Israel holds 7 Hamas men: Israeli soldiers have arrested seven militants from the Islamic resistance movement Hamas at a refugee camp on the occupied West Bank, Palestinian sources said, AFP reports from Ramallah

The swoop on Sunday night followed the detention last Wednesday of nine Hamas men from Jalazurn refugee camp and a neighbouring village just north of Ramallah.

1 killed in Sarajevo shelling: One person was killed and 14 were wounded in Sarajevo on Sunday as the Bosnian capital was shelled for the second evening running in defiance of a UN ban on heavy weapons around the city. Bosnian police said. Reuter reports from Sarajevo.

The shelling was directed at Hrasnica, a mainly Muslim residential suburb west of the city where one person was killed by shelling on Saturday evening.

6 S Korean gangsters to die: A South Korean court on Monday sentenced to death six members of a gang convicted of a gruesome spree of killing and cannibalism, Reuter reports from Seoul.

Court officials said the gangsters were found guilty of five murders, dismembering the bodies, burning them in an home-made incinerator and burying the remains.

Colombians go to polls: Colombians voted for more than 12,500 mayors, councillor and governors in relative peace on Sunday despite a guerilla attack on a police patrol and the burning of two buses, Reuter reports from Bogota.

Defence Minister Fernanco Botero said the government was satisfied with the relative calm in which the elections were being held throughout the country.

RUK soldier kills 2 officers: A South Korean army private went on a rampage on Monday, shooting two officers to death and wounding seven other soldiers before killing himself, military officials said, AP reports from Seoul.

Pvt. Huh Mun-shik, 21, turned his automatic rifle on fellow soldiers during a firing exercise northeast of Seoul. Huh then turned the rifle on himself, said the officials at Army Headquarters.

Blast claims 7 in Cambodia: Seyen passengers were killed and at least 10 seriously wounded when a time bomb exploded on a passenger train in Banteay Meanchey province at the weekend, the Cambodian railway director said yesterday. AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

Pich Kimsreang said Khmer Rouge guerillas were suspected of hiding the powerful bomb in a basket on the train on Friday before it left Battambang town for Sisophon.

Solomon Islands PM resigns: Solomon Islands Prime Minister Francis Billy Hilly resigned in parliament in Honiara yesterday, the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corp reported, AFP says from Honiara.

Hilly, sacked by Governor General Moses Pitakaka on October 13 on grounds that he no longer held majority support, said he was resigning with a clear conscience and no regrets.

3 die in Filipino mishap: Three people were killed and several injured yesterday when a bridge collapsed under the weight of a truck carrying a bulldozer, police said. Reuter reports from Angeles, the Philippines. The wooden bridge and truck plunged into the Sitio

Dimalang River in a remote eastern area of Luzon island. The dead were among 20 people hitching a ride on the truck to return to their villages in Aurora province for Tuesday's Roman Catholic festival of All Souls, police said.

Prince Philip in Israel: Prince Philip visited his mother's grave for the first time on Monday before attending a ceremony honouring her for saving Greek Jews during World War II. AP reports from Jerusalem.

The British consort and his sister, Princess Sophie, walked through the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in the Garden of Gethsemane where their mother's remains were reinterred according to her last wish.

HK holds 9 cops for vice: Nine police of ficers have been arrested by Hong Kong's anti-graft body for alleged involvement in a vice den protection racket, a spokesman for the watchdog said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The nine officers were rounded up by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) along with 44 other people - including owners of vice establishment and women from China. Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia - in a three-day operation in the Mongkok district.

Quake shakes E Indonesia: An earthquake measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale hit eastern Indonesia early yesterday but there were on immediate reports of damage or casualties. Reuter says from Jakarta.

The Jakarta-based Meteorological and Geophysical Agency said the quake hit at 12.21 am Jakarta time (1721 GMT on Sunday) with its epicentre 181 km beneath the sea, 400 km east of the East Timorese capital of Dili.

Kurds on hunger strike in UK: About 100 Kurds including several children were on their third day of a hunger strike in London on Sunday in a show of support for Kani Yilmaz, a senior Kurdish militant who is due to be expelled from Britain, AFP reports from London.

The hunger strikers who have also refused to drink anything but water since Friday, said they intend to maintain their places in front of the Home Office until Yilmaz is freed or deported to the country of his choice.

Russian ship crew rescued: All 155 crew were rescued from a Russian fish processing ship after it grounded on rocks on the north Scottish Shetland Islands in a gale early on Monday, AP reports from Lerwick, Shetland

Coast guards said the 10,035-ton Pionersk was badly holed and leaking fuel and engine oil into the sea. It went aground two miles south of the Shetland capital Lerwick after dragging its anchor. The crew was taken off the Pionersk by helicopter and lifeboat. Nobody was injured in the grounding or in the pre-dawn rescue.

South Korea, China agree to strengthen relations

SEOUL, Oct 31: Chinese Premier Li Peng met with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam on Monday and agreed to further strengthen the two nations' economic and other relations, officials said, AP reports.

They also agreed to coop-

JERUSALEM. Oct 31:

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak

Rabin said today Lebanese

President Elias Hrawi's pro-

posal for a joint Israeli-

Lebanese' committee on a

peace settlement was interest-

ing, but Israeli withdrawal

could not be a precondition.

Ban-b-Ami confirmed a report

by Israel's army radio quoting

returned to Israel on Monday

from the regional economic

conference in Morocco, had

discussed the proposal with

US Secretary of State Warren

Christopher, who also at

tended the Casablanca confer-

our diplomatic reporter... that

if Lebanon did not put the

withdrawal of the army from

south Lebanon as a precondi-

tion on the committee's dis-

cussions, then they were talk-

ing about an interesting idea.

"The prime minister told

Rabin's spokesman Oded

The radio said Rabin, who

reports Reuter.

Rabin on the issue.

ence.

the radio said.

ment a US-brokered accord with North Korea aimed at opening its feared nuclear programme to inspection, the

South Korean officials said. Chinese and South Korean representatives later signed agreements to develop nuclear power for peaceful use and to open direct airline flights soon between Seoul and Betting and the Chinese cities of Shenyang.

Business leaders from both countries also called for jointventure development of medium-range passenger planes. cars, electronic communication systems and new generation television.



Chinese Premier Li Peng (background, 3rd from L) and South Korean President Kim Young-Sam (background, 2nd from R) stand behind their foreign ministers, Qian Qichen (L) and Han Sung-Joo in the presidential Blue House in Seoul yesterday as they sign a pact on direct - AFP photo air links between the two countries.

Israel rejects precondition

Hrawi, interviewed by the

Egyptian news agency Mena.

was quoted as saying he was

prepared to set up with Israel

a joint committee to work out

a timetable for withdrawal

from Lebanese territory within

that not a single bullet will be

fired during that period, pro-

vided that Israel commits itself

to withdrawal in accordance

Russian PM rejects

Hrawi added: "I warrant

six months.

The Li-Kim meeting was the highlight of the Chinese premier's official five-day visit Qingdao Dairen and Tianjin.

to South Korea, which began on Monday. "I am convinced that the ties of goodwill and cooperation between our two nations will grow further and further

> banquet in Li's honour late Monday. Li's itinerary shows that China's interest is more in economy than politics. The premier is to meet with many South Korean business leaders

in the future." Kim said at a

and visit automobile, electronics and aviation plants. · Li is the highest-ranking Chinese official ever to visit South Korea, a former adversary of China.

His visit shows how quickly relations between the two countries are improving economically. China - a longtime ally of Seoul's rival. Communist North Korea - established formal relations with South Korea in 1992.

Li first met with Kim privately for one hour. They were joined later by aides for another session. The discussions covered many issues, including trade and North Korea, officials said.

Kim sought China's help in making sure that the North complies with the nuclear accord, which could take five years to fully open it to inspec-

US, China resume

arms control

talks after 6 yrs

American negotiators "moved

closer to common ground" on

arms control, the director of

the US Arms Control and

Disarmament Agency said on

banning nuclear testing pro-

grammes, extending the Nuc-

lear Non-Proliferation Treaty

and plutonium and uranium

implement a recent US-bro-

kered nuclear agreement with

The United States sus-

pended military contacts with

China following Beijing's harsh

crackdown on the massive

Tiananmen Square pro-demo-

The current nuclear disar-

... Changes in the interna-

mament talks are the first

tional security environment

over that six-year period led to

a much broader range of com-

mon views and common

thinking between the United

fought two wars over Kashmir.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad

which controls the northern

third of Kashmir, of arming

Benazir is scheduled to meet

with President Francois

Mitterrand, who visited

Pakistan in 1990 as well as

Prime Minister Edouard

Balladur, Paris Mayor Jacques

Chirach and several ministers,

Benazir's French agenda in-

cludes Bosnia and conflicts in

Tajikistan and Afghanistan, ac-

cording to diplomatic sources.

among the principal contribu-

tors of military personnel to

UN peacekeeping forces

nied by Foreign Minister Asset

Ahmad Ali and Defence

Minister Aftab Shaban Mirani.

is expected to raise the pos-

sibility of acquiring 40 French

made Mirage 2000-5 fighters.

which has been under discus-

sion for more than two years

but has been stalled by financ-

Benazir is to be accompa-

across the world

ing problems.

France and Pakistan are

Apart from Kashmir,

During her visit to France.

cracy movement in 1989.

such round in 6 years.

North Korea, he said.

Talks also covered ways to

production, John Holum said.

The two sides discussed

Monday, reports AP.

BEIJING, Oct 31: China and

Dissanayake's assassination

Widow wants Indians to investigate

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Oct 31: Srima Dissanayake has asked for help in her husband's murder investigation from the Indian detectives who probed the similar assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, reports

Gamini Dissanayake, the opposition candidate for pres-. ident, and 53 others were killed October 24 by a suspected Tamil rebel who detonated explosives concealed on her body.

The explosion appeared to be similar to the suicide bomb that killed Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 at an election rally in south India. A Tamil woman detonated a belt bomb as she bent to greet Gandhi in the traditional fashion by touching his feet

Mrs Dissanayake, who replaced her husband as a candidate for the November election, asked the Sri Lankan government to seek India's help, officials said Monday.

Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga, who is Mrs Dissanayake's opponent for president, has not taken action on the request so far, said the officials.

The government has offered a reward of six million rupees (dlrs 122,000) for help in solving the case.

Police believe the assassin was a woman whose decapitated head was found 30 yards (meters) from the stage where

Dissanayake spoke. Samples of her skin and hair were sent to London for DNA testing.

Meanwhile, the United National Party said Mrs Dissanayake will not address any campaign rallies because

she is in mourning.

Indira Gandhi's 10th death anniversary observed

NEW DELHI, Oct 31: Indian leaders paid homage today to the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the 10th anniver sary of her assassination, reports AFP.

Two minutes of silence were observed around the country at the precise moment when two Sikh bodyguards cut down the prime minister in a hail of bullets at her residence here on October 31, 1984.

President Shankar Dayal Sharma and Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, who served as Foreign Minister under Gandhi and now heads her Congress (I) party, were among the officials who laid wreaths at the Indira Gandhi memorial here.

Maneka and Sonia Gandhi the widows of Indira Gandhi's two sons Sanjay and Rajiv, also paid their tributes at the memorial and attended prayer meetings at the shrine.

Off the Record

Viewers take disaster movie for real

LOS ANGELES: A US television movie about an asteroid striking earth triggered hundreds of phone calls nationwide Sunday night from confused viewers - some reportedly in tears - concerned the depicted events might be true, reports

In the CBS network's disaster movie "Without Warning. the fictional "Evening World News" reports asteroids hitting the US state Wyoming, France and China, supposedly bringing information to viewers as it's occurring.

The world "live" appeared on the screen and the actors were often experienced local and national TV reporters. Hundreds of calls poured into television stations in Wyoming, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Tennessee, Louisiana and Las Vegas. Calls also were made to news organisations and

authorities in New York, Atlanta and Chicago. In "Without Warning," an advisory reassured audiences "None of what you are seeing is actually happening." But after the opening warning, the first 15 minutes of the movie which established its mood, ran without the advisory.

WCCO-TV, a CBS affiliate station in Minneapolis, apologised during its evening news to viewers fooled by the movie.

"CBS broadcast disclaimers at every commercial break, but in spite of that we got almost a hundred calls from people alarmed, upset, some in tears," said anchor woman Amy Marsalis.

Egg-throwing game turns tragic

UNDATED: Halloween celebrations got off to an ominous start when man hit by an egg stabbed a 12-year-old boy to death in New York City and about 2,000 people stampeded in an Illinois college town, reports AP.

Six youths were playing a Holloween egg-throwing game Saturday night when two passers-by were inadvertently hit police said. They beat and stabbed Pedro Ramos to death

Robert Delgado, 20, was arrested on an assault charge

Police sought a second man for the stabbing. In Carbondale, Illinois, a crowd was trying to make its way to the Southern Illinois University football stadium during a

street party late Saturday when police blocked the way and threatened to use tear gas unless revelers dispersed. After a five-minute standoff, the crowd ran downtown and divided into smaller mobs that ran through alleys as police

clubs. Nearly 60 people were arrested, most on charges of illegal possession or consumption of alcohol, and two cars were

officers chased them, spraying tear gas and swinging billy

overturned. Crowds have gathered in the city's streets to celebrate Halloween for years. The city has responded by closing bars

early and the university has banned campus parties.

India's oldest surrogate mother

NEW DELHI: A 49-year-old housewife has earned the distinction of being India's oldest woman to become a surrogate mother with the help of a donor egg, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Sunday, says AFP. PTI, which did not reveal her name, said the surrogate

mother delivered her test-tube baby on October 20 at a private clinic in the southern city of Madras, where the

woman was initially diagnosed as barren. Kamal Selvaraj, director of the clinic, told PTI that she was healthy and had regular menstrual cycles but was unable to

conceive during her 29 years of marriage. The clinic is a pioneer in India's artificial insemination.

Caste quotas help India's poor, but still cause violent debate

- AFP photo

continues in Kabul, 35 hurt

Heavy fighting

KABUL. Oct 31: Presidential troops battled rival Islamic

strikes and machine-gun fire in heavy fighting that touched all parts of the beleaguered capital Monday, reports AP. Two of Kabul's hospitals re

ported 35 wounded by midday There was no immediate figure on the number killed

A day earlier, at least 10 civilians were killed and about 100 injured.

The fighting began before dawn Monday as Hezb-e-Islami forces, led by renegade Prime Gulbuddin Minister Hekmatyar launched a ground offensive in eastern Kabul said General Najibullah, a government military spokesman

By the code of India's ancient caste system Asim Arun should have been a cobbler or tanner of hides, socially unlit to touch an upper-caste Hindu or even look him in the eye.

MUSSOORIE, india, Oct 31:

an elite academy, training for a coveted position in India's civil service.

He was admitted under a quota that reserves one in five lower placed "Untouchables."

For some 70 years, long before the term affirmative ac tion" was coined in the United States. India has used quotas

- one of the most widespread. rigid and exclusive systems of social discrimination ever devised by man and sanctioned

possession.

Undated file photo, released on October 29 by the El

Paso County Sheriff's Department, TX, shows Francisco

Martin Duran, who fired into the White House grounds on

Saturday. The 26-year-old was charged on Sunday with

wilfully damaging federal property and illegal weapons

serving jobs through quotas has given hundreds of millions of Indians a chance for upward mobility, spread literacy and given confidence to social classes doomed for centuries to oppression because of their

Yet despite its long history. the "reservation policy" still excites furious - sometimes lethal - argument

In early September, the state of Uttar Pradesh. India's most populous and powerful. announced it was broadening the list of castes eligible for quotas. More than 50 per cent of the bureaucracy would be

reserved for low castes, which account for more than eight of every 10 Hindus. Fearing they would lose

their places in good schools. Nearly everyone agrees re hundreds of upper-caste students marched through the narrow streets of Mussoorie

shouting protests. As so often happens in India, the crowd became a mob, police opened fire, and six people were dead. Since then, at least 30 people have died in Uttar Pradesh during violence in similar protests.

The new quota would apply all over the state, even in sparsely populated mountain areas where few low caste Hindus live. That has brought demands by the hill people to break up Uttar Pradesh and give them their own state government

Critics say that quotas amount to reverse discrimination, that they are undemocratic and that they deny the best jobs to the best people. India has outlawed discrimina tion by caste, yet it paradoxi cally perpetuates it, they argue,

"I look forward to the day when we get rid of reservations," said Arun, a soft-spoken policeman's son." But right now we still need them, not because we are innately incapable, but because over 3,000 years we have been denied all opportunities for education of advancement."

The National Academy of Administration, set in a lorest of cedars and pines in Mussoorie, a hilltop town on the edge of the Himalayas, is a crucible of the quota policy.

After the British left India in 1947, the academy became the reserve of Indians from the best families who spoke English with an Oxford accent. Today, because of the quo-

tas, some students come from dusty villages that have erratic or no electricity and where water wells are still segregated by caste. "For me, this school is a

culture shock," said Arun Unlike him, his upper caste classmates drink alcohol, date girls and know Western dancing. "This is alien to my community," he said.

The academy pays more at tention these days to levelling people from varying back grounds An etiquette class teaches how and when to shake hands rather than use the traditional Indian greeting of folding one's palms like someone praying, how to use knives and forks, and how to show sensitivity to other folkways and religious in India's sometimes explosive cultural

Caste is Hinduism's hereditary hierarchy based on occupation. At the top are Brahmins (priests) and aristocracy, then warriors, and merchants and artisans, and finally peasant farmers and tradesmen. Each of the four castes has thousands of sub-

People like sweepers and grave diggers are outside the caste system, and are considered so low that even their shadow is polluting to the high caste. They are the outcastes, or Untouchables.

Kodavas allowed guns during Karnataka polls BANGALORE, India, Oct 31

India's election authorities have allowed hundreds of thousands of a warrior caste in the south-ern state of Karnataka to carry guns in the run-up to state assembly polls, despite a ban on people carrying weapons. M S Monappa, a prominent

leader of the Kodava group which lives in the Coorg Hills of Karnataka, told Reuters by telephone 200,000 of his people would be allowed to carry their guns during campaigning and voting, due at the end of We are very happy with the

Election Commission's deci sion," he said from his home in the Kodava heartland, about 250 km (150 miles) from Bangalore, the Karnataka capi

factions with rockets, air reports AP. Defying history. Arun is in

> government jobs and university places for people from Iridia's primitive hunter-gatherer tribes, members of Hinduism's lowest castes and the even

to try to undo its caste system

call to sack five ministers MOSCOW, Oct 31: Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on Sunday rejected calls to sack five key ministers, three days after a no confidence vote

"I do not see the necessity to carry out such changes today," Chernomyrdin said on Russia's private NTV television

against his government failed

by a narrow margin, reports

for peace with Lebanon with the timetable that will be agreed upon." But he said Lebanon would not act inde-Uri Dromi, an Israeli gov-

ernment spokesman, on Sunday said the Lebanon proposal also depended on Syrian approval: "We have been through this before and we know that nothing happens in Lebanon without Syria's ap-

Israel set up a 13 km wide zone in Lebanon in 1985 when it withdrew most of its 1982 invasion forces. Israel has repeatedly de-

manded that Lebanon, with Syria's help, disband the pro-Iranian Hezbollah guerilla movement and establish calm on the border for six months before it will negotiate a peace accord with Lebanon. Another report from

Casablanca adds: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher insisted on Sunday that President Bill Clinton's Middle East tour last week had produced concessions in Israeli-Syrian peace talks.

States and China," Holum said Kashmir issue may cloud Benazir's France visit

the rebels.

ISLAMABAD, Oct 31: The Kashmir dispute could cloud Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's upcoming visit to France after Paris urged her government to seek a solution through direct talks

with rival India, reports AFP. The November 2-5 visit was originally intended to pack up investment deals between Pakistan and France.

But days before her visit, France backed direct Indo-Pakistani talks on Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, where a bloody campaign is being waged by separatist rebels who enjoy political support from predominantly Muslim Pakistan.

The French call runs counter to Benazir's often repeated stand that the issue can only be resolved through strong international pressure

has never missed any opporof her stance on Kashmir.

India and Pakistan have

on new Delhi, and not in a bilateral framework Since Benazir came to power in October 1993, she tunity to tell foreign officials