

'Yadav's prosecution likely to plunge Gujral govt into crisis'

NEW DELHI, Apr 28: The prosecution of a formidable leader in a corruption case is likely to plunge Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's coalition government into a crisis, analysts said here today, reports AFP.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Sunday opened the prosecution of Bihar state Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav for allegedly siphoning millions of dollars of government funds meant for buying cattle feed.

Fifty-four others were named in the 271-million-dollar scandal besides Yadav who is president of the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party), the largest partner in Prime Minister Gujral's 13-party United Front government.

The Congress (I) Party, which extends its parliamentary support to keep the United Front in power, warned that Gujral's fragile coalition could run

into bad weather if Yadav refused to quit his political posts. The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party) also demanded the resignation of the Bihar chief minister today.

The Statesman newspaper quoting unnamed coalition leaders said the CBI crackdown would have "far-reaching implications in Indian politics, which might even lead to the instability of the Gujral government."

"This is a very important matter," said Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the general secretary of the Communist Party of India-Marxist, as the leftwing allies of Gujral's government began a meeting Monday on the CBI crackdown.

Senior Congress leader Rajesh Pilot told AFP: "There could be trouble for the United Front if Yadav does not resign."

"We are giving the wrong

message to the people as every third day a politician is involved in a corruption case," said Pilot, who was India's security minister when the scandal surfaced on 27 January, 1996 in Bihar.

"I appeal to politicians linked to corruption to step down and usher an era of value-based politics," Pilot said of the case, in which a senior Congress leader has also been implicated by the CBI.

The Indian Express newspaper said Yadav's prosecution would put Gujral's government on the horns of a political dilemma.

It warned the CBI's action would spark off a power struggle in Gujral's eight-day-old government and encourage political rivals of Yadav to demand his ouster as leader of the Janata Dal.

Yadav's position as president of Janata Dal is in serious doubt, it said of the dominant

party which has 46 of the centre-left coalition's 180 members of parliament on its rolls.

The CBI's move has surprised other partners of the Front, which assumed office April 21 after the coalition replaced deposed prime minister HD Deve Gowda with 77-year-old Gujral, observers said.

Yadav, an outspoken politician from Bihar, on Sunday said Deve Gowda as prime minister used the CBI "as an instrument of power to trip his colleagues, demoralise them and destroy their image."

Gujral after assuming office promised a transparent administration which will put an end to "witchhunts."

Deve Gowda has denied the allegations, saying the investigations launched against several politicians from parties such as the Dal and the Congress were ordered before he became prime minister last June.

Police violently break up rally in Jakarta

JAKARTA, Apr 28: Police violently broke up a protest march outside a courthouse Monday as four political activists were sentenced to long prison terms on subversion charges stemming from deadly riots last year, reports AP.

The violence came on the second day of the tightly controlled official campaign period for general elections on May 29. Witnesses said police with clubs broke up what had been a peaceful demonstration outside the Jakarta Central Court.

Several demonstrators were injured and at least three were arrested.

Inside the courthouse, a group of judges handed down prison terms ranging from 7 to 12 years to four members of the illegal People's Democratic Party.

The sentence of the party leader, Budiman Sudjatmiko, 27, was expected to be announced later Monday.

Earlier, Budiman sat in the courtroom wearing a red protest headband.



Retired General Colin Powell (2nd-R), the general chairman of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, gestures towards US President Bill Clinton's (R) injured knee as they wait for the start of the Day of Commitment Kick-Off ceremonies at the Marcus Foster Stadium Sunday in Philadelphia. Joining Powell and Clinton and the stage are (L-R) Barbara Bush and former President George Bush, Roslyn Carter and former President Jimmy Carter. — AFP/UNB photo

Jakarta dismisses impact of US ban

EU to extend sanctions on Myanmar for 6 more months

LUXEMBOURG, Apr 28: European Union sanctions on Myanmar aimed at forcing the country's military rulers to stop human rights abuses will be extended for a further six months here on Tuesday, diplomats said, reports AFP.

