

International

29 killed as commuter plane crashes in Michigan

DETROIT, Michigan, Jan 10: A commuter plane crashed into a snow-covered cornfield in rural Michigan south of Detroit Thursday, killing all 29 people on board, airport officials said, reports AP.

The officials said the plane burst into flames and exploded on impact in a cornfield near Monroe, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) southeast of Detroit.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known. Officials said 26 passengers and three crew were aboard the ill-

fated comair plane. Comair is partly owned by Delta Air Lines.

Authorities said visibility was 1.5 miles (12.4 kilometres) and winds were light at the time on the crash. They added that there had been no prior word of any trouble and the plane just disappeared from radar screens.

They said the plane had been cleared for landing and was on its approach to Detroit about 20 miles (32 kilometres) away when contact was lost.

The area had just received its first major snowfall of the winter season and visibility in

the area was very low. But it was not clear whether bad weather may have been responsible for the crash.

Emergency vehicles were at the scene and police sealed off the area which was strewn with body parts and mangled, burning wreckage.

Witnesses said the Brazilian-made plane dipped a wing, nosedived and exploded on impact.

"I heard a jet fly very low then I heard a very loud boom" said Tom Marino.

Major holds talks with Gowda

CALCUTTA, Jan 10: British Prime Minister John Major and Indian counterpart HD Deve Gowda held two hours of talks on a flight between Calcutta and Bangalore today officials said, reports AP.

The two leaders staged the negotiations on an Indian Air Force plane after taking part in a trade summit in Calcutta which ended on Thursday.

Major, in India at the head of a British trade delegation which is also due to visit Bangladesh and Pakistan, urged Gowda on Thursday during a speech at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) partnership summit '97 to continue opening up the Indian economy to foreign competition.

There were no details of today's talks, although Downing Street said before the trip that Major would discuss with Indian authorities the fate of two Britons who are among a group of four hostages held by Kashmiri separatists since July 1995.

The British premier is due to visit Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. India's sole aircraft manufacturer, in Bangalore and visit British firms Standard Chartered Place and John Brown Engineering. He will also visit a British-backed aid project.

Police allow students to march thru' Belgrade

BELGRADE, Jan 10: After a daylong standoff police backed down early Friday and allowed student protesters to march through central Belgrade, reports AP.

Thousands of people reportedly took part in the march, and supporters waved to the students from balconies and windows.

But the celebration was quickly marred after a government supporter drove into a crowd of students, injuring four or five protesters. Police arrested the driver, who apparently drove into the crowd intentionally.

Following an electoral triumph over Slobodan Milosevic, the estimated 30,000 students had gathered Thursday afternoon and vowed to remain in central Belgrade until police allowed them to march.

Except for Monday's Orthodox Christmas Eve, police have been confining the scope of the daily demonstrations in the capital for several days. The students had promised that starting Thursday, they would no longer retreat when confronted by police.

Chinese dissident sentenced without trial

BEIJING, Jan 10: A veteran democracy activist who called for the release of China's most us dissident has been sentenced without trial to three years in a labour camp, a human rights group said Friday, reports AP.

Human Rights in China, based in New York, also said a Chinese court has sentenced three other dissidents convicted of 'counterrevolutionary' or anti-government acts.

The labour camp punishment given to Wang Ming and the sentencing of Shen Liangqiang, Huang Xiuming and Ma Lianggang are part of a government crackdown that has all but silenced China's small dissident community over the past 20 months.

Wang, a 36-year-old light bulb company worker from Chongqing, in southwest China's Sichuan province, was arrested shortly after releasing an open letter last November 16 that called for the release of Wei Jingsheng and other well-known dissidents. Human Rights in China said.

If either side rejects binding arbitration, a 30-day cooling off period could be followed by a strike or lockout, or American could impose terms of the rejected deal, according to federal labour rules.

The next step might be up to the National Mediation Board, which has overseen the dispute.

Pitts said the panel could order American and the union back to the negotiating table or declare an impasse in talks and offer the two sides binding arbitration.

The union's five-member negotiating committee, which worked out the deal, turned down, resigned, and a

new committee was nominated.

The pilots' rejection of the contract put on hold American's plans to buy 103 new Boeing jets, worth \$6.6 billion.

The four-year deal, which of

Lankan troops consolidate positions at northern bases

COLOMBO, Jan 10: Government troops beat back sporadic Tamil rebel attacks Friday and continued to consolidate positions at two northern military camps where a major battle left 60 soldiers dead and 232 wounded, military officials said.

The military claimed intercepts of rebel radio transmissions indicated 500 guerrillas were killed or wounded in the fighting, but a rebel spokesman in London, Anton Raj, dismissed the government claim as anonymous.

The rebels fired mortars and rockets as troops search for missing soldiers and also for guerrilla mines and booby traps at the army camps at Elephant Pass and Paranthan, officials said.

No fresh details of military casualties were released Friday, but the death toll from Thursday's attack is likely to increase in the attacks which the military claimed was "successfully repulsed."

The rebels however did not issue details of the attacks, which military officials claim was not a success for the guerrillas.

More than 3,000 rebels are reported to have staged the at-

tack in human waves, forcing soldiers to destroy six or seven long-range artillery guns before they fell into the hands of the guerrillas, said military officials speaking on condition of anonymity.

The rebels had also managed to sever the link that troops from Elet Pass have with Paranthan in the south. But reinforcements, supported by warplanes and helicopter gunships, launched a counter attack and regained the link nearly 11 hours later, officials said.

Elephant Pass camp is strategically located, linking the mainland with the northern Jaffna peninsula that government troops captured earlier last year.



A wounded man is carried into the hospital in Tel Aviv after two bombs exploded in a poor neighbourhood of south Tel Aviv, injuring at least 10 people on Thursday. A police official said that the attack was probably a terrorist attack.

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Ist UN trial of Rwanda genocide suspect opens

ARUSHA, Tanzania, Jan 10: A former Hutu mayor used the respect his position commanded to order the killing of 2,000 Tutsis, prosecutors argued in opening a UN tribunal's first case against a suspect in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, reports AP.

Jean-Paul Akayesu, who went on trial Thursday, has pleaded innocent to 12 counts of torture, murder and genocide in the April 1994 killings at his Taba village. A half-million Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus died in Rwanda during that summer of state-organized slaughter.

Akayesu originally had been protective of Tutsis in the area under his control, keeping vil-

agers calm even as killings spread across Rwanda. Prosecutor Yacov Haille Mariam told the three-judge panel of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Eventually, Akayesu was faced with a choice support the genocide or lose his job, Yacov said.

After the April 18, 1994, killing of a Tutsi teacher at Taba, Akayesu attended a meeting of Hutu residents to urge the extermination of all their Tutsi neighbours, Yacov said.

"The Tutsis' faith in Akayesu was misplaced," Yacov said. "Instead of being shielded, they were hacked, killed and buried in several mass graves."

Expert witnesses, videotapes of killings and testimony from journalists and aid workers will show that the massacres at Taba were part of "widespread and systematic murders," he said.



A local boy passes by cars piled on top of each other after the Guadalquivir River overflowed its banks and flooded the Andalusian town of Alcala Del Valle on Thursday following heavy rainfalls in southern Spain.

neighbours, sometimes their relatives, their wives and their children," Yacov said.

As a signal to begin the massacres, Akayesu and Hutu militiamen publicly executed eight men as they begged and pleaded for their lives, the prosecutor said.

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US Vice President Al Gore (L) and Speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich laugh before the start of a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC on Thursday. In a constitutionally required ritual, the results of the votes cast by the members of the electoral college in the 1996 presidential campaign were opened and counted before the members of the Congress.

— AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Grapes can help prevent cancer

WASHINGTON: A natural substance found in grape skins and some vegetables could help prevent cancer, says a new study to be published Friday in Science magazine, reports AFP.

Researchers say "resveratrol" has successfully prevented the three main stages of skin cancer in mice: when the tumor starts growing, when it becomes malignant, and when it spreads.

The study was carried out by the University of Illinois.

Resveratrol blocks an enzyme that is essential in the process leading to cancer, the authors of the study say.

The substance has no apparent toxic effect in humans.

Researchers do not know what the exact function of resveratrol is in plants. They say the substance could belong to a group of products that help plants fight the effects of environmental stress or carcinogens.

One of the theories is that the grapes may have large quantities of resveratrol to be able to resist fungal infections.

Caution for misuse of antibiotics

OTTAWA: The rampant misuse and over-prescription of antibiotics have resulted in increased resistance to the drugs and in making people sicker, a group of Canadian doctors warned, reports Xinhua.

Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria directly or halt their multiplication. The miracle drugs of the 1930s, launched with the introduction of penicillin, are now considered on many fronts to be enemies.

"People are dying today because they're developing infections that we don't have effective therapies for," said Dr. Gary Garber, a researcher with the Canadian infectious disease society.

Antibiotic resistance is a major public-health issue around the world, added Dr. Ronald Grossman, Chairman of the New Awareness Campaign to set doctors and consumers straight about proper antibiotic use.

— AFP/UNB photo

Japanese PM in Indonesia Hashimoto wins support to fight terrorism

JAKARTA, Jan 10: Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto won support today for a tough stance against terrorism during a visit to Indonesia, as the Peruvian hostage crisis dragged on, officials said, reports AFP.

Hashimoto held a 90-minute meeting with Indonesian president Suharto today, one day after arriving on the third leg of a five-nation Southeast Asian tour.

The leaders agreed to "not relent to terrorism, and hope for cooperation and exchange of intelligence information to deal with terrorism problems in the future," Indonesia's State Secretary Mardiono told reporters.

After the Peruvian crisis is resolved he "Hashimoto would like to report back to ASEAN countries... to create a network to exchange information... regarding terrorism," said a senior Japanese official who declined to be named, at a press briefing.

Netanyahu, Ross hold further talks on Hebron deal

TEL AVIV, Jan 10: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US peace negotiator Dennis Ross held further talks on a Hebron deal under the shadow of Tel Aviv bombings that wounded 13 people, reports Reuter.

Army radio said the session ended in the early hours of today without any breakthrough.

Israeli police said they believed Arabs planted the nail-packed bombs that blew up in Rubbish Bins near Tel Aviv's central bus station on Thursday.

"We raised various ideas but the conversation was cut off by the attack and for this reason I have nothing to announce to you," Netanyahu told reporters at Tel Aviv's Ichilov Hospital.

Netanyahu and Ross resumed their meeting later, a sign that Israel was taking no action for now to slow or stop diplomatic efforts to clinch a Hebron deal.

Ghosts of war may return, warn Bosnian Serbs

TEL AVIV, Jan 10: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US peace negotiator Dennis Ross held further talks on a Hebron deal under the shadow of Tel Aviv bombings that wounded 13 people, reports Reuter.

American soldiers and other troops from the NATO-led peacekeeping force maintained a low-key presence in the city during the day. An American base, Camp McGovern, is a few miles outside Hebron.

Brcko's deputy mayor, Radislav Bogicevic, said Brcko's population is now more than 50,000, including 30,000 Serb refugees.

Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz leaders sign treaty

BISHKEK, Jan 10: The leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan today signed a treaty on "eternal friendship" boosting cooperation, including military ties, between the three Central Asian states, reports Reuter.

The presidents of the three former Soviet republics told a joint news conference after the signing ceremony in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, that the treaty was "objectively prompted by history itself."

"Our becoming closer is objective... some 400,000 Uzbeks or Kyrgyz.



US President Bill Clinton (L) presents the National Medal of Arts to US actor and director Robert Redford (R) and Hillary Clinton (C) watches during the National Medal of Arts award ceremonies in Washington, DC on Thursday. The National Medal of Arts honours individuals and organisations for their contributions to the arts and culture.

— AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Maoists kill 16 cops in India:

Sixteen policemen and two civilians were killed yesterday when suspected Maoist guerrillas blasted a police station in southern India, the United News of India (UNI) reported, AFP says from New Delhi.

The guerrillas, believed to be from the outlawed People's War Group (PWG), escaped 32 weapons and ammunition after destroying the police station at Karakudam in Andhra Pradesh state, the news agency said.

"We believe they have stopped," said Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon, declining to provide further details.

Outgoing Defence Secretary William Perry threatened in April to use military force if necessary to prevent the Tarhouna plant from going into production.

US journalist killed in Almaty: A 28-year-old American journalist running a US media charity in Central Asia was found murdered in his apartment in the Kazakh capital Almaty on Thursday, police said, Reuter reports from Almaty.

Staff at