

35 massacred on Timorese refugee ship: AI clamp down on militias

Jakarta to hand over E Timor security to UN Monday

JAKARTA, Sept 24: The Indonesian military will hand over security to the International Force for East Timor (Interfet) on Monday, Indonesian Military Chief General Wiranto said, reports AFP.

The handover will be carried out on September 27, military spokesman Major General Sudrajat quoted Wiranto as saying.

The major general said that after the handover, the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) will be gradually pulled out to leave two battalions to work in cooperation with Interfet.

TNI elements will be gradually pulled out until two battalions are left to help the Interfet, Sudrajat said.

He identified the battalions to remain there as one army battalion and a mixed battalion that will comprise a company of marines, two of the airforce elite special forces and three of the elite Brimob police brigade.

One Indonesian battalion comprises about 650 men while one company average about 100 to 125 men.

Sudrajat said the commander of the East Timor Martial Law Command, Major General Kiki Syahni will on Tuesday be pulled back to Jakarta.

Meanwhile, multinational troops clamped down on the feared militias with a frustrated arrest Friday as frustration mounted among aid workers struggling to get supplies to starving refugees.

Australian peacekeepers said Caitano da Silva, a platoon commander in the brutal Aitarak (Thorn) militia was arrested Friday and was being held by the International Force for East Timor (Interfet).

"I think it is the first higher profile person that we have," said force spokesman Major Chris Henriksen-Andersen.

The arrest sent a clear message to the militias: "You cannot run, you cannot hide. Justice is here."

Interfet troops also mounted a heavily armed raid on a burned-out building on Dili's harbourfront, arresting three pro-Jakarta militiamen, witnesses said.

The ruined cinema and restaurant complex was blocked off by three armoured personnel carriers and guarded by six Black Hawk helicopters hovering overhead, an AFP reporter saw.

Australian forces have so far arrested several dozen militia suspects and confiscated hundreds of weapons during street searches.

Aid groups warned that the threat of attack from the marauding gangs, who drove up to 190,000 people out of the territory's cities and towns in the wake of an independence vote, was in danger of seriously compromising relief efforts.

It emerged Friday that two truckloads of food bound for the refugees were stolen by the Indonesian military.

World Food Program (WFP) spokeswoman Abby Spring said the first cargo of aid to be sent to Dili, in the hills outside Dili where up to 37,000 refugees are sheltering, was intercepted by soldiers.

"The WFP took four trucks

out to Dili but unfortunately two were commandeered by the TNI (army)," she said in Darwin, Australia.

The Australian-led force's commander Major General Peter Cosgrove said Thursday he would speed up the deployment of his force, amid threats that the anti-independence militias could mount an attack, and increasing aggression in the capital Dili from Indonesian troops.

A company of Filipino rangers arrived Friday to swell the numbers of the force which is expected to reach 7,500 by early next week.

Details of atrocities committed by the army-backed militia continued to emerge.

Amnesty International said in a report it had evidence that 35 East Timorese refugees had been killed and their bodies dumped overboard from a ship carrying them from the territory to West Timor.

The identities of those killed are not known but all are believed to be young men," Amnesty said.

The towns of Maliana and Suai, in western East Timor, have been virtually burnt down. In nearby Ainaro houses were still burning.

UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson called Thursday for an international inquiry into the Timor terror and accused Indonesian security forces of complicity in the militia rampage.

"The available information shows clearly that gross human rights violations were committed in East Timor affecting its

entire population and territory," she told a special session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

"Extreme violence was initiated by different militia groups, in which elements of the security forces were also involved," she said.

Jakarta slams EU embargo on arms sales

The Indonesian government slammed European Union foreign ministers Friday following their decision to impose an arms sales embargo over violence in East Timor.

The government really deplores the decision of the foreign union to impose against Indonesia, an embargo on the exports of arms, ammunition and military equipment for four months," a foreign ministry press release said.

The release also deplored the suspension of bilateral military cooperation between Indonesia and members states of the European Union.

"These unilateral actions are unfounded and have belittled the efforts by Indonesia to overcome the incidents of violence in East Timor following the announcement of the results of the ballots," it said.

"The Indonesian government will not buckle under pressure and intimidation," the statement said.

Indonesia, it said, had not only imposed martial law in East Timor but had also agreed to the multinational force to help restore peace and security there.