The move, to be approved by EU foreign ministers, reflects growing frustration among EU governments with the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council's refusal to open negotiations with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

At the insistence of Denmark, the ministers will discuss the situation in Myanmar in the wake of United States' decision this past week to ban new investment in the Southeast Asian nation. An early decision to follow the US lead is not, however, expected.

Britain, the biggest foreign investor in Myanmar, has yet to reach a position on the issue.

France and Germany have also expressed reluctance in the past to impose economic sanctions.

The EU moved last October to ban members of Myanmar's ruling junta and senior members of the military or security forces from travelling to Europe.

Contacts at ministerial or senior official level were also frozen.

The measures strengthened an existing package of sanctions that includes an embargo on the sale of arms, munitions and military equipment to Myanmar, a ban on military cooperation and the suspension of non-humanitarian aid or development projects.

The EU also agreed last month to exclude Myanmar from the generalised system of preferences (GSP) — which accords preferential access to EU markets to goods from developing countries — in protest at

Myanmar's widespread use of forced labour to promote economic development.

Meanwhile, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas today dismissed the impact of both US sanctions against Myanmar and the US call for ASEAN to keep Myanmar out of the Southeast Asian grouping.

Alatas also played down concerns over political stability in Cambodia, saying he believed the warring partners in the fragile coalition government would be able to resolve differences "without resorting to force."

Speaking to reporters ahead of a UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) ministerial meeting, Alatas said the Myanmar was better prepared than the other candidates to meet the obligations of membership.

Turkey's army displeased at PM's attempts

ANKARA, Apr 28: Turkey's powerful army is displeased at Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's attempts to delay a planned anti-Islamist crackdown that has split his government, the Turkish press said today, reports Reuters.

The Milliyet Daily quoted an unnamed senior military officer as criticising Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party for being reluctant to comply with secularist measures demanded by the military-dominated National Security Council.

The prime minister accepts everything in the National Security Council and says he agrees but then Welfare spokesmen outside say the complete opposite," the officer said.

Two ministers from the conservative wing of the Islamist coalition resigned at the weekend because of Erbakan's stalling.

The officer accused Erbakan, secularist Turkey's first Islamist leader, of "takkiye" — a practise under which Muslims can hide their true feelings for the good of the faith.

China ratifies chemical weapons convention

BEIJING, Apr 28: China ratified the International Chemical Weapons Convention on April 25, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said today, reports AFP.

"China's Ambassador to the United Nations, Qin Huasun, submitted the letter of ratification to the United Nations on April 25," the spokesman said. "So China is now the 78th country to become an original signatory member of this convention," he added.

The convention goes into effect April 29 and bans the development, production, stockpiling or use of chemical weapons.

Countries began signing the treaty after its final negotiation in 1993, which followed 20 years of discussions.

Major predicts repeat of '92 result Labour takes 19-pt lead over Conservatives

LONDON, Apr 28: Three days before Britain's May 1 election, the latest opinion poll published today gave the opposition Labour Party a 19-point lead over the ruling Conservatives, reports Reuters.

The Gallup poll for the Daily Telegraph put Labour at 49 per cent, up two, the Conservatives at 30 per cent and the minority Liberal Democrats at 14 per cent.

It showed a 13.3 per cent swing since the 1992 election with a projected Labour majority of 197 in a 659-seat parliament.

The latest survey, was consistent with several polls in Sunday newspaper which showed Labour's leading in a range from 15-24 points.

The poll was based on interviews with 1,028 electors interviewed by telephone on April 25-27.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister John Major was down but insisted he was not yet out of the

running in Britain's May 1 election despite opinion polls predicting a Labour Landslide.

Despite the dire warnings, Major shrugged off predictions of doom and held out hope that the Conservatives would come from behind to win an unprecedented fifth consecutive term.

Only Thursday will determine what 30 million British electors will do, Major said in a television interview.

Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine was also insistent that a Labour victory was anything but a certainty and said that with a quarter of voters still undecided the race was wide open.

Hammering home threats of higher taxes, further integration with Europe and a return to crippling trade union powers under a Labour government, the Conservatives are hoping for a repeat of the 1992 result, when they defied poll predictions and pulled off a stunning surprise win.

Gunmen kill 2 cops, escape with gang leader in Karachi

KARACHI, Apr 28: Gunmen shot dead two policemen and injured three others today in a commando raid on a hospital to free their gang leader who is under sentence of death, police and witnesses said, reports AFP.

A group of armed men entered the surgical ward of the civil hospital Karachi where Asghar Ali Shah was receiving treatment under police custody.

They sprayed police on duty with bullets and fled with their hand-cuffed leader leaving the policemen in a pool of blood, police and witnesses said.

Panic gripped patients and staff with some trying to hide behind walls and others throwing themselves to the floor, witnesses said.

"I jumped on my mother's bed, she was shivering after the firing," one said, adding the pa-

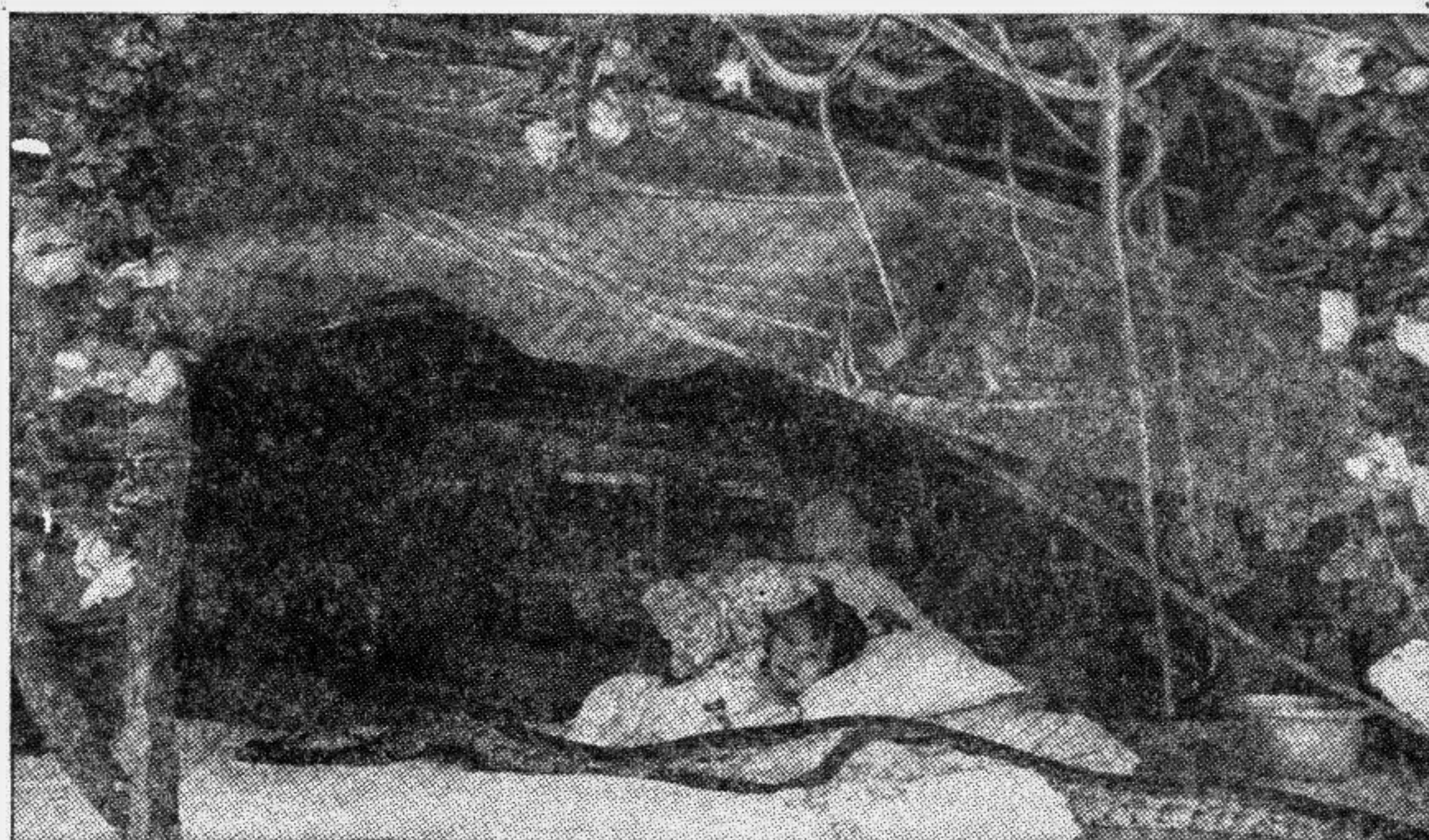
tients of the ward had been moved amid a heavy police presence in the hospital.

