

12 suspects of Egyptian embassy blast held

Aliens without visas barred from entering Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Nov 23: Foreigners without visas and residential permits have been barred from entering Islamabad following Sunday's suicide bombing that destroyed the Egyptian embassy and killed 17 people, a report said today, says AFP.

The Pakistani authorities have also ordered foreigners to carry their visa, residential permits and identity cards around with them, failing which they could be prosecuted, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported.

The authorities had earlier questioned about two dozen

Egyptians soon after the blast, claimed by three Egyptian militant groups opposing President Hosni Mubarak's government.

But officials said no definite clue had been found so far. Several Egyptians have been stopped from leaving Pakistan pending their screening.

A local daily The News said police in Peshawar, the northwest city bordering Afghanistan, had arrested two Egyptians for suspected involvement in terrorist activities.

But it quoted a government official as saying the

duo might not be linked to the bombing. One of them came from Afghanistan and did not possess a visa.

The paper also said that a group of eight people, mostly Arabs, was believed to have entered Pakistan after being expelled by the authorities in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province.

The group, believed hiding in the semi-autonomous tribal territory, was led by Abdullah Al-Hashmi, a Palestinian from Jordan who reportedly had citizenship of two Western countries.

Meanwhile, Pakistani police have arrested 12 sus-

pects over the Egyptian Embassy bomb blast Sunday that killed 17 people and injured 60, the Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar said here today.

They were six Egyptians, two Jordanians and four Afghans, he said.

The suspects were arrested in Karachi, Peshawar and Islamabad, Babar told a news conference.

He said he would not reveal further details as the investigation was at a preliminary state.

"For the time being let us keep the details under cover," he added.

BRIEFLY

Pak HC detains 13 for hooliganism:

A Pakistani High Court yesterday sentenced 13 opposition activists, including 10 women, to six months in jail for "hooliganism" in the courtroom, a court official said, PTI reports from Islamabad.

He said the opposition workers chanted slogans against judges of the Punjab High Court and broke windows after the court rejected a bail application from an opposition Parliamentary Deputy.

IFWJK to observe 'demand day':

The Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJK) on Wednesday asked all journalists and newspaper employees to observe nationwide 'demand day' and stage *Dharnas* on December five to urge the Narasimha Rao government to enhance the quantum of interim relief proposed by the Minisana Singh Wage Board, PTI reports from Panaji.

A resolution to the effect was adopted on the concluding day of the two-day 97th session of the working committee of the IFWJK in Panaji, which has also formulated the recommendations to the parliament committee on national media policy.

SC upholds 4 Filipinos death:

The Philippines supreme court upheld the life imprisonment sentences of four supporters of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos who pleaded to death a supporter of Marcos' rival, former president Corason Aquino, newspapers reported yesterday AFP says from Manila.

The high court said in its decision Wednesday that the four men were guilty of the murder of Stephen Salcedo, who was beaten after police dispersed a rally of Marcos supporters in July 1986, five months after Aquino was swept into power by a popular revolt which overthrew Marcos.

Talks on Panama Canal postponed:

US and Panamanian officials on Wednesday postponed until next year key talks on the future of the Panama Canal because of differences over who should foot the bill for the conversion of US military bases along the canal, Reuter reports from Panama City.

Officials said the talks, which were due to start next week, were being postponed until next year but added that no firm date has been set.

Ibrahim won't challenge Mahathir:

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday he would not challenge Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for the top post of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), The National Bernama News Agency said, Reuter reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Speaking at the simultaneous opening of UMNO youth and women general assemblies, he said: "Don't anybody try to instigate or waste time nominating me (as party president) just to test or to offend. My stand on this matter is firm."

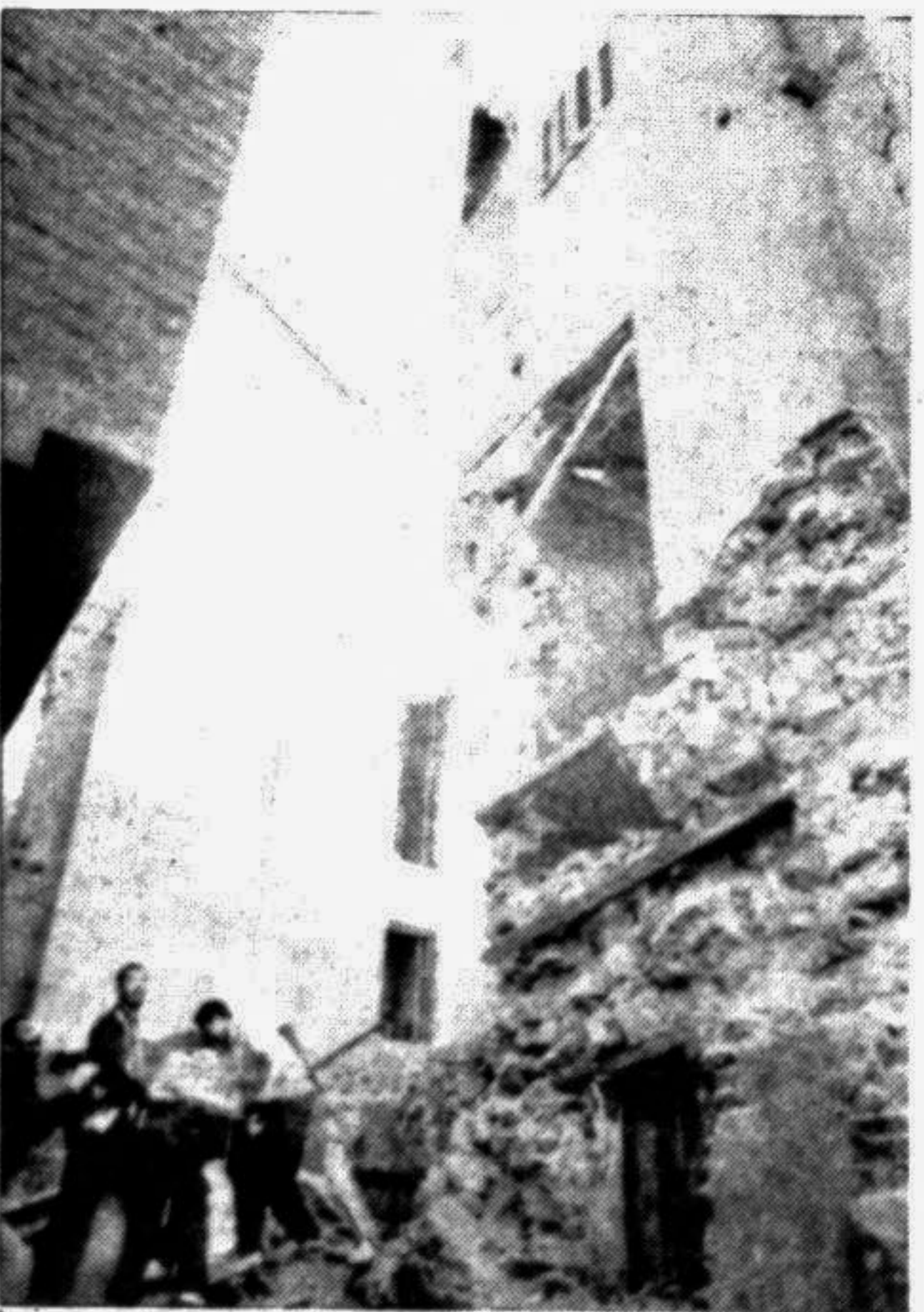
Israeli troops search PLO office:

Israeli soldiers searched the Palestinian authority's statistics office in the West Bank town of Ramallah yesterday and detained one of its workers, a Palestinian official said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

"The army forced their way into our offices, they searched them and they arrested Musa Masharqa without giving any reason," Hassan Abu Libdeh, head of the office, told Reuters.

Fire claims 8 in S Korea:

Eight people, six of them high school girls, died and 30 others were rescued by helicopter when a fire tore through a high-rise karaoke lounge in the South Korean port city of Pusan, reports said yesterday, AFP reports from Seoul.



Egyptians walk through the rubble of a collapsed building on Wednesday in Shubra, south of Cairo, after a powerful earthquake. The earthquake measuring up to 7.1 on the Richter scale struck the Middle East Wednesday, causing at least eight deaths and millions of US dollars in damage to the Red Sea resort. — AFP/UNB photo

Arafat praises new Israeli govt of Peres

THE HAGUE, Nov 23: PLO chairman Yasser Arafat on Wednesday praised the new Israeli government of Shimon Peres and said he was sure it would continue along the path of peace in the Middle East, reports Reuter.

Peres earlier on Wednesday became Israel's 12th Prime Minister, replacing Yitzhak Rabin assassinated 18 days ago by a right-wing religious Jew opposed to Palestinian peace.

Paying tribute to Rabin, Arafat told reporters: "We are sure that Peres, with his strong new cabinet, will be able to continue the same line and the road which Rabin had started."

Arafat was beginning a two-day visit to the Netherlands, involving bilateral aid talks with Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok on Wednesday.

Immigrants from Asia facing tough time in US today

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov 23: Race relations in the United States are usually painted in black vs white especially in the polarised debate that followed the Million Man March in Washington last month, reports IPS.

But Asian Americans are now bearing the brunt of a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment across the United States.

Statistics show an alarming rise in racially motivated physical and verbal attacks on Asian Americans, which community and civil rights leaders attribute to historical as well as present-day political and economic factors.

Florence Hongo, a Japanese American educator and director of the Asian American Curriculum Project in San Mateo, California, says it is due partly to "traditional stereotyping" dating back to World War II, and partly to irresponsible actions and

Chandrika reiterates call to end Tamil separatist war

COLOMBO, Nov 23: Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga today called for negotiations to end the country's dragging Tamil separatist war, after the rebels carried out another spectacular attack against an air force plane, reports AFP.

Kumaratunga said the military was on the verge of completing the "first phase" of its offensive against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) but warned that the end of the war would not mean lasting peace.

"We must negotiate a lasting political solution and then, and only then, can there be peace for our people," Kumaratunga said in her address to the nation broadcast over state radio.

She did not directly invite the LTTE for talks but said her government wanted peace with honour and dignity for all those involved in the drawn-out conflict which has claimed more than 50,000 lives since 1972.

"The defeat of the enemies of peace who were thought to be invincible is near," she said. "The war is not against the Tamil community but against ruthless terrorists."

Her remarks came a day after the LTTE downed an air force plane near the northern Jaffna peninsula, killing 60 people on board. The attack came four days after a similar attack which brought down a larger cargo plane.

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AFP adds: Sri Lanka's Tamil guerrillas have crippled the vital air bridge to soldiers fighting separatist rebels in the northern Jaffna peninsula with the downing of another aircraft, officials said today.

Guerrillas of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) shot down the Antonov-32 plane taking 60 security personnel to the Jaffna battle zone as it approached to land at a military base in the region Wednesday.

Defence officials said the airforce grounded its remaining two transport planes — another AN-32 and a smaller Avro HS-748 plane — amid fears of more rebel attacks against aircraft.

'Balkan accord may let HR violators escape justice'

WASHINGTON, Nov 23: The historic agreement initiated in Ohio to bring peace to Bosnia could let human rights violators escape justice, Amnesty International USA said in a statement on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The peace agreement seems to make broad commitments for governments to cooperate with the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and excludes those indicated from holding public office.

"What we hoped to hear, but have not, is a specific commitment by the parties to hand over those indicted to the tribunal," the group said.

"Past vague commitments to cooperate with the tribunal have not amounted to much in practice," the group added.

A peace deal concluded on Tuesday between Bosnia,

Serbia and Croatia calls for indicted war criminals to be barred from holding public office or a military rank in Bosnia.

The measure is specifically aimed at the top leaders of the breakaway Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, who have both been charged on several counts by the special war crimes tribunal set up by the United Nations, to look into allegations of atrocities in the former Yugoslavia.

"Their future is not bright," Richard Holbrooke, chief US negotiator at the Balkan peace talks, told a press conference.

Under the agreement, initiated by the leaders of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia, all parties pledged themselves to cooperate fully with the tribunal, the first set up to deal with war crimes since World War II.



Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the United Nations votes on Wednesday in the UN Security Council in New York to suspend immediately economic and trade sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro. — AFP/UNB photo

Pakistan, KSA agree on action plan to help end Afghan conflict

RIYADH, Nov 23: Saudi Arabia and Pakistan agreed Wednesday on an action plan to help end the conflict in Afghanistan by proposing to set up a broad-based leadership involving the warring factions, reports AFP.

The three-point plan was announced by Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmad Ali at the end of a 24-hour visit to Riyadh during which he met his Saudi counterpart Prince Saud Al-Faisal.

It involves "a transfer of authority to a type of consultative council, the demilitarisation of Kabul and the creation of a neutral Afghan peacekeeping force which

would maintain security in the capital and clear heavy weapons from around it," Ahmad Ali told reporters.

The leadership would include representatives of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, the Islamic student-led Taliban militia, General Rashid Dostam, former prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, former president Mojadadi and the Shi'ite Muslim Hezb-e-Wahda organisation.

Ahmad Ali criticised Rabbani "for refusing to transfer power to a broad-based council."

He said the action plan was based on proposals from

the United Nations and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which are trying to help mediate between the warring parties in Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia invited their representatives to a peace conference in Jeddah in July but its offer was not taken up.

Meanwhile, Afghan government forces admitted today they had lost the key military base of Pul-i-Charki just east of Kabul to the advancing Taliban militia.

The Taliban said earlier they had taken Pul-i-Charki, around 10 kilometres (six miles) east of Kabul and nearby Butkhak.

Indian press Paints Diana as victim

NEW DELHI, Nov 23: India's press painted Britain's Princess Diana as a victim today but viewed her prime television confessions as a further milestone in the fading institution of the British monarchy, reports Reuter.

"While the disclosures made earlier by Prince Charles and now by Princess Diana give glimpses of the terrible sorrow resulting from broken marriages, they also throw light upon how Britain is no longer the same old country that it was believed to be by earlier generations," The Hindu commented.

Off the Record



Recent picture of convicted killer Rosemary West, issued by police on Wednesday after she was sentenced to life imprisonment on ten counts of murder, as the jury that convicted her of three murders Tuesday found her guilty of the remaining seven. Her husband Frederick, admitted the murders before committing suicide. — AFP/UNB photo

Briton's dilemma

LONDON: The British public is split on whether Prince Charles should become king in the wake of his estranged wife Princess Diana's television interview in which she doubted that he was committed to the role, reports AFP.

In a poll Wednesday for the television station ITN 43 per cent of those questioned said Prince Charles should inherit the throne and exactly the same number disagreed.

The poll of 635 people conducted by Harris showed that almost two thirds (63 per cent) believed the royal couple should now divorce compared to a quarter (24 per cent) who disagreed.

But an overwhelming majority — 79 per cent believed the princess was right to do the interview. Just 14 per cent thought she should not have done it.

An estimated 15 million people in Britain, and at least 200 million more around the world, were watching Monday as Diana used the eagerly awaited BBC television interview to explain publicly for the first time how her marriage had turned sour.

James Bond restraint

LOS ANGELES: A Los Angeles judge issued a temporary restraining order Wednesday against a Hollywood production firm preventing it from broadcasting a two-hour television documentary on James Bond, reports Reuter.

US District Court Judge William Keller issued the order against Starcom Television Services Inc, which Mett-Godwyn-Mayer Inc claims is trying to cash in on the success of MGM's latest Bond film "Goldeneye" by airing a documentary called the Total James Bond.

In a lawsuit filed Tuesday in US District Court here, MGM charged the programme "is a blatant and wholesale infringement of their copyrighted trailers electronic press kit and James Bond films."

Keller scheduled a hearing for Dec 6 to hear arguments related to the injunction. In the meantime, television stations are prohibited from airing the programme.

The complaint claims the previews or trailers which were used in their own promotional film, James Bond Forever, were never made public and that Starcom stole them.

Starcom chief executive officer Gary Worth said he was "rather perplexed" at the lawsuit.

"Goldeneye," the newest 007 movie grossed 26.2 million in its opening last weekend making it one of the most successful introductions of the year.

US bid to broker peace in northern Iraq rejected

TEHRAN, Nov 23: An Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim opposition leader rejected on Wednesday US efforts to broker peace in northern Iraq, charging that Washington had "colonial" intentions in the region, reports AFP.

Mohammad Bakir Hakim, the head of the Iran-based Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), said Iraqi people were "suspicious about the United States' intentions" in Kurdish controlled northern Iraq.

"We believed that the main goal of America's political movements in the region is to ensure its presence and influence in a future Iraq and

to leave an impact in the whole region," he said.

"The United States is not interested in bringing about a fundamental change in Iraq and its movements are for the make of colonial interests."

The United States launched an effort several months ago to broker peace between the two main Iraqi Kurd parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), whose bloody conflict has cost over 2,000 lives.

The State Department said Monday that it expected the warring factions to conclude a peace agreement in the near future.

US condemns 4th French N-tests

WASHINGTON, Nov 23: The White House issued what it called its "ritual condemnation" of France's fourth nuclear test, but said it was pleased with Paris's pledge to sign a test ban treaty next year, reports AFP.

The White House issued a statement protesting the first test but remained silent following the second and third tests.

Asked about the fourth test, which took place late Tuesday, White House spokesman Michael McCurry issued what he called "the ritual condemnation or concern about the test."

"But, nonetheless, we acknowledge and we remain encouraged by the fact that (French) President Jacques Chirac is committed to that goal of achieving that test ban," he added.

foreign-born or native-born."

He said the number of reported cases increased partly because law enforcers became more systematic in collecting information. But he noted there are still many states, such as Hawaii, Indiana and Louisiana, that do not collect hate crime statistics.

It's still an incomplete picture, Ancheta said.

The rise in attacks comes at a time when US lawmakers are trying to stem the tide of foreigners trying to make the United States their home.

Last year, the Californian electorate voted in favour of denying undocumented immigrants medical, educational and other benefits enjoyed by US citizens.

Also this year, several members of the Republican-dominated Congress proposed bills that would deny similar benefits even to legal immigrants and naturalised citizens.