

President Nelson Mandela (R) of South Africa laughs as British Prime Minister Tony Blair gestures Thursday during a visit at Downing Street in London. It is the first time the two leaders have met since Labour swept to power on May 1 and Downing Street said the informal meeting was expected to last an hour, and would mainly concentrate on South Africa. — AFP/UNB photo

Three states advocate for elimination UNSC renews sanctions against Libya

UNITED NATIONS, July 11: The UN Security Council renewed sanctions against Libya on Thursday but not before an unprecedented bid by Arab and African members to relax measures imposed in the wake of the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, reports AP.

Council President Peter Osvald of Sweden said the sanctions, which ban air travel to and from Libya, would remain in effect for another 120 days.

Those sanctions were imposed in 1992 after Libya refused to hand over suspects in the Pan Am attack and in the 1989 bombing of a French UTA jetliner over Niger.

Libyan leader Moammar Ghadaffi has offered to send the suspects to a neutral country for trial but refuses to hand them over to British, American or French courts.

The sanctions have been

routinely extended with little debate every four months.

On Thursday, however, Egypt, Kenya and Guinea-Bissau for the first time formally requested moves aimed at eliminating the sanctions. They cited resolutions of the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity against the sanctions.

The three asked the council to convene a special meeting to consider three options: trying the suspects in a neutral country; trying them before Scottish judges at the International Court of Justice in The Hague; or establishing a special court to hear the cases.

In the meantime, the three asked the council to permit flights for religious, humanitarian and official missions.

They also asked the council to order the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs to investigate the impact of the sanc-

tions on the Libyan people and on neighboring countries which traditionally trade with Libya.

France, Britain and the United States insisted on maintaining the sanctions. The British and the Americans also opposed any UN investigation on the humanitarian impact.

After a three-hour debate, Osvald ruled that the Libyans had not complied with the sanctions resolution and the sanctions would be extended.

"We do not believe it is right for the council to get into a negotiation with a member state over the implementation of its resolution, especially when the state concerned is harbouring two terrorist suspects," deputy British Ambassador Stephen Gomersall told the council.

But Egyptian Ambassador Nabil Elaraby, appearing with envoys from Kenya and Guinea-Bissau said Thursday's debate

marked a major shift in attitudes toward Libya.

"Today was not a routine review," Elaraby said. "For the first time in five years, proposals (were discussed) ... that seek justice, that call for holding a trial of the suspected persons, because without a trial, no one can say who committed this heinous crime."

Despite the decision to extend the sanctions, Libya's UN ambassador, Abu Zaid Dorda, considered the fact of a debate to be a diplomatic victory.

"From now on we can behave as though these sanctions were not there," he told reporters. "We have many, many options that we will study carefully with our Arab brothers."

A total of 270 people were killed in the bombing of the Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland. In the UTA bombing, 170 people died.

Pakistan tries to ease Russian worries about Taliban

ISLAMABAD, July 11: While in Moscow, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub said he tried to ease Russian worries about Afghanistan's Taliban militia and whether it wanted to export its rigid brand of Islam to Central Asia, reports AP.

Ayub, who spoke to reporters upon his return to Pakistan on Friday, said Russia feared both the fervor of the Taliban soldiers and their radical interpretation of Islam. Russia also worries that the Taliban rulers have ambitions to convert the majority Muslim populations of Central Asia to their vision of Islam, he said.

The apprehension is there... they may be considered very conservative, but they are a reality. You can't wish them away," Ayub said he told his Russian counterpart.

Instead Ayub said he encouraged the Russian to open direct talks with the Taliban.

"A face-to-face contact would be beneficial... if you know

them better than naturally with that contact there is a lot of moderation, a lot of interaction between the two and this fear would slowly dissipate itself," Ayub said.

Pakistan is seen as a major ally of the Taliban, while both Russia and Iran are considered allies of the anti-Taliban coalition, which is made up mostly of Afghanistan's minorities, like Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Shites and Ismaili Muslims.

The Taliban, by comparison, are from Afghanistan's majority Pashtun tribe and are mostly Sunni Muslims.

The Taliban control the Afghan capital of Kabul and roughly two-thirds of the countryside. The alliance runs the northern one-third of the country.

In May when the Taliban briefly swept through northern Afghanistan and for 72 hours controlled 90 per cent of the country, Afghanistan's northern neighbours went on high alert.

Uzbekistan shut down its border with Afghanistan, sending tanks and crack army troops to block the only border crossing at Termez in Uzbekistan.

An estimated 25,000 Russian soldiers, its biggest foreign deployment, are patrolling Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.

Ayub said Russia agreed to attend a conference in Pakistan, which will try to find a peaceful end to Afghanistan's protracted and bloody civil war.

Russia, Ayub said, would act as a guarantor of any agreement, along with the United States.

Also on the invitation list for that meeting is Iran, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Afghanistan's warring factions.

However, no date has been set for the meeting, nor has all the groups battling for power in Afghanistan agreed to attend.

Eight killed as LTTE attacks police check-point

COLOMBO July 11: Tamil Tiger guerrillas opened fire today at a police check-point in northeast Sri Lanka, killing eight people including a pregnant woman and her two children local officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) staged the attack in Thoppur in Trincomalee district despite a security alert in the area officials said.

The woman and her two children were waiting to buy medicines at a nearby pharmacy when they were killed," said an official in Trincomalee town 260 kilometres (160 miles) north of here.

The eight people killed included two constables officials said adding that the civilians were killed when the Tigers surprised the constables.

At least 12 more civilians and two other constables were also wounded.

CEC declares official results in Albania

TIRANA, July 11: Albania's Socialist Party and its main ally, the Social Democrats, hold a crucial two-thirds majority in the country's Parliament according to official results of the recent elections, released late Thursday by the Central Electoral Commission, reports AP.

Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano, who plans to be prime minister, said that just with these two parties alone, the winning coalition had passed the limit required to vote a constitution.

By itself, the Socialist Party holds 99 seats. The total of all six left-wing parties in the coalition is 116 seats, out of a 155-seat Parliament.

The defeated Democratic Party of President Sali Berisha received 27 seats.

Under the system worked out for the June 29 and July 6 general elections, 115 seats were chosen by majority voting, while the remaining 40 were distributed by proportional voting.

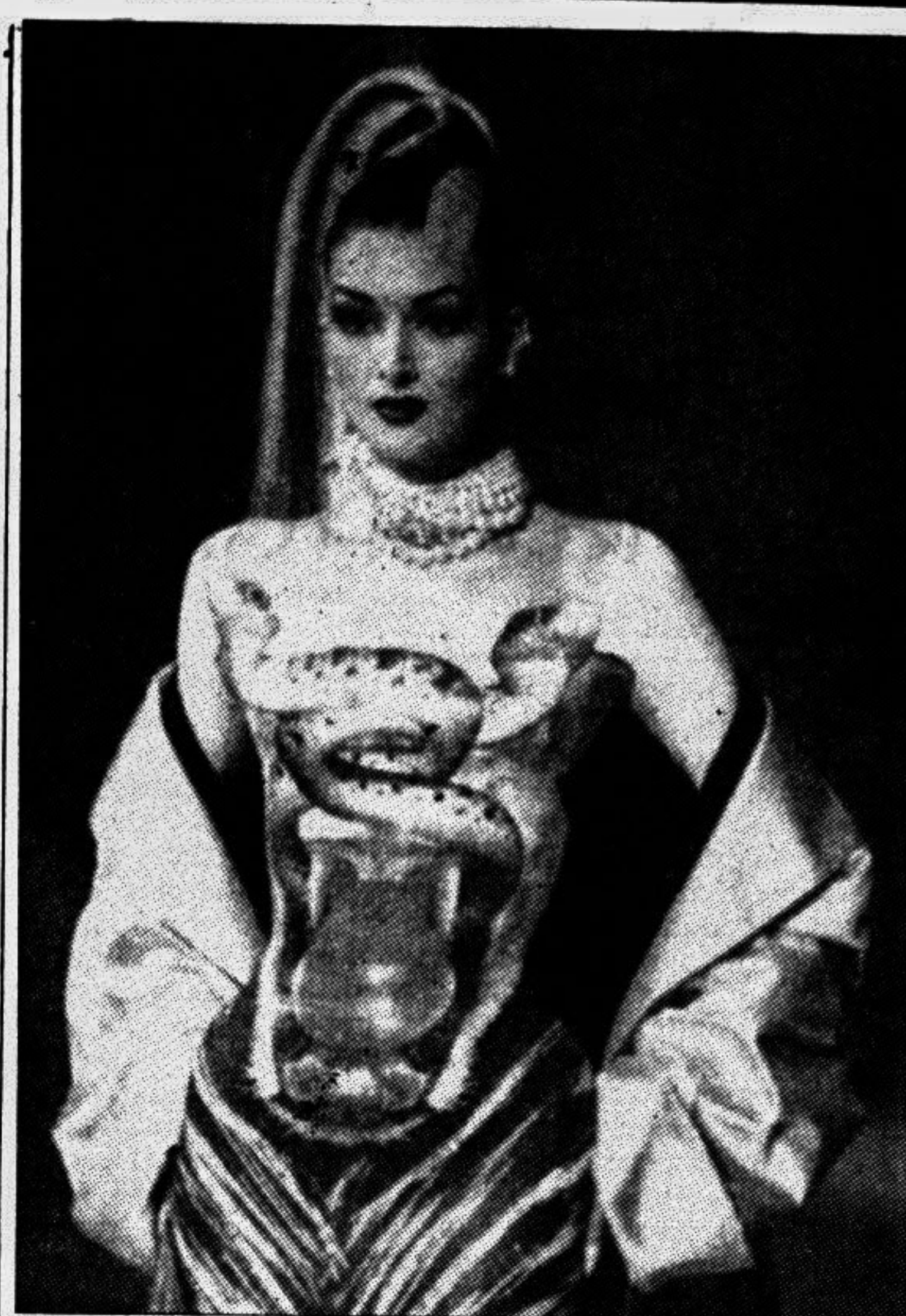
NATO's enlargement

US rejects Canadian PM's allegations

WARSAW, July 11: The White House rejected Thursday allegations by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien that the United States had restricted NATO enlargement to three countries for domestic electoral reasons, reports AP.

"I think Prime Minister Chretien knows that's not the case," US President Bill Clinton's national security advisor Sandy Berger said here.

Speaking in Madrid Wednesday in front of a microphone he apparently thought he was turned off, Chretien said the decision to limit the expansion was due to a lack of enthusiasm in the US Senate and the political clout of the Czech, Polish and Hungarian communities in the United States.



A model wears a snake-ornated fitted dress and a white cape during the presentation of Thierry Mugler's 1997-98 fall-winter haute couture collection presented in Paris Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

All she did for an aspirin

DETROIT: An American Airlines flight made an unscheduled stop in Detroit on Thursday after a passenger said she needed an aspirin so badly she could kill someone, reports Reuters.

After the plane landed, police took the passenger into custody for questioning by agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said Barbara Hogan, a spokeswoman for Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

The passenger was identified as a 29-year-old California woman whose name was not released. Authorities could not be reached for comment late on Thursday on whether she had been released or would be charged with a crime.

Flight 2074 had taken off from Chicago on its way to Newark, New Jersey, when the woman said, "Boy, have I got a headache. I need an aspirin before I kill someone," Hogan said.

American Airlines spokeswoman Mary Frances Fagan said the woman made threats against a flight attendant that went beyond on-off-hand comment about her headache.

Transmission of HIV via mouth is rare but possible!

ATLANTA: A woman apparently became infected with the AIDS virus from a deep kiss with a man who had bleeding gums and cancer sores — the first reported case of HIV transmission through a kiss, the government says, reports AP.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention emphasized Thursday that the virus was transmitted via the man's blood, not his saliva. There are no reported cases of people becoming infected with the AIDS virus through saliva.

Both the man and woman had gum disease and poor oral hygiene. He had bad breath and hairlike growths on his tongue, a symptom that sometimes plagues people with the AIDS virus, the CDC said.

Her gum disease had weakened and thinned her gums, making it easier for the virus to get into her blood, the agency said.

The man's gums often bled when he brushed and flossed his teeth. The couple usually had sex and kissed at night after he brushed, the CDC said.

The couple said they always used a condom during sex. They said it tore once, but that was before the period the CEC believes she was infected. The couple also had oral sex but denied having contact with blood or semen.

"We think it's highly unlikely that's how it was transmitted, but we cannot definitively rule it out," said Dr Scott Holmberg, a CEC epidemiologist.

Dilemma with tallest

CHICAGO: This city can once again brag that it's home to the world's tallest building, reports AP.

Sort of.

After all, Kuala Lumpur and New York can make the same boast.

The International Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat announced Thursday that the 110-story Sears Tower is once again the tallest skyscraper in the world. That is, if you measure from the ground to the roof 1,450 feet (442 metres), or from the ground to the highest occupied floor 1,431 feet (436 metres).

The council said the twin Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, which took over the world's tallest title last year, are the highest — if you measure from the ground to the top of their spires, which are considered part of the structure 1,483 feet (452 metres).

And the World Trade Centre in Manhattan is the tallest if you measure all the way to the top of their antennas, 1,728 feet (526 metres) into the sky.

That could help repair the bruised ego in Chicago, a city that loves to refer to itself with superlatives.

Even so, Dr R Shankar Nair of Chicago, the chairman of the tall buildings council, didn't find the issue too serious as he explained the new categories to reporters standing next to giant steam vents on the Sears Tower roof, where tourists aren't allowed.

Indian scientist warns

Earth can become lifeless like Mars

NEW DELHI, July 11: A leading Indian scientist Thursday warned earth could "become as lifeless as Mars" if the ozone hole was allowed to grow unchecked, reports AP.

Nirupama Raghavan, Director of New Delhi's Nehru Planetarium, said "the threat is very real, of course it will not happen tomorrow but could take place over several years if we are not careful."

As the US Pathfinder probe continued to beam back pictures from Mars, Raghavan said the ozone hole over earth was the result of "modern habits."

Chlorofluorocarbons used in home appliances like refrigerators and fire extinguishers do not react with anything here but reach the stratosphere and break up the ozone concentration there, she said.

"There is a daily increase of the ozone hole, that means can-

China upgrading medium-range missiles

WASHINGTON, July 11: China is upgrading its medium-range missiles with smaller more accurate systems that can target India, Japan, Russia, Taiwan and other parts of East Asia, The Washington Times daily said, reports AP.

The daily obtained a secret report by the national air intelligence centre making public for the first time details about China's Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) nuclear forces.

China is currently converting 40 CSS-2 missile capable launchers at six sites to handle new mobile CSS-5 Mod 1 launchers and missiles said the report based on satellite photographs.

The boat with mainly women and children aboard sailed off from Turkey's Aegean port of Karaburun, 300 kms southwest of Istanbul, last night but overturned and sank shortly afterwards.

5 Japanese rescued from sea: Five crew members on a mid-sized Japanese freighter were rescued after their ship sank following a collision with an empty chemical tanker early Friday, maritime safety spokesmen said, AP reports from Tokyo.

The accident occurred in the Pacific Ocean at around 4:20 am (1920 GMT Thursday) about 47 kilometres south of Cape Inubo, about 100 kilometers east of Tokyo.

ETA threatens to kill hostages: The armed Basque separatist group ETA said Thursday it would kill a hostage it had kidnapped earlier in the day if the Madrid government did not concentrate 600 ETA prisoners in the Basque region, AFP reports from Bilbao.

But government ministers said Madrid would not bow to blackmail, and ordered a maximum police effort to find Miguel Angel Blanco Garrido, 28, a municipal councillor for Spain's governing Conservative Popular Party.

Mexico confirms druglord's death: Mexican authorities confirmed Thursday that the country's top druglord is dead from a heart attack following eight hours of cosmetic surgery and liposuction to alter his appearance, AFP reports from Mexico City.

Mariano Herran Salvati, head of the country's anti-drug unit, said DNA tests confirm the death of Amado Carrillo Fuentes, head of the powerful Juarez drug cartel linked to Colombia's Cali cartel.

Sojourner has 1st mishap on Mars, but working well

PASADENA, California, July 11: Pathfinder mission controllers said Thursday the Sojourner rover sustained no damage and continued operating splendidly after the kind of parking lot auto mishap you'd barely notice on Earth, reports AP.

Sojourner was backing up toward a rock scientists have dubbed "Yogi" when the rover hit it. Sojourner ended up with one of its six wheels partly up Yogi's side, and the instrument the rover was trying to plant on the rock left touching nothing.

No worries, though. Mission controllers will just pull the rover forward and try again, like a student driver practicing parallel parking.



In this photo released by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, Thursday, the Sojourner rover takes a photograph of the Martian landscape with the Mars Pathfinder in the background (L). The Sojourner began its study of the Martian rock dubbed Yogi. Scientist report that communications with Sojourner and the Mars Pathfinder are so good that data are moving three to six times faster than planned. — AFP/UNB photo

US Attorney General suspends deportation of illegal immigrants

WASHINGTON, July 11: Attorney General Janet Reno temporarily suspended Thursday the deportation of tens of thousands of illegal aliens who have lived in this country for years, and she sought legislation she said would treat them more fairly, reports AP.

Reno said if Congress agrees with her suggested modifications of the 1996 immigration law, a much larger number of illegal aliens — estimated at 160,000 — would have another chance to avoid deportation on humanitarian grounds.

For many years, the United States allowed illegal aliens to avoid deportation if they had lived here for 7 years, showed good moral character and proved deportation would cause extreme hardship either to the alien or a spouse, parent or child who was a US citizen or legal permanent resident.

The 1996 law imposed an annual cap of 4,000 on such suspensions of deportation. It also restricted humanitarian exemptions from deportation to

those who have lived here 10 years and whose removal would cause "exceptional and extremely unusual hardship" to a spouse, parent or child legally in this country.

Finally, the law no longer allowed aliens to count any time they were in immigration service deportation proceedings toward their years of residence in the United States.

This so-called "stop-time" rule applied to any proceedings begun since last April 1. A recent Board of Immigration Review decision extended this new rule to every alien whose case under the old system had not been completed by April 1.

To avoid what she called the "unfairness that could come from applying new rules to pending cases," Reno vacated the review board decision and said she would decide later whether to reverse it.

In the meantime, she wrote House Speaker Newt Gingrich, "while the case is under review, I will take immediate steps to protect against deportation per-

sons who might have been able to claim suspension" of deportation because their cases were begun under the old rules before the April 1 cutoff.

The Justice Department could not immediately say exactly how many deportations might be halted while Reno reviews the board's decision and awaits action by Congress, but estimated the number probably would reach into the tens of thousands.

Reno said she would send Congress legislation next week to make clear that the new rules and the 4,000-a-year cap do not apply to cases begun before April 1.

If the legislation is rejected, she promised to recommend that President Clinton take other administrative action to temporarily delay deportation of up to 190,000 Salvadorans, 50,000 Guatemalans and 40,000 Nicaraguans who were allowed to remain here under special programs or court settlements during the 1980s because of strife in their countries. The

immigration service estimated that many of these Central Americans are no longer seeking legal residence in this country.

Reno said the changes in the law "dramatically reduce the number of migrants eligible for the humanitarian relief ... Consequences are most profound for Central Americans who entered the United States in the 1980s in response to civil war and political persecution" in their homelands.

Ira Kurzbart, a Miami attorney who represented thousands of Nicaraguans and other immigrants affected by the retroactive ruling, said, "The attorney general, much to her credit, has taken the first positive step toward addressing the light of those people who have been in the United States for many, many years ... Our hope is Congress will act promptly and immediately to address this issue of the numerical limitation placed on the numbers of people who can receive sus-

pension of deportation."

Desecration of statue sparks riot in Bombay: 10 killed by police

BOMBAY, July 11: Low-caste Bombay residents discovered a bust of their hero had been desecrated Friday, sparking a riot in which at least 10 people were killed by police, reports AP.

An angry crowd grew after finding a garland of shoes — considered a grave insult in India — draped over a bust of Babasaheb Ambedkar, an independence leader born to Hinduism's lowest caste.

The crowd set fire to two buses and threw stones at police. Police fired back, killing 10 people, including two children, according to police.

"We had no option but to resort to firing," said Ramrao Ghadge, an assistant police commissioner.

Ten bodies lay in a room at nearby Rajawadi Hospital, and doctors said another 27 people were injured in the clash. Relatives wailed as they gathered around the body of 7-year-old

Mangesh Shisharan, who had been shot in the head.

Hundreds of police patrolled the streets following the shootings, while about 500 residents shouting "long live Ambedkar" set fire to tires to block a highway that runs along their neighbourhood of shacks and tiny homes. Police tried to push residents from the highway, but refrained from using their clubs or guns.

The shoes were replaced by flowers around the neck of Ambedkar's stone bust, which was set on a column on a street corner.

Though it was not immediately clear who had desecrated the bust, the neighbourhood has been the site of several clashes between low-caste Indians and members of a right-wing Hindu group known as Shiv Sena. Violence could spread to other tense neighbourhoods in Bombay — India's commercial hub.