With guns slung across their shoulders, the assailants holding their gang leader disappeared, said Mohammad Akbar, an attend of the patient.

Shah, in his 30s, was sentenced to death by a special anti-terrorist court last year, but the date of his execution has not been set.

He was admitted to hospital two months ago with an unspecified illness, police said, adding that he had remained an activist of a Sindhi nationalist Jeay Sindh Tehrik Party.

The accused was arrested in 1992 after accusations of his gang's involvement in more than 100 cases of kidnapping and car theft in southern Sindh province of which Karachi is the capital.



Three-year-old Lei Hongmei lies on her bed next to a boa constrictor Saturday inside the glass-fronted enclosure that she and five other members of her clan inhabited for 99 days. The family, long associated with snakes, attempted to enter the Guinness Book of Records by living with 38,888 snakes, one third of which were venomous. In spite of occasional bites and not being allowed to leave by management of the Flying Dragon World when they decided they did not wish to complete the stunt, Guinness refused to accept the record. — AFP/UNB photo

Kabila gives UN 2 months to evacuate 1 lakh Rwandans

KISANGANI, Apr 28: After a tense meeting Sunday, rebel leader Laurent Kabila gave the United Nations two months to airlift home the 100,000 Rwandan refugees apparently scattered through the jungle of central Zaire by attacks on their squalid camps, reports AP.

The first 40 refugees were flown from Kisangani to the Rwandan capital of Kigali on Sunday, representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said.

Filippo Grandi, an official with the UN agency, said Kabila set a 60-day deadline starting May 1 for the UNHCR to collect and airlift the refugees, using any airport except one the rebels hold in Goma, on the Zaire-Rwanda border.

It was not known would

happen to the refugees if they remained in Zaire after the deadline.

Kabila also promised international officials that aid workers would be allowed unrestricted access to the refugees, in desperate need of food and medicine.

"We are going tomorrow to the camps. We've been given access," European Union envoy Aldo Ajello said after he and UN representatives talked with Kabila.

Flying over the jungle Sunday, aid workers spoke might be from campfires of large groups of refugees too frightened to come out of the jungle, said Paul Stromberg, a UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesman in Kisangani.

"The problem is, the forest is

so dense it's virtually impossible to see anything from the air," he said.

The refugees are among the more than 1 million Hutus who fled Rwanda in 1994, fearing reprisals for the country's state-orchestrated genocide that killed at least 500,000 people, mostly Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Most have since returned to Rwanda.

Rebels repeatedly blocked UN efforts to fly the refugees home and have done little to prevent looting and attacks by Zairian villagers.

Kabila insisted that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan retract allegations last week that rebels were using a tactic of condition that their names be withheld, and called the meeting "very tense."

BRIEFLY

Hailstorm kills 20 in India: A hailstorm has killed 20 people and damaged homes in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, newspaper reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

The Statesman said 20 people died and 24 others were injured Saturday night when a severe hailstorm pounded the Bihar districts of Muzaffarpur and Samastipur. Most of the casualties occurred when houses collapsed on residents, the daily added.

