fire and crashed into a hill.

In the second accident, five people died when their AN-2 plane caught fire during an emergency landing in the Yakutia area of Siberia early on Saturday. One of the dead was a child.

Kaunda returns to politics

LUSAKA, Oct 30: Zambia's former president Kenneth Kaunda, one of the stalwarts of Africa's anti-colonial drive, has announced his return to politics three years after being driven from power in a resounding election defeat, reports Reuter.

"I have come back. I am back. There is a crisis in Zambia. This country can break into pieces unless we do something about it," Kaunda told a Lusaka political rally on Saturday.

"I find I cannot stand by and watch, it is incumbent upon me to make my humble contribution. That is why I have accepted the call to come back," said Kaunda, who is 70.

His announcement came two days before the Monday anniversary of his overwhelming defeat by current president Frederick Chiluba and his Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD).

Angolan troops recapture town

LUANDA, Oct 30: Angolan government forces recaptured the town of Chimbandi from rebels in the northern oil rich enclave of Cabinda, a military spokesman in the province said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The town of Chimbandi is now under the control of the FAA (Angolan Armed Forces). Colonel Manuel Paiva said on independent radio Laco.

Chimbandi, some 35 kms (20 miles) east of the provincial capital, was captured by joint rebel forces of FLEC (Front for the Liberation of Cabinda Enclave) and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, Angola's mainstream rebel movement, more than two weeks ago.

Off the Record

Streisand has great sex appeal: Charles

LONDON: Prince Charles, whose revelations about his marriage and his family have rocked Britain, says in the latest excerpt from a new biography he found singer Barbra Streisand "devastatingly attractive with great sex appeal," reports Reuter.

In the extract he speaks of his romance with Hollywood, saying he met Frank Sinatra who "looked like tonto, dressed in yellow leather." Star Joan Collins had "an unbelievable cleavage all raised up and presented as if on a tray," the prince says.

The authorised biography by journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, serialised in the Sunday Times, has so far told of his affairs with Camilla Parker Bowles, his loveless marriage with Princess Diana and his domineering father prince Philip.

The book says Charles is more content than he has been for many years, following his separation from Princess Diana.

It says staff have noticed a change of mood. "They have seen his sense of humour return, and with it a gaiety of spirit that for several years has too often been stifled by melancholy."

The prince is quoted as saying on the monarchy: "It is considered in the country at large that there are too many of the royal family and too much public money being spent on them. Would it not be better to sit down and examine how many members of the family you actually need?"

The book says the prince, not even in moments of despair over his personal life or media coverage of it, contemplated surrendering what he considered his inescapable duty to succeed Queen Elizabeth, nor has he ever favoured abdication.

Although he is still nostalgically attracted to the mystique which once surrounded the royal family, the prince is aware that the veil has been parted and that much of the magic has already escaped, the book says.

It says, at 45, the prince has not lost his essential insecurity or self-doubt but he has discovered an inner resolve which gives him strength.

He dotes on his sons William and Harry, according to Dimbleby. "He has been deeply hurt by media lies that he is distant and unloving to them."

Megabugs exhibition

SINGAPORE: The Singapore government thinks people should know a little bit more about insects. After all, they outnumber humans by 200 million to one, reports AP.

To increase awareness in the creepy and crawlies, Singapore on Monday will unveil an exhibition of bugs that includes 17 plastic-and-electronics robot insects 500 times larger than life.

Through the use of animatronic (animated electronics) technology, the state-of-the-art lifelike monsters will simulate sounds and movements — crawl, spread their wings, fly, rub their antennae together or crunch on their meal.

"We share our planet with an incredible life form that we should not continue to ignore because we cannot do without them," said Goh Woon Kim, director of the Singapore Science Centre, the host of the Megabugs exhibition.

Insects form an important part of the food chain, the basis of life's survival on earth. "But most of us have inaccurate perception of insects," he said at a weekend preview of the four-month show.

The 5-million-Singapore dollar (US \$1.35 million) spectacle will later travel to Taiwan and China, and then to other parts of the world.

Fatal mistake

CEBU, Philippines: Two cooks accidentally substituted a pesticide for spices, killing three children and hospitalising ten others on Sunday, a town mayor said here, reports AP.

The accident killed two boys, aged six and 11, and a girl, 13, said Francisco Gonzales, mayor of Trinidad town in the nearby island of Bohol.