Referring to the Kargil intrusion, he said we too could have crossed the borders during the conflict but we did not and our patience was rewarded at last.

Rejecting the Congress charge that his Lahore bus ride was an image-building exercise, reports PTL.

"We want good neighbourly relations but Pakistan must not test our patience," Vajpayee said addressing an election rally here.

Referring to the Kargil intrusion, he said we too could have crossed the borders during the conflict but we did not and our patience was rewarded at last.

Rejecting the Congress charge that his Lahore bus ride was an image-building exercise, reports PTL.

"We want good neighbourly relations but Pakistan must not test our patience," Vajpayee said addressing an election rally here.

Vajpayee warns Pakistan against 'testing India's patience'

BAHRAICAH, Sept 24: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today warned Pakistan against testing India's patience, even as he rejected Congress charge that his Lahore bus journey was an image-building exercise, reports PTL.

"We want good neighbourly relations but Pakistan must not test our patience," Vajpayee said addressing an election rally here.

Referring to the Kargil intrusion, he said we too could have crossed the borders during the conflict but we did not and our patience was rewarded at last.

Rejecting the Congress charge that his Lahore bus ride was an image-building exercise, reports PTL.

"We want good neighbourly relations but Pakistan must not test our patience," Vajpayee said addressing an election rally here.

Typhoon kills 25 in Japan

TOKYO, Sept 24: At least 25 people were killed on Friday as a powerful typhoon slammed into western Japan, triggering flash floods, landslides and a tornado, officials said, reports AFP.

Twelve people were found dead after high waves engulfed some 60 houses in Shiranui, on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu, as Typhoon Bart raged through the region.

"We have confirmed that twelve people died," a local fire department spokesman said. "Houses were flooded by high waves, which covered the second floor."

Dozens of rescuers rowed out in rubber dinghies to search for victims in the houses, some of which were flooded up to the roof.

Waves topped the breakwaters when the typhoon struck at full tide in Yashiro Sea, a large inland sea. A car overturned into a ditch in strong winds near the city, while tall trees were mowed down, interrupting traffic.

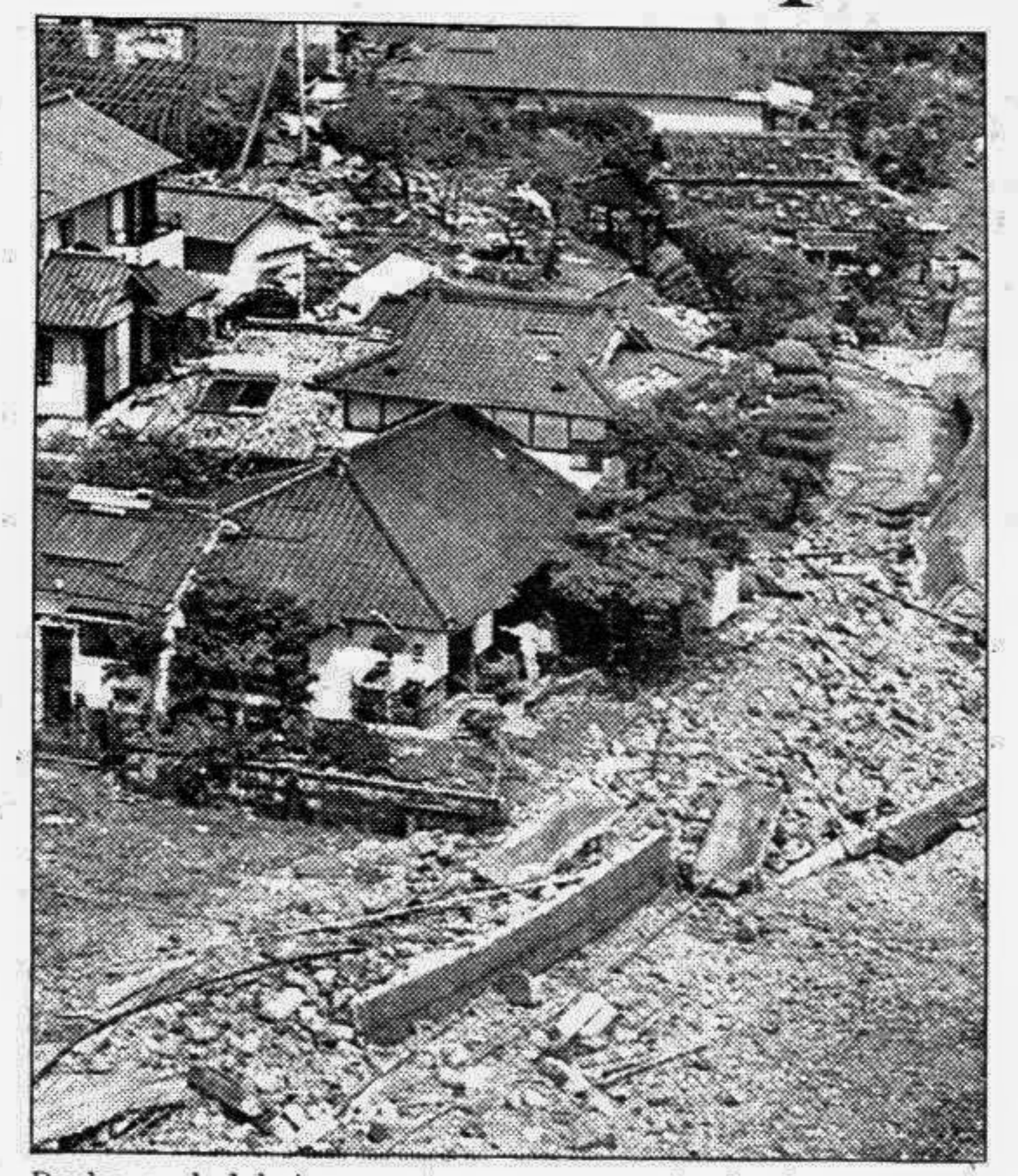
"Waves attacked us like a tide wave," a survivor told a national television network. "A muddy stream swept through the room in an instant."