Australia widens defence posture: The defence minister has dramatically widened Australia's defence posture by saying troops could be deployed anywhere freedom was under threat, including allies' internal conflicts, AP reports from Canberra.

Defence Minister Ian McLachlan specifically mentioned the Korean peninsula as one place Australian troops might intervene if North Korea launched a war. When asked to promise that Australian forces would never be used in a battle between China and Taiwan, McLachlan replied: "I can't give an ironclad guarantee that Australian forces won't be used anywhere."

Fire breaks out in HK shopping mall: Hundreds of people fled from a fire which broke out today at a Hong Kong shopping mall, police said, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The fire, which started in a garbage store on the stairway of the mall in Sam Po Kong in Kowloon Peninsula, sent hundreds of shoppers and office workers fleeing the mall. No injuries were reported, but there was widespread alarm as the blaze followed a series of fatal fires here in recent months.

Palestinian shot dead in Hebron: A Palestinian youth was shot dead Sunday night and another was wounded during clashes with Israeli soldiers in a village near the West Bank town of Hebron, witnesses said, AFP reports from Hebron.

Issam Mahmud Akabneh, 19, was shot in the head when the soldiers opened fire after they were attacked with stones, the witnesses said. The incident occurred when a patrol entered Kharas village, which is in a zone under Palestinian administrative and Israeli military control.

TV newsmen stabbed to death in India: An Indian television journalist was stabbed to death and his wife seriously injured in an overnight attack at their New Delhi home, police said yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Officials said 35-year-old Ashok Mishra was stabbed in the head with either a screwdriver or an ice pick late Sunday in their rented home in the city's Karol Bagh district. The police have ruled out robbery as a motive for the murder of Mishra, who worked for a private television network, the officials added.

Road mishap kills 2 in China: Two people were killed when a circus truck carrying tigers and lions overturned in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, it was reported yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The driver and his assistant were instantly killed in the accident at busy intersection in Guangzhou over the weekend, the semi-official China news service said. Eight other passengers all members of the circus troupe were also injured in the accident.

Fighting leaves 17 killed in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU, Apr 28: At least 17 militiamen and civilians were killed and 26 other people wounded during heavy factional fighting which erupted in the Somali capital overnight, medical sources and witnesses said today, reports AFP.

The fighting was between combatants loyal to south Mogadishu strongman Hussein Ali Aidid and those supporting his rival Osman Hassan Ali 'Atto'.

Two children and their mother died when a stray mortar round landed in their house in the Bulohubey neighbourhood of south Mogadishu during the fighting. Militiamen traded artillery fire, mortar shells and anti-aircraft missiles near Atto's residence, terror-stricken neighbours said.

Surge of immigration charts new demographic course for US

WASHINGTON, Apr 28: A surge of immigration from Asia, Africa and Latin America has charted a new demographic course for the United States, which is fast moving from overwhelmingly white to everything but ... reports AFP.

"We've never had this kind of diversity before, and neither has anyone else," said Philip Nyden, a sociologist at Loyola University.

"The big question of the next century is, what kind of society is going to be? Is it everyone behind fences in walled communities, or is it going to be a genuinely multi-ethnic society?"

Last year, nearly one in 10 US residents was born elsewhere, up from one about in 20 in 1970, according to a new census bureau study. By itself, that statistic is not a US record

high — after all, in 1910, nearly one in seven was born on foreign soil. But whereas most immigrants at the start of the century were white and of European origin, today's immigrants are of all races, and mixed races, and hail from Mexico, the Philippines, China, Cuba and India.

By 2050, whites with European backgrounds and their offspring are expected to drop from a majority of just over 70 per cent to 48 per cent of the population. One quarter will be of Hispanic origin, 12.5 per cent black, and others — Asians, indigenous native Americans and people of mixed race — accounting for the rest.