He said the victims had attended a neighbourhood prayer meeting at the house of a couple where food was served. Gonzales said the couple, who were among the 10 hospitalised, said they had accidentally mistaken a red-powderish insecticide, used for killing lice, for a spice, which they mixed in a sauce for goat meat.

No charges were immediately filed.

Macedonia's opposition alleges fraud in polls

SKOPJE, Oct 30: Macedonia's opposition parties called for a boycott of the second round of parliamentary elections today, claiming fraud in the first round held two weeks ago, reports Reuter.

Both the ruling alliance for Macedonia and the opposition say the future of the tiny former Yugoslav Republic is at stake in the elections and predict war should the other side win.

The alliance, whose popular leader Kiro Gligorov was re-elected president of the republic two weeks ago, was certain to win a vast majority of the 120 parliament seats in view of the opposition boycott.

The three main opposition parties — the Imro, Democratic Party and Maak —

planned separate polls today in main squares of towns to demand new and fair elections.

They also planned to launch a campaign of civil disobedience to reverse the results of the elections which democratic party leader Petar Gosev called an "election coup d'etat."

"What we had was massive fraud and forgery of election lists. They added a phantom 125,000 votes to enable Gligorov to win," said Ljubisa Georgievski of the Imro.

"We could not prevent that from happening then but we are sure can stop participating in this fraud this time round."

Western observers said there were serious irregularities in the first round, but not to the extent to warrant a boycott.

BRIEFLY

Road mishap in India claims 17:

Seventeen people were killed and 17 others seriously injured when a truck overturned in southern India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said yesterday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The accident took place late on Saturday at a village near Raichur, some 350 km (218 miles) from Bangalore, the capital of the southern state of Karnataka, as the lorry was carrying labourers returning from a day's work, it said.

4 hurt in Sarajevo shelling: Two artillery shells hit Sarajevo on Saturday, wounding at least four people after an outbreak of fighting between Muslim and Serb forces outside the city, Sarajevo police said, Reuter reports from Sarajevo.

The shells exploded in the Muslim suburb Hrasnica, and other reports said the district was also hit by mortar and anti-aircraft fire. One of the wounded later died at a Sarajevo hospital, Bosnian state radio reported.

2 receive Gandhi Award: Coretta Scott King, the widow of slain US civil rights leader Martin Luther King, was honoured with the Gandhi Award for universal harmony, AFP reports from New York.

At a ceremony marking the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi late Friday, King was honoured along with Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, who was cited for his efforts to promote international peace and understanding.

8 killed in Philippine clash: Troops clashed with Muslim rebels on Basilan Island, and eight people were killed including the insurgent commander who had been sought for 31 murders, police said on Sunday, AP reports from Zamboanga City.

Elsewhere in the southern Philippines, four people, including a pregnant woman, were wounded on Saturday when a hot air balloon exploded in a store in Iligan City, 800 kilometers south of Manila.

NZ chopper crash claims 7: Seven people aboard a helicopter were killed in a crash in Fox Glacier in South Island of New Zealand on Saturday, Radio New Zealand reported yesterday. Xinhua reports from Wellington.

Among the victims were two tourists from Thailand. The pilot was reportedly killed.

1 killed in Moscow robbery: Masked gunmen killed a guard and escaped with 400,000 dollar worth of cash in a raid on a controversial Russian investment fund's Moscow branch, Interfax news agency said on Saturday, reports Reuter from Moscow.

It quoted police as saying three men entered the office of the Selenga Investment Fund late Friday and shot the sole guard with an automatic rifle. They then emptied the safe and escaped with some 1.3 billion roubles in cash.

140,000 Chinese CP men punished: More than 140,000 Chinese Communist Party officials have been punished since the anti-corruption campaign was launched in August 1993, the Legal Daily said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The newspaper did not say how many were expelled from the party but added that 10,000 cases have been sent to judicial authorities. More than 4,500 high-level party officials have been punished, it added.

Libya condemns ME econ confce: Libya condemned the Middle East economic conference opened in Casablanca Sunday saying it was an Israeli plot to dominate the Arabs, AFP reports Tripoli.

"The participation of Israel is aimed first and foremost at totally dominating the Arab economies and bringing about economy colonisation of the Arab World," the state run Jana news agency said.

Palestinian hurt in blast: A 20-year-old Palestinian was wounded when a grenade he was preparing to throw at Israeli soldiers blew up Sunday in the centre of Hebron, witnesses said, AFP reports from Hebron, WB.

He suffered "moderate" injuries, said doctors at the occupied West Bank town's Alia hospital where Israeli soldiers arrived to arrest the man.

Prince Charles in California: Dust off the Wedgwood and haul out the crumpets, Prince Charles is coming to Tinseltown for the first time in 17 years, touching off a wave of Anglophilia across southern California, AP reports from Los Angeles.

The Prince of Wales is to arrive on Monday for a week-long royal tour, covering everything from a supermarket to a china shop to a Hollywood premiere.

Japanese team to visit DPRK

TOKYO, Oct 30: Japan announced today that a delegation from the country's ruling parties would visit North Korea next month in a gesture indicating the two countries may be close to resuming normalisation talks, reports Reuter.

Yoshiro Mori, secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), senior partner in Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama's three party coalition government, said North Korea had accepted a request for a delegation to visit.

Diplomats said the visit was just the latest positive fallout for peace in East Asia from this month's US-North Korea agreement on Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

JNP commits hara-kiri to overhaul Japan's political order

TOKYO, Oct 30: The maverick party that two years ago set off Japan's biggest political upheaval since World War II committed ritual suicide today by disbanding in the interests of opposition unity, reports Reuter.

The Japan New Party (JNP) used its first and final national convention since its May 1992 founding to formalise plans to merge into a large political force that leaders hope will complete the overhaul of Japan's political order.

"We didn't form the JNP to start a 50 or 100-year dynasty, but to be a child of the era and a limited, project-oriented party," its leader, former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, told the Tokyo gathering.

"The JNP is not disappearing, it's moving forward," Hosokawa said the party was "constructively destructing" in the next stage of a political realignment process that began last year when the JNP and its allies ended the 38-year rule by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Ten parties of the non-communist opposition, including the JNP, have set December 10 as the day they form a new party to take on the ruling coalition of the LDP, the socialist party of Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama and the new party Shigake.

Hosokawa accused the ruling coalition of "lacking the courage to undertake thorough reforms" and returning Japanese politics to corrupt years of the past.

Ironically, Hosokawa's JNP,

which enjoyed a meteoric rise by championing neglected ur-



JNP leader M Hosokawa — ban voters and consumers, is a victim of its success in destroying Japan's political

order. Hosokawa's crowing achievement during his eight months as Prime Minister of a wobbly eight-party coalition was the passage of laws to completely overhaul the electoral system to introduce more competition and curb endemic corruption.

Despite approval ratings of 80 per cent, Hosokawa resigned last April over claims of illegal personal financial dealings.

His reforms replaced a complicated multi-seat constituency system, in which special-interest-backed candidates with just over 10 per cent of the vote could have won parliamentary seats, with a highly competitive first-past-the-post system.

In the new winner-take-all contests, small parties like the

JNP have no choice but to merge with larger groups. Bigger parties also receive more sizeable public campaign funding.

The opposition alliance has been slow to get off the ground, hampered by personal rivalries among its three former prime ministers and differences between support groups ranging from labour unions to consumers to the religious right.

The unwieldy group has asked the public to suggest a new name. It has struggled to draft policies that clearly set it apart from Murayama's coalition, which is having its own identity crisis.

The socialists dropped liberal policies like opposition to a security treaty with the United States to become part

of the ruling coalition, leading to a split among its members.

"The most difficult task for the JNP and its allies is to co-ordinate candidates for the next election," said Masaharu Nakagawa, a JNP delegate from Mie prefecture.

Hosokawa said he would make sure the grand new party inherited JNP virtues which he described as "the zeal of amateurism" and a simple "hand-made quality."

Former Prime Minister Tadamoto Hata, leader of the larger Shinseito party and a guest at the funeral-cum-revival rally, was frank about the dilemma Hosokawa's followers now faced.

"I sympathise with the pain that comes from knowing that politics does not move on idealism alone," Hata said.

Riyadh, Pretoria set up ties

RIYADH, Oct 30: Saudi Arabia and South Africa decided on Saturday to establish diplomatic relations at a ceremony here attended by the African country's President Nelson Mandela, the official news agency SPA announced, reports AP.

The agency said Foreign Minister Saud Al Faysal and his South African counterpart Alfred Nzo signed an agreement to establish ties at the level of ambassadors.

Saudi Arabia became the second Gulf Arab country to establish full relations with South Africa, after Bahrain.

Prince Saud hailed "the struggle of the South African people and its will to set up a modern state free of apartheid, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela".