

# US Congress okays tough immigration package

WASHINGTON, Sept 29. Landmark legislation to crack down on illegal immigrants, including placing controls on Social Security benefits and drivers' licenses, won House passage Saturday as part of a giant federal spending bill, reports AP.

The immigration package, aimed at stemming the tide of illegal immigration that sweeps some 300,000 people to US shores, "secures America's borders... protects American jobs and saves taxpayers billions of dollars," said Rep. Lamar Smith, the Texas Republican who is chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on immigration.

Said House Speaker Newt Gingrich: "We cannot be open for those who will break the law."

The immigration package, attached to the spending bill which passed the House, 370-37, as lawmakers raced to adjourn and get on the campaign trail, now goes to the Senate. A vote there is expected on Monday.

In marathon talks the night

before, lawmakers and White House emissaries resolved a partisan impasse over how legal immigrants should be treated in what had been a separate immigration bill. The stalemate had threatened to derail the bill, months in the making, which now is poised to become one of the most far-reaching pieces of social legislation enacted by the Republican-led Congress.

The impasse also had complicated year-end budget talks as lawmakers pushed to tack the immigration measure onto the spending bill. That prompted Republicans to accuse President Clinton on Friday of risking a government shutdown.

As Clinton and the Democrats see it, the new accord turns the package back toward its original purpose of combating illegal immigration and away from restricting benefits that legal immigrants can receive.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry, speaking on Clinton's campaign plane fly-

ing to Rhode Island, described the deal as "very, very good. We're satisfied we have measures that will continue to protect America's borders while setting the right kind of standards for legal immigrants," he said.

The immigration provisions were coming first before the House, where Republicans — especially from California — had strenuously opposed accommodation with the White House.

The negotiators agreed to limit the degree to which legal immigrants would be susceptible to losing certain benefits after a year on welfare. The White House had demanded limitations on legal immigrant benefits be dropped entirely.

Earlier Reuter says: The US House of Representatives passed on Saturday a bill clamping down on illegal immigration after Republican leaders bowed to White House pressure and removed the most controversial measures from the deal.

A deal reached in negotiations that stretched through the

night stripped out language that would make even legal immigrants liable for deportation if they used any of dozens of government relief programmes for one year out of their first seven in the country.

It also eased proposed income standards required of Americans seeking to sponsor entry of close family members.

President Bill Clinton hailed the accord during a trip to Rhode Island, saying it fought illegal immigration "without hurting innocent children or punishing legal immigrants."

The immigration measure was included in a huge bill funding much of the government for the 1997 fiscal year the House approved late on Saturday. The Senate was to vote on Monday.

Many Democrats had called the provisions in parts of a section called Title 5, targeting legal immigrants, "mean-spirited" and the White House refused to accept them.

Representative Howard Berman, a California Democrat

and one of the bill's critics who has served on the congressional negotiating team, said "Basically all the worst provisions of Title 5 are out."

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said of the agreement: "We're satisfied we have immigration measures that will continue to protect America's borders while setting the right kind of standards for legal immigration."

The agreement also removed a ban on government-paid treatment for AIDS for legal and illegal aliens.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich told a news conference Republicans had yielded to the White House on some issues "in order to get everything done."

He said the administration had been adamant on allowing an illegal immigrant to have government-paid treatment for AIDS as well as emergency medical services.

"We frankly receded to them on what most people would not think is a very good policy... an illegal immigrant not only gets emergency medical services,"



Peace demonstrators observe a minute of silence for the victims of the recent clashes as tens of thousands of people called for the closure of the disputed Jerusalem tunnel on Saturday in Tel Aviv. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu meanwhile declared in Jerusalem that the tunnel would stay open for ever. — AFP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

### 8 die in wall collapse in UP

Eight girl students were killed in an Indian town when a dilapidated wall of an adjoining market collapsed on their class room, a newspaper reported yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

More than a dozen students were injured, some of them seriously, in the accident Saturday at Sitapur district in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, the Hindustan Times said.

### 6 drugs dealers hanged in S'pore

Singapore has hanged six men in the latest execution of drug traffickers convicted under the city-state's tough narcotics laws, the Sunday Times said. AFP reports from Singapore.

The six, who were hanged in Changi prison Friday, were identified as Tan Seng Kim, 43, Koh Koon Tong, 47, Omar Abu Baker, 40, Chang Seow Hong, 53, and Mazlan Sulaiman, 31. Tan, an unemployed, Kwang an insurance manager and Goh, unemployed, were charged with abetting Tan and identified as members of a drug trafficking syndicate with connections in Thailand and Indonesia.

### Israeli army chief plans to quit

Israel's chief-of-staff is planning to quit in anger at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of this week's crisis, a London newspaper reported. AP reports from London.

Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak has written his resignation letter, a frontpage Tel Aviv-dated story in The Sunday Times reported, not citing sources. Israeli army spokesman Oded Ben-Ami contacted The Associated Press bureau in Jerusalem to deny the report soon after it appeared late Saturday night.

### 9 get jail term in China

Nine people have been sentenced to jail terms in Shanghai for selling goods with faked logos, including electrical switches, car door handles and medicines, the Liberation Daily reported on Sunday. Reuter reports from Shanghai.

The newspaper said the nine were sentenced in three separate trials on Saturday. In one case, a woman was sentenced to seven years in jail and fined 100,000 yuan for selling electrical switches falsely labelled as having been produced by the domestic Chinese firm Huatong.

# Women beaten up on Kabul streets for 'improper' dress

KABUL, Sept 29: Taliban militia fighters beat several women with sticks on the streets of the Afghan capital because they were not considered properly dressed, residents said today, reports AP.

In at least three cases seen by witnesses on Saturday, the women were told to return home and to dress correctly in public.

The Taliban overran Kabul last Friday and have put heavy restrictions on women's activities as part of their campaign to enforce a strict Islamic Sharia law.

The Taliban generally seem to want to discourage women from appearing on the streets, but this is not forbidden in Islam, and Kabul women, although in much less numbers, were seen out in the bazaars today.

All women must now observe a strict Islamic code of dress, which means that when in public they must wear the full flowing "Chadert" which covers face and body.

Hours after their entry into Kabul, the Taliban announced

on Radio Kabul that "all sisters who have outside work should stay at home till further notice."

However, a senior Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Rabbani told journalists that Islam recognises the right of education for women.

But a large percentage of the Kabul workforce, in particular professionals such as administrators, doctors, teachers and nurses, are women who have just been banned from their jobs.

If this decree becomes permanent it may well mean a real addition to the economic suffering of war-weary families in Kabul who have no male bread winners.

Ten years of war during Afghanistan's occupation by the former Soviet Union as well as the past four years of factional fighting has left a lot of families fatherless. Mothers no face a lot of the burden of making sure their children are fed.

Earlier report says Afghanistan's victorious Taliban Islamic militia paused in its pursuit of

forces loyal to ousted President Burhanuddin Rabbani who were apparently regrouping in the Panjsher Valley north of the capital Kabul, reports Reuter.

The Taliban instead concentrated on consolidating its hold over Kabul, where it set up a strict Muslim government after capturing the city against little resistance last Friday at the climax of a sweep through eastern Afghanistan.

A Pakistan-based private Afghan news service said Taliban had seized Charikar, capital of Parwan province north of Kabul, and were heading further north towards the Jabel-us-Seraj base of pro-Rabbani forces.

But reporters visiting the area said Rabbani's forces still controlled Charikar and Taliban fighters were making no attempt to advance from the Bagram Military Air Base, 50 km (30 miles) north of Kabul.

Four tanks hoisting Taliban's plain white flag guarded the edge of the militia's territory at Bagram. A score of Rabbani fighters manned a check-

point just south of Charikar about 10 km (six miles) further north.

Taliban said earlier it believed Rabbani and his aides, abandoning Kabul fled to Jabel-us-Seraj just before the militia's fighters took control of the capital.

A pro-Rabbani commander told reporters that Rabbani, his top military commander Ahmad Shah Masood, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Abdurrah Rasul Sayyaf, leader of a pro-Rabbani faction, were now all in the Panjsher Valley in Kapisa province.

AFP adds: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference on Saturday urged Afghan factions to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Afghanistan after the seizure of Kabul by the Taliban in a statement issued here.

The OIC Secretary General, Hamid Algabid, "expressed the hope that the Afghan parties would peacefully resolve their differences and collectively work for the restoration of peace and stability in the country."

# Tigers smash police post, kill 15 Troops continue push on LTTE stronghold

COLOMBO, Sept 29: Government soldiers advanced to within about 1.5 kilometres (1 mile) of the rebels' northern stronghold and were continuing their push Sunday, a military official said, reports AP.

Soldiers backed by armour and artillery fought through moderate rebel resistance Saturday and moved about a kilometre (mile) towards Kilinochchi, said the official, who asked he not be identified.

He didn't have word on the number of casualties.

The military was continuing to advance Sunday in two columns in the direction of Kilinochchi, about 280 kilometres (170 miles) north of the capital, Colombo.

The battle for the town is a crucial test for the military as it tries to wrest control of northern jungle towns that have served as refuges for Tamil rebels during a 13-year civil war that has killed more than 46,000 people. Government forces chased the guerrillas out of their urbanised stronghold, the Jaffna Peninsula, in December.

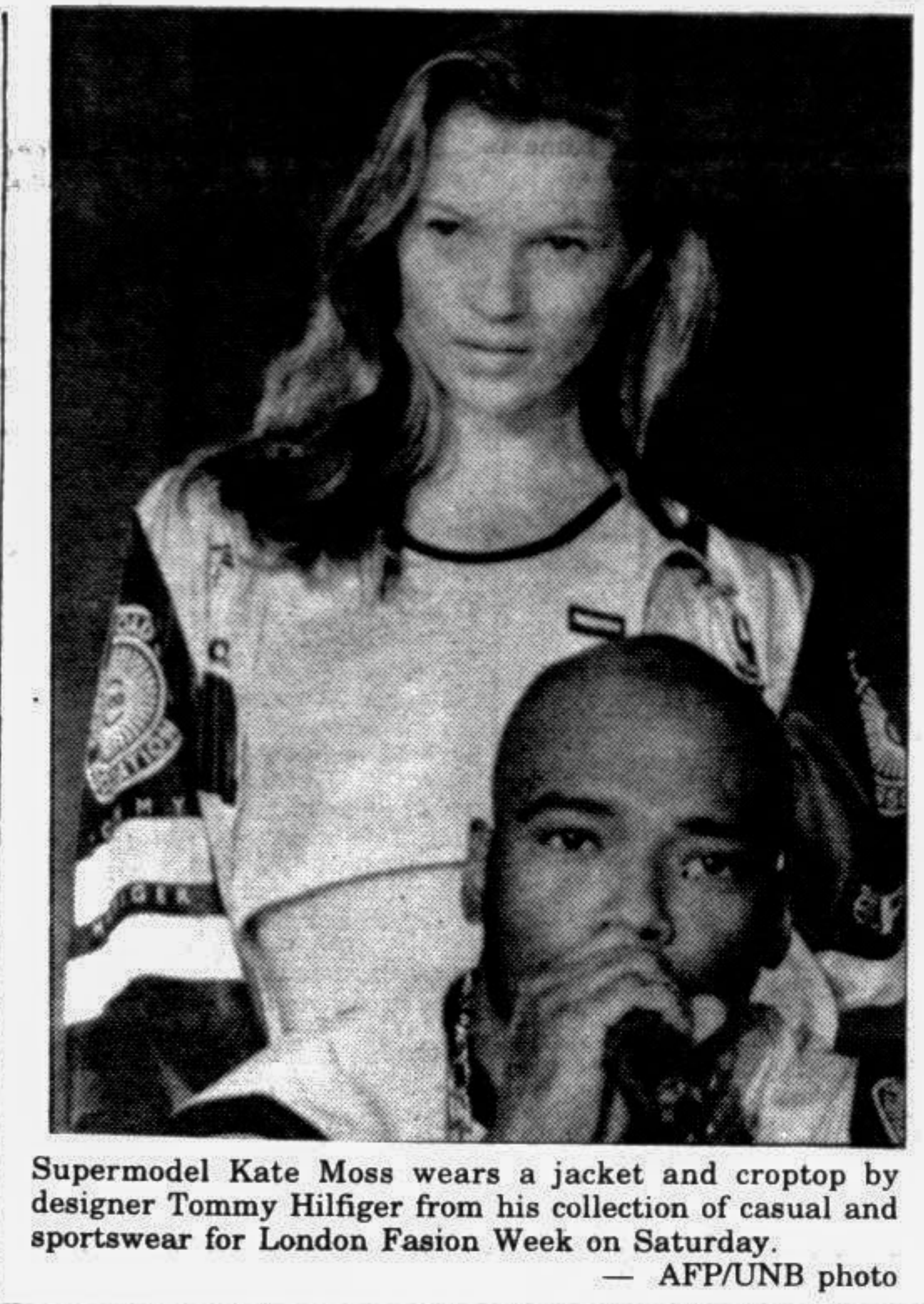
The rebels are fighting for a homeland for minority Tamils,

who account for 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 17 million people. Sinhalese, who make up 75 per cent of the population, form the country's establishment.

The military has said at least 625 rebels and 219 soldiers have been killed in the offensive, launched last Sunday — the worst fighting in the last two months. Most of the rebels were killed in their failed counter offensive Thursday, which left 127 soldiers and 450 guerrillas dead, the military said.

Meanwhile, rebel leaders have appealed for reinforcements to defend their northern stronghold against thousands of advancing soldiers. The weeklong battle for Kilinochchi has already claimed more than 800 victims.

The battle is a crucial test for the military as it tries to wrest control of northern jungle towns that have served as refuges for Tamil rebels in previous battles during a 13-year civil war. Government forces chased the guerrillas out of their urbanised stronghold, the Jaffna Peninsula, in December.



Supermodel Kate Moss wears a jacket and croptop by designer Tommy Hilfiger from his collection of casual and sportswear for London Fashion Week on Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

## 'UN wants to pursue dialogue with Taliban'

KABUL, Sept 29: UN special envoy Norbert Hoil said today the United Nations wanted to pursue dialogue with Afghanistan's Islamic Taliban movement which has declared a new government after capturing Kabul, reports Reuter.

"My main message was an offer that the United Nations wants to continue the political dialogue and cooperation with Taliban," he told a news conference after a two-hour meeting with the Taliban governing council led by Mullah Mohammad Rabbani at the presidential palace.

He said he had asked the Taliban to protect UN agencies working in Afghanistan and to respect the UN charter.

Asked why the United Nations wanted to intensify cooperation with the Taliban, Hoil said: "because the United Nations believes that without the cooperation of Taliban the Afghan issue cannot be solved."

He said he had discussed the question of human rights with the Islamic fundamentalist group, including Taliban restrictions on women working in offices and girls going to schools, and hoped that here would be "a constructive solution."

He said the United Nations was committed to promoting national reconciliation in Afghanistan. All Afghan factions and groups are part of this process," he said.

## US abstains from voting UNSC urges Israel to close Jerusalem tunnel

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 29: The Security Council indirectly urged Israel to close a tunnel that sparked off fighting between Israelis and Palestinians leaving at least 70 people dead, reports AP.

The vote late Saturday was 14-0, with the United States abstaining.

The United States had opposed bringing the Palestinian-Israeli dispute before the Security Council, instead pressing for talks between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We've been working non-stop to try to set up a meeting between the two parties," US Ambassador Madeleine Albright said after the vote. "We abstained because we wanted to make sure the parties on the ground had the best possible opportunity to conduct this meeting."

Washington at first agreed to the text of a compromise resolution, and the council announced a vote for 6:30 pm Saturday. But as council President Alfredo

Lopes Cabral was preparing to call the meeting to order, US officials told him they needed more time.

The vote finally came more than three hours later, after the other 14 members demanded it. Council diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the delay was due to Israeli objections to the final text.

Arab states insisted on a resolution and had at first demanded one that directly called on Israel to close a tunnel near Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

The opening of the tunnel led to riots and gunbattles between Palestinian police and Israeli soldiers.

The resolution calls for the "immediate cessation and reversal of all acts which have resulted in the aggravation of the situation."

It also "calls for the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians to be ensured."

An estimated 56 Palestinians and 14 Israelis have been killed since the violence began Wednesday.

## Murtaza's children sent to Syria for security

KARACHI, Sept 29: The two children of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, slain brother of Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, have been sent to Syria because of fears for their lives, family and party sources said today, reports AP.

Fatima Bhutto, 14, and Ali Bhutto, 8, left for Damascus aboard a Syrian airlines flight today after Murtaza's widow Ghinwa held a long telephone conversation with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, they said.

After Ghinwa had spoken to Assad "it was decided to send the children to Damascus for their security," the sources said.

"We have fears for the members of Murtaza Bhutto's family after his assassination," they added.

Murtaza and six companions were killed in a shootout with the police here last week.

## Pakistan, Libya sign two pacts

ISLAMABAD, Sept 29: Pakistan and Libya Saturday signed an extradition treaty and an agreement on combating drug-smuggling and countering terrorism, an official Pakistani statement said, reports AP.

The pacts were signed by visiting Libyan Justice and Civil Security Minister Mohammad Hijazi and Pakistani Interior Minister Naserullah Babar.

The extradition treaty provides for exchange of "criminals and convicts" between the two countries in order to counter "organised crimes," the statement said.

The other agreement allows exchange of information about "activities and crimes of terrorists in both the countries," the statement said.

The statement quoted Babar as saying the agreements would "go a long way in consolidating fraternal and friendly relations and strengthening cooperation in the field of security and well being of both the nations."

## Benazir meets Leghari amid recent differences

ISLAMABAD, Sept 29: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto held an unusually lengthy meeting with President Farooq Ahmed Leghari here Saturday, amid recent reports of differences between the two leaders, says AP.

The talks, which closely followed a three-hour meeting between Leghari and Benazir's arch foe and main opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, lasted six hours, an official statement carried by the Associated Press of Pakistan said.

The statement quoted Benazir as telling the president that his meeting Thursday with Sharif would "help remove misunderstandings and strengthen democracy."

Benazir was apparently referring to tensions between her government and the Sharif-led opposition which has been waging a campaign for her ouster and fresh elections under a neutral caretaker administration.

Over her meeting and decided to continue such meetings as before," the official statement said.

On Thursday, a statement from the presidency said Leghari told Sharif that he would use his constitutional powers to dissolve the National Assembly if "supreme national

interest demanded it," Leghari was further quoted as saying he had "taken note" of the opposition contention that the country was not being run in accordance with the constitution.

Sharif also alleged "massive" corruption in the government and economic mismanagement, saying the country was heading toward economic collapse.

Benazir and Leghari discussed a wide range of issues" including her upcoming visit to New York starting from Sunday as well as the situation in Afghanistan following the Taliban militia's takeover of Kabul, the official statement said.

"The two leaders also discussed regional security," it added.

Thursday's meeting was the president's first with former premier Sharif after assuming office in November 1993. Previously he had been frequently under fire from the opposition which accused him of pro-Benazir behaviour.

Leghari's differences with Benazir surfaced on September 21 when he filed an application with the Supreme Court seeking a verdict on whether or not he could appoint judges to superior courts without the advice of the chief executive.

# Sarajevans know no answer about their future

SARAJEVO, Sept 29: When music washes over the outdoor cafe tables and the worst crisis is that at Konoba Restaurant has run out of Adriatic crawfish, you think Bosnia is going to make it, reports AP.

Then you drive past all those graveyards where gardens and playgrounds used to be. Each grim marker is a monument to someone's memory that will not quickly fade.

Sarajevo, most people agree, is the symbol of battered Bosnia. Well into the Dayton peace plan, however, no one seems quite certain what the reviving city symbolises.

There are taxis, chocolate sundaes, sports cars with neither dent nor bullet hole, and loud laughter late at night. New minarets sprout over mosques like asparagus shoots. The airport works.

All of that suggests damage can be fixed and interrupted lives started up again.

Yet Sarajevo, capital of a redrawn Bosnia, is filled with Muslims who fled homes that are now sanctified by elections as part of the Serb's Republika Srpska and the Croat's unofficial state of Herzeg-Bosna.

On paper, Bosnia is united and anyone can go anywhere. Bosnians know better. And many Sarajevans are haunted by the words of Haris Silajdzic, an unsuccessful Muslim candidate for president.

"The elections establish a new principle: Kill thy neighbour steal his property and vote in his place," he said.

In Sarajevo, it is clear why outsiders fool themselves with ethnic generalities, simplified history and outward appearances.

The "welcome to Hell" sign still scrawled on a shattered wall near the airport seems at first glance to be no more real than a Hollywood horror film set.

But if you knock on any door, you can see why Sarajevo lives in the present, so burned by its past that it fears the future.

For example, there is the shabby brown door at 4 Dubrovnik St.

Inside, Radica Grozdanic measures her quality of life in grams of coffee and flour, oranges and hours of water allotted each day.

"I manage, today," says Rad-

ica, 75, whose sharp eyes smile easily but are permanently rimmed in red. Tomorrow, who knows? It is enough to be alive."

Radica is a Serb who lived to see the Serbs' siege of Sarajevo because Muslim friends nursed her back to health in 1994. She had faced a German firing squad as a resistance saboteur in Banja Luka and was left for dead.

Over the 40 months of the city's siege, she had only occasional difficulty with Muslim neighbours. Her main problem was Serb artillery fire meant for the nearby presidency and the general terror.

War has left Sarajevo, and Bosnia beyond it, with a new sense of the absurd.

At a cafe in Banja Luka, the Serbs' only city, Srpska Minister of Religion Dragan Davicovic offers a joke business card. After his name, address and shoe size, the word "length" is followed by a blank space. That, he confirms, is a reference to his most private part.

For the optimistic, there are plenty of encouraging signs.

At a fancy new shoe store in downtown Sarajevo, people

stop to gawk. They don't look at the shoes, but at the brightly lit shop, yet one more sign that their city is no longer a black hole on Europe's map.

Trams and buses run, and traffic cops write tickets. People are resuming their beloved trips to the coast. Soon there will be mobile phones.

Heavy metal and hard rock have less literal meanings now, as sounds from the Atrium cafe echo off repaired facades in the heart of a city built by Turks to withstand more than mortar shells.

Crowds throng to a gaily lit square, just breathing the air. At the edges, waitresses in high-fashion leather carry good whiskey to freshly retired soldiers.

At night they pore over menus — helpfully translated in terms like "frying brains" and "acidly salad" — and debate whether a delayed peace plan and flawed elections will eventually bear fruit.

For most Sarajevans, guessing the future is for the outsiders who darted in and left, or came when it was all over. They are just happy to be around.

## Youthful dream finally came true

GDANSK, Poland, Sept 29: A youthful dream finally came true for Poland's former President Lech Walesa when he met and danced with Brigitte Bardot during his just-ended visit to France, he disclosed Saturday, reports AP.

Walesa, who feted his 53rd birthday here Saturday at a party attended by 200 guests, said that in Paris, he had joined BB in celebrating her 63rd birthday.

Walesa said Bardot had been "the love of his youth."

"It was nice to be able to meet and talk to her," he said, adding that he had also "danced" with the former sex symbol. "A youthful dream... we got on very well," he added.

## NLD denies junta charges of collusion with US

YANGON, Sept 29: Myanmar's opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) has denied junta charges of collusion with the United States and asserted its right to hold party conferences without special permission, reports AP.

In a statement received by AFP today, NLD chairman Aung Shwe urged the authorities to immediately release all party supporters detained in the runup to a three-day party congress which was to have begun Friday.

AP adds: Myanmar's military regime accused democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi of trying to provoke riots as heavily-armed troops bearded her presence near the Nobel laureate's lakeside home Sunday.

Former defense minister Tin Oo, now vice chairman of Suu Kyi's political party, urged her followers not to fear the soldiers.

"To the people I say, don't be afraid," Tin Oo told the Associated Press following his Buddhist prayers Sunday. "Trust your strength, and your strength is your desire for democracy."

Dozens of democracy activists were arrested Saturday by the Lon Htein, or riot police, as they walked towards the intersection leading to Suu Kyi's University Compound in hopes of hearing her usual weekend speeches.

It was the first time the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner was

prevented from delivering her Saturday afternoon talk since her release from six years of house arrest in July 1995.

Riot police and army troops sealed off all roads to Suu Kyi's home to prevent her from holding a three-day congress of her National League for Democracy that was scheduled to begin Friday, and had arrested 109 of her followers who were planning to attend.

Yangon braced for more arrests as many of Suu Kyi's supporters vowed they would return to the roads near University Avenue to show support.

"I am not afraid," said an 18-year-old who nonetheless did not want to give his name. "I will come again Sunday. I am one of her followers and it is my duty."

The state-run press Sunday said Suu Kyi's congress was intended to incite riots and upheaval in the entire country.

Tin Oo said the government never warned his party against holding the congress. District officials told members it was permissible to attend, he said, if they broke no laws or contravened the work of the military run constitutional convention which has been meeting since 1993.

The military, which in 1988 invited political parties to submit proposed constitutions, passed a law forbidding that after Suu Kyi announced last May her party intended to draft one.