Before the 1960s immigration law that allotted immigrant visas in percentages mir-

roring the population that already was in the United States kept people from most of the developing world out. Those barriers fell in 1965 when congress overhauled the laws and opened the door to the world.

Under the new law, workers with special skills as well as relatives of legal citizens were ushered in regardless of their nationalities.

Demographer Richard Barrett said Congress thought it would draw most new immigrants from the special skills category, and a much smaller number under the reunification measure.

The expectation was that most of those who did bring in their families would be European," he said.

In fact, just the opposite happened.

"In the first wave, we were picking the brains of the third world," Barrett said. "The next wave in the mid-70s was the close relatives of that first group. And then those newcomers had relatives as well, and it just kept expanding like a pyramid."

The immigration is rapidly turning the United States into a country with "brown edges and a white middle," according to author Dale Maharidge.

The west, led by California, already is the nation's most diverse region. But the northeast is holding its own, with Asians, Latin Americans and Africans taking the place of whites drifting west and south.

For the most part, the deep

south remains black and white with the exception of big cities such as Atlanta, Georgia.

And the Midwest is a throwback to the 1950s: 90 per cent white and 10 per cent black.

"This country is going to be balkanised," warns William Frey, Director of the University of Michigan Population Studies Centre.

Politicians have reacted by embracing limits on immigration that resonated with voters fearing a massive expansion of federal benefits to help poorer jobless newcomers with large families.

A 1994 census bureau study shows a more nuanced picture of the newcomers.

Some 12 per cent of immigrants over the age of 25, for example, have earned graduate degrees against eight per cent of

those born on US soil. And while immigrant women of child-bearing age have slightly more children than native-born women, the difference is slight: 1.5 children against 1.2 children.

On the other hand, recent immigrants are more likely than native-borns to be unemployed, and their average salary is \$6,000 dollars a year — about half of what native-born residents earn.

Especially hard-hit are African refugees and immigrants, said Erku Yimer, Director of the Ethiopian Community Association in northeast Chicago.

"It's a very complex situation, language and race combined, and there's anti-immigrant feeling out there as well," Yimer said.

High turn out in Yemen polls

SANA'A, Yemen, Apr 28: Yemenis turned out in huge numbers to choose a new parliament in what was called a largely fair election in the Arabian Peninsula's most democratic country, reports AP.

But the election was tarnished by violence Sunday that killed 11 people. In the worst incident, a guard at a polling station in Mukayras in southern Yemen opened fire on fellow guards and election workers hours before the polls opened, killing eight and wounding one, Interior Minister Hussein Mohammed Arab said.

The minister said the soldier was arrested. Polling officials and election monitors suggested he went berserk before the rampage in the room where the people slept.

Off the Record

Rare competition

DUBAI: Two wives of a Saudi man suffering from kidney disease competed to donate their kidneys to save their husband and the donor was chosen by drawing lots, a Saudi newspaper said Monday, reports Reuters.

"There was a degree of competition between the women as to who the donor should be," the English-language Arab News said. "The hospital administration was forced to draw lots between the two wives," it said. "The second wife ... won. However the first wife insisted that the chance of donating her kidney should have been hers."

Panda problem

BEIJING: Zoo keepers in Beijing are trying to trace the father of a giant panda cub, now six months old, from among three possible candidates, reports Reuters.

The problem, an unusual one among the endangered giant panda notorious for its low libido, needs to be solved to prevent inbreeding in the future, the Xinhua news agency quoted zoo keepers as saying.

"It's very important for us to make it clear, because the mother panda, 'Le Le', mated with two male pandas and was artificially inseminated before she gave birth to the baby," it quoted Beijing Zoo Director Zong Ying as saying.

"If we know exactly which one is the cub's real father we can avoid inbreeding among pandas in future, and the quality of panda reproduction will be improved," said panda raiser Wang Chonghai.

Only about 1,000 giant pandas survive in the wild, most of them living in the western provinces of Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi.