Press Freedom Awards Declared: Journalists who fought death threats, repressive regimes and religious fanatics in Turkey, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Cuba, and Hong Kong have been named recipients of the 1994 International Press Freedom Awards, AP reports from New York.

Underscoring the dangers reporters face overseas, the Committee to Prortect Journalists said on Friday awards will be given to four journalists slain two years ago, most likely by paramilitary forces, in Tajikistan's civil war.

6 Chinese die in stampede: Six students were killed in a stampede at a high school in the midwestern Chinese city of Xian. it was reported yesterday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

Another 24 students, aged between 13 and 15, were injured in the stampede. The rush to leave the school caused the accident on a stairway in the Guangshan Middle School in Xian on Tuesday, the Hong Kong branch of China News Service said.s

Ban on scarves protested: A Malaysian social activist group Friday protested a recent French government ban on wearing Muslim headscarves in schools, calling the move a form of "social persecution." AFP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

The Malaysian Action Front (MAF) condemned the September 20 directive issued by French Education Minister Francois Bayrou which forbade 'ostentatious' religious insignia, saying it reflected cultural intolerance of minorities.

Hanoi applies to join ASEAN: Hanoi has formally applied to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the staunchly anti-Communist group formed at the height of the Vietnam War, senior ASEAN officials said vesterday. Reuter reports from Bandar Seri

Canadian PM in China: Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien arrived in Beijing yesterday at the head of a 300-strong delegation that hopes to sign more than one billion dollars in contracts during a six-day China mission, AFP reports from Beijing.

Chretien, who is also accompanied by the premiers of all six Canadian provinces, is the highest-ranking Canadian official to visit China since the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.

Turkey expels 4,793 foreigners: Turkey has expelled 4,793 foreigners from the country in the past 10 months. Turkey's Anatolia news agency reported on Friday, Xinhua says from Ankara.

Among those expelled, 3,131 are from Romania, 1,223 from Russia and 317 from Bulgaria.

Menem expelled from HR Group: President Carlos Menem was expelled from an Argentine human rights group on Friday for remarks that the board interpreted as condoning the military's "dirty war" in the 1970s, Reuter reports from Buenos Aires.

The Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH) accused the Peronist leader of "vindicating torture, murder, exile, stealing children, looting homes as war booty ... as part of the usurpation of power by the use of force.

Bombs explode in Tajikistan: Four explosions went off in the Tajikistan capital Dushanbe on Friday and Security Minister Saidamir Zukhurov said they were intended to disrupt Sunday's presidential elections and constitutional referendum. Itar-Tass news agency reported. Reuter says from London.

No one was injured in the blasts, which occurred at the electoral commission telephone exchange, agriculture ministry and a major printing works in the city, the agency. monitored by the BBC in London, said.

4 Russians die of poisoning: Four people died and 11 were in critical condition after eating poisonous mushrooms in the Krasnodar region of southern Russia, the Ministry for Emergency Situations reported on Friday, AP says from Moscow.

A total of 22 people were hospitalised in the poisoning case, including six children, the ministry said in a report carried by the Interfax news agency

Guatemala govt, rebels meet: Guatemalan government negotiators met with leftist guerilla leaders in Mexico City of Friday for a new round of talks to end a 33-year-old civil war that has killed more than 100,000

people, officials said, Reuter reports From Mexico City, The talks will focus on the rights of Guatemala's majority population of indigenous Indians and will continue until November 9 in the picturesque town of Valle De Bravo, about 60 miles (100 km) west of Mexico City, the officials said.

4 die in Indonesian plane crash: Four people died as their twin otter plane crashed and burned in the thick jungle of Indonesia's easternmost province of Irian Jaya, an airport official at the provincial city of Jayapura said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

The Sentani Airport official said that the aircraft, owned and operated by a private charter company. Pt Trigana Air Service, crashed on Friday a few kilometres (miles) north of the Paniai Lake in the central mountainous range of the province.

Rafsanjani blasts US: tranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Friday blasted the United States over its call for the economic isolation of the Islamic Republic, saving such efforts were doomed to fail. AFP reports from Tehran.

Speaking at Friday prayers at Tehran University, Rafsanjani said the United State was under an illusion to think it could block the flow of goods to Iran.

Crew of sinking boat rescued: Res cuers from Scotland's remote Shetland Islands picked up the six crew from a Scottish fishing vessel that started taking on water on Friday, the coast guard said. AP reports From

The fishing boat Morning Dawn sent mayday calls for assistance when its pumps were not able to cope with the water, said a coast guard spokesman at Lerwick, the Shetlands main

Singer Crosby hospitalised : David Crosby of the rock group Crosby. Stills and Nash was in fair condition on Friday with a deteriorating liver and was awaiting a transplant. AP reports from Los Angeles

The 53-year-old musician was admitted Wednesday to the University of California at Los Angeles Medical Center

1 killed in Nepali clash: Police fired bullets to prevent a clash between activists of rival political parties and one person was killed, officials said on Friday. AP reports from Kathmandu.

Left-wing activists in Dang, a town 300 kilometers (180 miles) west of Kathmandu, tried to attack an election rally on Thursday of the rival Nepali Congress party and police had to fire to stop them, officials of the home ministry said on condition of anonymity. The victim was identified as Narayan Chaudhury, a member of the Communist Party of Nepal.

Tajik peace talks end: The third round of Tajik peace talks in Islamabad ended on successful note and Iran played a crucial role in it, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said. IRNA reports from Moscow.

Exchange of prisoners of war would be top on the agenda of the fourth round of talks to be held in Moscow in December, he told reporters yesterday

UNITA threat to withdraw accord: Angolan rebels threatened on Friday to withdraw from a peace agreement if government troops refuse to halt an advance that has pushed to the edge of the rebels' headquarters.

AP reports from Luanda. If the government does not call back its troops immediately the peace process stops right here," said Rui Oliveira

Saudi Arabia refuses to accept Off the Record basing of arms for US troops

WASHINGTON, Nov 5: Saudi Arabia has refused to accept basing of arms for US troops who might again be sent to the Gulf, but the United States will press the Saudis to reverse that position, a senior defence official said on Friday.

The official also told Reuters that Kuwait will pay the largest share of the estimated 600 million dollar cost of a recent US military buildup in the Gulf against Iraq, but that Washington also expected Saudi Arabia to help pay the bill.

"The Saudis aren't letting us put (military) stuff there. They have told us right now that they are not in favour of this but we hope they will change their mind, said the official who asked not to be identified.

"It is still very much on our agenda with them." The official responded to

questions about a New York

NEW DELHI, Nov 5: The

man who masterminded the

abduction of three Britons and

an American to secure the re-

lease of 10 jailed Muslim

guerrillas was a British na-

tional of Kashmiri origin, In-

dian police said today, reports

Muslim arrested in the Nor-

thern State of Uttar Pra-desh.

was a British national who

came to India from Pakistan, a

senior police officer in the

Uttar Pradesh town of Gha-

tendent of a police A K Jain

told AFP that Sheikh was a

student at the London School

of Economics and had been

UN to maintain

sanctions on

Iraq, hopes US

United States expects the

United Nations Security Co-

uncil to maintain unchanged

its programme of sanctions

against Iraq when it next dis-

cusses the matter on Novem-

ber 14, a State Department

spokesman said on Friday.

the Kuwaiti border last month

has killed off support for eas-

ing the trade sanctions even

among countries relatively

sympathetic to Baghdad.

spokesman Mike McCurry said

Security Council will agree

with us that no change in sanc-

tions is warranted at threat

point," McCurry told a news

consultations on the sanctions,

imposed after Iraq invaded

Kuwait in 1990, every 60 days.

The Security Council holds

"We're confident that the

lrag's troop buildup near

reports Reuter.

briefing.

WASHINGTON, Nov 5: The

Ghaziabad senior superin-

ziabad said by telephone.

Ahmed Umer Syef Sheikh, a

Times report that the Pentagon had virtually given up on cost of the 1991 Gulf War. trying to get the Saudis to base enough tanks and other equipment in their country to supply a brigade of more than

Kuwait and Qatar have each agreed to provide basing for enough tanks and other supplies for a US brigade and the Pentagon is searching for a base in the region for enough equipment for a third brigade.

2,000 US troops if those tro-

Iraq.

ops were again needed to lace

The Saudis currently provide basing for dozens of US warplanes, but have been reluctant to accept supplies for American ground troops because of opposition to such a move by Muslim fundamental-

A more recent problem for the Saudis according to Pentagon officials, is that they are strapped for cash because

A Pakistani doctor examines a pair of siamese twins, joined at the head, at the airport before

their departure for ('anada yesterday. The two-year old twins, Hira (R) and Nida (L) are to be

UK national mastermind in

abduction of 4 westerners

Jain said Sheikh was caught

after being wounded by police

at a village about seven kilome-

ters (4.3 miles) from Ghazia-

bad soon after they rescued

Bela Joseph Nuss, an American

who was among those kid-

the Hindu alias of Rohit Shar-

ma and had planned and exe-

terrorist," Jain said, adding

that his interrogation" has

given us a lot of information

about his group and associates.

He came from Pakistan and

·The three British tourists

COLOMBO. Nov 5: Prime

Minister Chandrika Kumara

tunga is facing criticism for

imposing restrictions on elec-

tion coverage by state-owned

radio and television, reports

Kumaratunga, who is con-

testing the November 9 presi-

dential polls, has instructed

the television station not to al-

low election speeches by her

rivals that carry "defamatory

given to the managers of the

state-owned Sri Lanka Broad-

casting Corporation that has a

monopoly over broadcasting

mmission mandates the broad

cast of campaign speeches by

candidates in the presidential

race, the government officials

who run the television station

are allowed to edit the

Although the Election Co-

Similar orders were also

references" to her.

who were rescued after police

there is a Pakistani link.

cuted all four kidnappings.

Jain said Sheikh went by

He is a trained militant, a

napped on October 31.

separated by a complex neuro-surgical procedure at the Children's Hospital in Toronto.

born in London.

of flat oil prices and the huge

The New York Times reported on Friday that Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan indicated to Defence Secretary William Perry during a recent visit to Jeddah that Saudi Arabia might have a hard time paying its share of last month's US buildup to face Iraqi troops massed near Ku-

Sultan also pointed out during the meeting that the Saudis were already spending billions on US weaponry the report said.

It is very clear that the Kuwaitis will pay by far the largest share of the Gulf buildup cost, the defence official told Reuters Friday, but we fully expect that the Saudis will participate in the Gulf Cooperation Council commitment to pay for this.

The official said that at least four Gulf Cooperation Council

— AFP photo

stormed a hideout in Saha-

ranpur in Uttar Pradesh on

November 1 said they were

abducted in New Delhi by a

man who called himself Rohit

napper were killed in an hour-

long gunbattle which followed

the storming. The three Bri-

tons were freed unharmed but

at least three other militants

were kidnapped by a previ-

ously unheard of Kashmiri

militant group called Al-Hadid

(The Blade) which demanded

the release of 10 Kashmiri

guerillas, including three

members of the powerful

"The Chairman of Rupava-

hini has the right to edit.

delete or even stop any broad-

cast if the finds it defamatory.

Election Commissioner Chand-

rananda de Silva told the

Associated Press in an inter-

The prime minister appar-

ently was irked by an election

broadcast by Harischandra

Wijetunga, a presidential can

didate from a little-known

group called the Sinhala Ma-

hasammatha Bhoomiputra Par-

ty the Dafly News reported

with the freedom of the media

under the present govern-

ment. Srima Dissanayake, told

not giving the opposition eno-

ugh publicity, which is very

The state-owned media is

"We are not at all happy

Saturday.

reporters.

Harkat-Ul Ansar.

Kumaratunga under fire

for curb on news

The American and Britons

Two policemen and a kid-

Sharma.

countries were expected to share the cost of the US buildup of more than 30,000 troops over 200 warplanes and several dozen warships

last month. But the official refused to go further. In addition to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. other countries in the council are the United Arab Emirates. Oman and Bahrain.

The New York Times said the Pentagon was now concentrating on trying to get the United Arab Emirates to accept equipment for a third US brigade of ground troops:

But the senior US official insisted that Perry had not given up on persuading Saudi King Fahd to change the Saudi position.

The secretary has been clear that there are still discussions and I think these discussions will go on, said the official, who added: "They may never be over."

Malaysia may buy more munitions from Russia

MOSCOW, Nov 5: Malaysia, which has already signed up to purchase 600 million dollars worth of Russian, Mig jets, is now looking into buying more military hardware, including tanks and navy landing craft. officials said on Friday, reports

Stanislav Filin, deputy director of the Rosvooruzhenie state company in Charge of weapons sales, said the contract with Malaysia to sell 18 MiG-29 jet fighters was a breakthrough for arms sales in the

"In addition to cooperation in the area of aircraft equipment, we also have had contacts with the Malaysian side on other types of equipment," he told a news conference. "In particular, we've held a pre-

sentation of our T-72 tank." Filin said the chief of Malaysia's land forces visited Russia earlier this year to observe the tank in action.

Ranasinghe challenges Srima's candidature

COLOMBO, Nov 5: Arthur Javasena Ranasinghe, an independent candidate in Sri Lanka's presidential elections next week, sought a court injunction on Friday preventing main opposition candidate. Srima Dissanyake, from standing, reports AFP.

"Ranasinghe has sought an injunction against the candidature of Srima Dissanayake because her appointment is not valid, said Sriratne Bandara, counsel for Ranasinghe.

The petition filed in the Colombo district court states that Dissanvake could not be a candidate from the main opposition United National Party (UNP) as she was a member of another opposition group when she was picked by the

UN Council happy over US-DPRK

agreement

UNITED NATIONS, Nov' 5 The Security Council in a statement on Friday said it was satisfied with a recent nuclear accord between the United States and North Korea and asked the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to carry out related monitoring activities, reports Reuter.

Under the October 21 accord. North Korea agreed to freeze and eventually dismantle its existing graphite-moderated nuclear reactors

In return, the United States will head an international consortium to finance and supply North Korea with a new generation of light-water nuclear power plants less suited to the production of fuel that could be used to manufacture weapons.



US singer Whitney Houston tries on Atraditional Ndebele blanket at a press conference on Friday at the Johannesburg Children's Museum. Houston, in South Africa for a threeconcert tour until November 19, pledged 286,000 dollar to South African children's charities. - AFP photo

> Woman gives birth to septuplets

BUENOS AIRES: A woman who underwent artificial fertilisation treatment gave birth to septuplets Friday morning in Cordoba, Argentina's second largest city but

three of the babies died shortly after delivery, reports Xinhua According to information from Cordoba, the four surviving babies remain in the Halac Hospital and are, like their mother whose identity is being withheld, in good health.

. The woman was admitted to the Allende Hospital in Cordoba after nearly six months of pregnancy but gave birtly to septuplets in the Halac hospital. No information was given about the babies' sexes

Hospital director Carlos Martinez Cano told the local press that the surviving babies are fine and he was confident that their condition will remain stable in spite of the fact that they were born premature.

The woman, 30, became pregnant through artificial fertili sation since she was unable to conceive naturally.

Fergie on 'Baywatch'?

LONDON: The Duchess of York, estranged wife of Queen Elizabeth's second son Prince Andrew, has been offered a role in a celebrity episode of the popular US television series "Baywatch". British newspapers reported yesterday, reports Reuter.

"A script has been prepared for her, and she has already had talks with the show's hunky male lead and director David Hasselhoff The Daily Star. a popular tabloid, said.

British entrepreneur Richard Branson is expected to appear in the same episode of the lifeguard show which is due to be screened next year. The show is broadcast in about 50

"I have had detailed discussions by phone, I am expecting a

call from her." The Daily Mirror quoted Hasselhoff as saying. The flame-haired duchess, popularly known as "Fergie married Prince Andrew in 1986 and the couple separated in 1992. They have to young daughters.

The Daily Mail, another tabloid, said Hasselhoff met the duchess and Branson when a trip on Branson's Virgin Atlantic airline to the Baywatch set was auctioned on behalf of one of Sarah's favourite charities.

Jilted lover's fiery revenge HONG KONG: Twelve female students were killed and two

injured in a dormitory fire started by a man apparently seeking revenge after being jilted by his girlfriend at a college in the eastern Chinese province of Shandong, said a report yesterday, reports AFP. Zhang Zonglin, a 49-year-old student of traditional Chinese

medicine from inner Mongolia, was arrested and later confessed to the crime. He allegedly torched the dormitory on October 30, the semi-official China News Service said.

The report said Zhang had "improper relations" with his girlfriend, who was identified only by her surname Li, after he started an internship at the Shandong College of Traditional

Chinese Medicine in Jinan last year The couple broke up over the summer, and Li later ignored Zhang whenever he came to her dormitory, the agency

The report did not say whether Li was among the 12 stu-

dents killed.

Mid-term congressional polls a major test for Clinton president on Friday sought to

partisan and unfair."

DULUTH, Minnesota, Nov 5: President Clinton's prestige and capacity to govern are at stake along with the careers of the endangered Democrats he is embracing in the closing days of the mid term campaign, reports AP,

In many ways, Clinton's presidency is on the ballot -and his campaigning reflects that he is mindful of this. Clinton's political efforts

over the past week, and his schedule for the days ahead. have been frantic — covering two and even three states a day as he crisscrosses the United States nonstop to next Tuesday's voting.

Preparing to spend a week end campaigning in California - i state crucial to his own 1996 re election bid - the

capitalise on a new unemployment report to trumpet his economic policies. We have delivered what

the American people have long wanted," he said after the Labour Department reported that the US unemployment rate had dropped to 5.8 per cent in October - its lowest level in four years.

He was clearly ready to play his economic card in California, whose long stagnant economy is finally beginning to come out of the doldrums.

It was no coincidence that Clinton's first scheduled stop in southern California was at the Los Alamitos Naval Air Station, where he was to for mally announce the signing of

a 1.6 billion dollars contract between China and McDonnel Douglas for the sale of 40 jet

Midterm elections are al ways indirect referenda on presidents, but Clinton raised the stakes - and the political risks - with his final week of non-stop campaigning.

"At least he's trying hard and working hard. He didn't hide. He's out there swinging. And Americans like that," said Thomas E Cronin, president of Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, and the author of several books on the presidency. "He didn't shrivel up or give up

The president was confin ing his home stretch cam paigning to the Pacific Coast,

Northeast and the upper midlands - including Friday's appearance here in behalf of Democratic Senate hopeful Ann Wynia and a planned return visit to Minnesota on Monday.

For the most part, he's been campaigning where White House strategists in advance knew he would find receptive audiences and heavy local media attention - and staying away from states like Texas and Florida where he's less popular.

"HE'S HERE" screamed the bariner headline on Friday's Duluth News Tribune. His role in the final days "is to travel around the country and help define the country and help define the choice between Republicans and Democrats," said White House political director Joan Baggett. "I think the stakes are

enormous for him," said Larry Sabato, a University of Virginia political scientist. "It's going to affect his positioning for the next presidential election. It's going to affect what he may accomplish.

If Democrats lose one or both houses of Congress, much blame is sure to be directed at the president, undermining his leadership capability.

Stuart Rothenberg, a Washington, DC political analyst and newsletter publisher, said Republicans had succeeded in making the mid-term elections "into a referendum on the status quo and Congress and Bill Clinton" - and Clinton was upping the ante.

staff go on PARIS, Nov 5: Tourists wi-

Eiffel Tower

shing to ride to the top of the Eiffel Tower were turned away on Friday due to a strike by workers demanding more staff and improved facilities for visitors, reports AP. It was unclear how long the

two left-wing labour unions leading the strike intended to keep workers off the job, but such actions in France seldom last longer than 24 hours. The unions said that the

tower's 180-strong stall was inadequate to deal with the average 20,000 people visiting between the 9:30 am through 11 pm opening hours. Many wait hours to ride a labourious elevator system to the top.