Twelve other people were killed and one was missing in western Japan. At least 65 people were injured, police said.

A tornado believed to be caused by the typhoon struck in Toyohashi, central Japan. Some 210 students were injured as the windows of their classrooms were shattered.

"Suddenly, all the windows were broken with loud noise, said a student at the Chubu Junior High School, whose head was wrapped in a bandage.

"Shattered glass fell on us and hit me on my head," the student said. "And then I found



Rocks and debris are strewn across the landscape after high waves lashed away some 60 houses, engulfing them at Shiranui town in Kimamoto prefecture, on Japan's southern island of Kyushu Friday. At least 25 people were killed and more than 300 were injured as a powerful typhoon slammed into western Japan.

myself covered with blood."

In Hiroshima, a 100-tonne crane fell and smashed a plant belonging to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd., leaving three people dead and four others injured, officials said.

The typhoon landed near Shiranui early Friday with winds of up to 144 kilometers (89 miles) per hour, the meteorological agency said.

At 3 p.m. (12:00 noon BST), it was located near the Sea of Japan off Matsue, moving northeast at 50 km per hour, after ripping through western Japan.

BRIEFLY

20 Chinese held in Panama: Twenty illegal Chinese immigrants were arrested by Panamanian authorities on an island southwest of Panama City during a drug bust, an official said on Thursday, AFP reports from Panama City.

The Chinese people were detained last weekend after being transferred from Colombia by smugglers, who charge between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars for a trip to reach the United States or Central America via Panama, said Jose Isaza, director of the National Marine Service.

2 die in Lanka bus shooting: At least two passengers were killed and another three seriously wounded when suspected Tamil Tiger guerrillas opened fire at a bus in northwestern Sri Lanka yesterday officials said, AFP reports from Colombo.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambushed the bus in the district of Mannar, officials said adding that those killed were two security personnel travelling in the bus. A student was among the three people seriously wounded and admitted to hospital, they said.

Blast kills 18 troops Ruling party squabble disrupts Parliament sessions

COLOMBO, Sept 24: Sri Lanka's parliament was forced to end its sessions abruptly Friday due to heated exchanges between members of the fragile ruling coalition, officials said, reports AFP.

Parliamentary Speaker K. B. Ratnayake overruled a legislator from the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) whose seven seats in the 225-member assembly provides crucial one-seat majority to the ruling People's Alliance coalition.

The SLMC threatened to reconsider its support to the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga as Education Minister Richard Pathirana slammed the SLMC.

The minister said the government's survival did not depend on the SLMC.

The political unrest in parliament came amid speculation that the government was planning to hold an early presidential election sometime in January although a vote is due only by November.

Meanwhile, suspected Tamil Tiger guerrillas killed at least 18 government troops and wounded about 30 in a powerful mine attack in eastern Sri Lanka Friday, officials said.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) set off a Claymore mine and ambushed the military convoy in the town of Batticaloa.

China continues aid mobilisation despite Taiwan's rejection Bungled coordination hampers rescue work

TAICHUNG, Taiwan, Sept 24: Attempts to find survivors of Taiwan's earthquake are being hampered by a lack of coordination and even outright bickering between international rescue teams, it emerged Friday, reports AFP.

"There's no co-ordination," said Louis Coste, the leader of a team from France's COSI (Comites de Secours Internationaux) dispatched to the disaster zone.

"This is what bothers us," he told AFP, alleging widespread doubling-up of work by crews from different countries.

"One must not waste time now -- there is still a chance for two to three days to find survivors."

He was speaking at the ruins of Tali city's Taichung Dynasty apartment complex in central Taiwan, where some 20 people were still missing and believed buried inside.

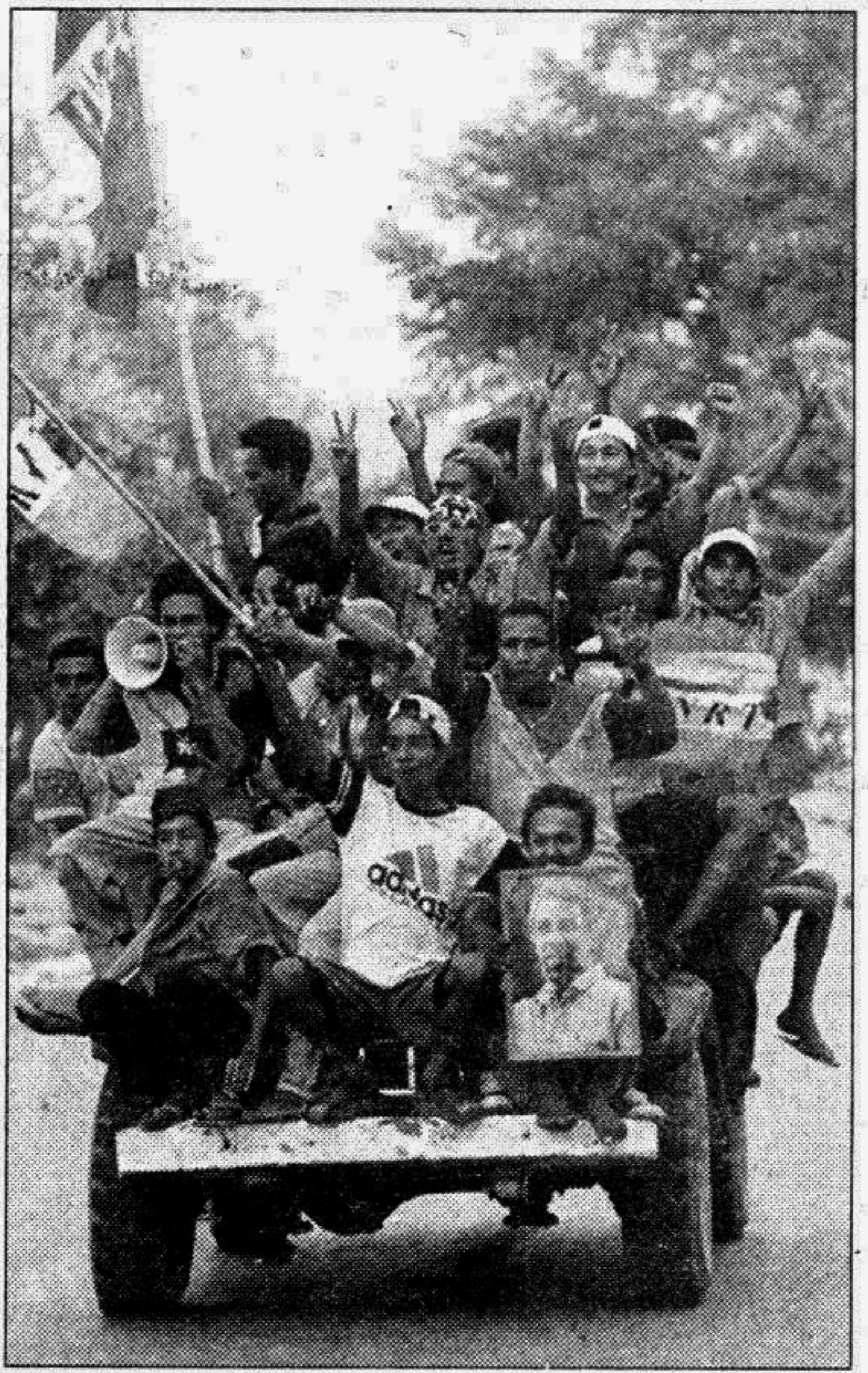
Nationwide on Friday afternoon a total of more than 350 people were still listed as trapped under rubble from Tuesday's pre-dawn quake, which measured 7.6 on the Richter scale, one of the largest worldwide this century.

As Coste spoke dozens of members of the Japan Disaster Relief Team fanned out after arriving on the scene.

Coste said he was piling out and heading to another site with his group, which specialises in using sonar equipment and sniffer dogs to detect signs of life.

"We told the Japanese what we do -- they don't listen, they just go in," he said, referring to a need for silence for the sonar to work properly. "We can't with all these people, all this noise, continue. It's not possible."

The COSI team ran into the



East Timorese pro-independence supporters flash v-signs, celebrating the withdrawal of a large number of Indonesian troops from the troubled territory Friday. Indonesia has speeded up the pace of the withdrawal of its troops as a multinational peacekeeping force officially took over.

Rains, tornado kill 9 in West Bengal

CALCUTTA, Sept 24: Incessant rains and a tornado killed nine people, forced 3,000 others to leave home for safer places and developed a flood like situation in 12 southern Bengal districts since last night, reports PTL.

The metropolis received a record concentration of 330 mm rainfall, which threw life out of gear, disrupting rail, road and air traffic.

Shops and business establishments remained closed, and even the state Secretariat recorded an attendance of merely 2.5 per cent.

State Home (police) Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya told newsmen that a woman, 25, and her five-year-old daughter were killed when their house collapsed at Amarpur village in Burdwan district last night.

Street protests leave 4 dead in Jakarta

JAKARTA, Sept 24: Three civilians and one policeman have been killed in mass street protests here over the past two days, hospital employees and the police said Friday, reports AFP.

A youth died Friday in hospital after being shot by security forces earlier in the day and two unidentified people were killed the previous day, they said. The policeman was found dead Thursday.

One youth, whose identity remains unknown, died here after he was brought in from Jakarta hospital, an employee in the emergency ward at the Cipto Mangunkusumo state hospital said.

India's first homegrown N-reactor activated

BOMBAY, Sept 24: Engineers cheered as India's first homegrown nuclear reactor was activated today, ready to start commercial operations by mid-October, reports AP.

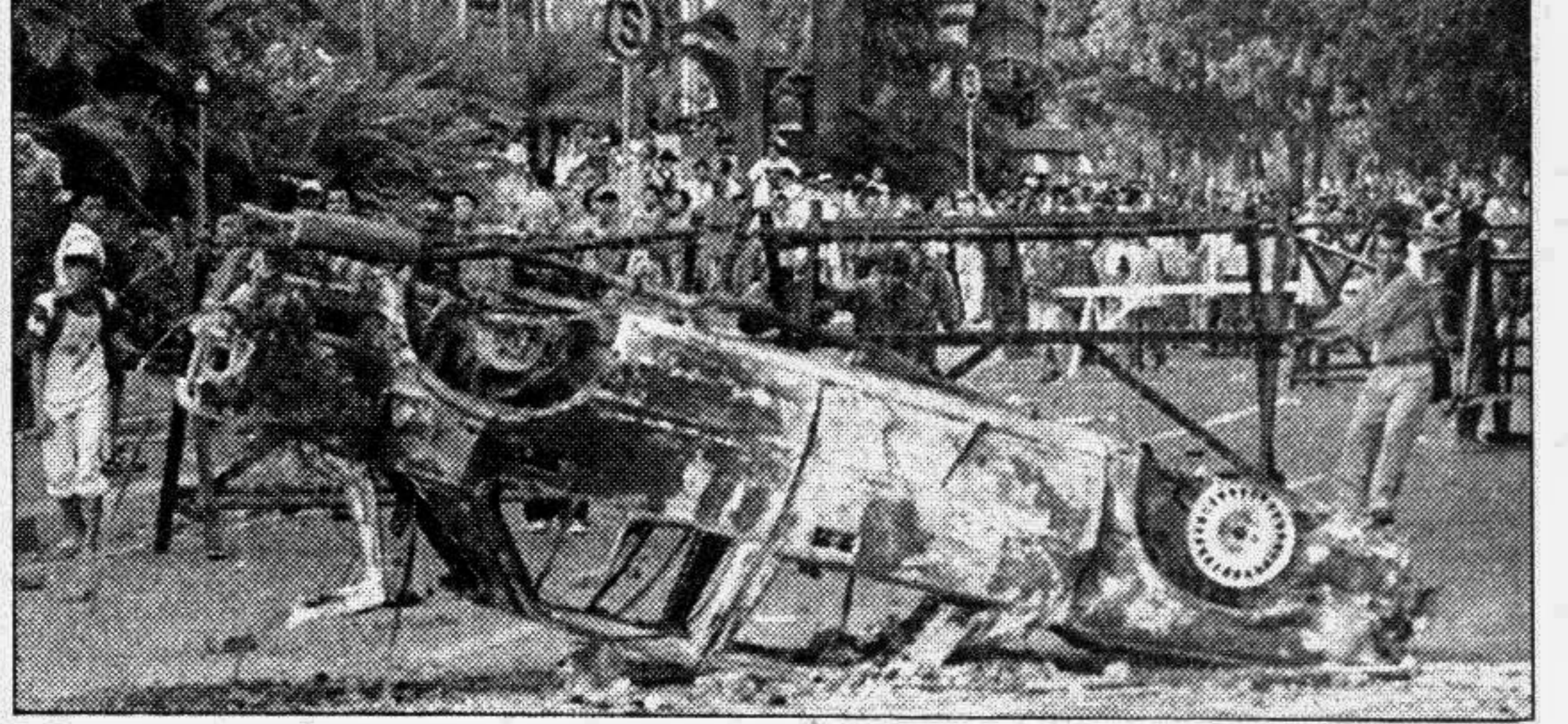
The 220-megawatt reactor in Kaiga in the southern state of Karnataka is being showcased as the first Indian reactor built fully with indigenous components.

Nuclear tests by India in May last year provoked international sanctions that dried up supplies of everything from software packages to safety valves.

About 3,000 workers spent months preparing for activation of the reactor, located on the banks of the Kali river and surrounded by dense forests, more than 700 kilometres southeast of Bombay, officials said.

Work on the reactor started in 1988, while India was under the first phase of sanctions imposed on it after conducting nuclear tests in 1974. Sanctions were extended in May last year after New Delhi conducted a second round of nuclear tests.

India's 10 nuclear power plants generate 1,840 megawatts of electricity. While three were built with American and Canadian technical collaboration in the 1960s, the others



Indonesian demonstrators set a barbed wire barricade in front of a burned car in Jakarta Friday around Atmajaya University, hours after security personnel had forced protesting students back into campus after a night-long running battle.

Kosovo to inevitably become independent from Yugoslavia: US

WASHINGTON, Sept 24: The United States believes that Kosovo will inevitably become independent from Yugoslavia and has privately stopped opposing the idea, the Washington Post reported Friday, quoting senior US officials, reports AFP.

Fearing regional destabilization, the United States and its regional allies have been insisting that Kosovo must remain part of Yugoslavia.

The United States officially opposed independence for Kosovo throughout the 78-day bombing campaign earlier in the year.

Yet now independence for Kosovo is "the mostly unspoken assumption" of all US policymakers, especially at the State Department and the Pentagon, an unnamed US official told the Post.

Nevertheless it is unlikely that Kosovo will become independent while Bill Clinton is still the US president.

"The issue of eventual status for Kosovo -- what their relationship to Serbia will be, what their relationship to Yugoslavia will be... will be taken up (at an international conference) in the future," a Clinton administration official told the Post.

NASA navigational error sends Mars Orbiter to fiery end

WASHINGTON, Sept 24: An unnoticed navigation error apparently sent the 900-million-dollar Mars Climate Orbiter probe to a fiery end above the red planet, NASA officials reluctantly acknowledged, reports AFP.

NASA engineers continued early Friday to reestablish contact with the unmanned Mars Climate Orbiter (MCO) after losing contact with it almost 24 hours earlier.

But National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientists admitted Thursday that the probe was probably destroyed when it was sent too close to the red planet -- an embarrassing error for an agency that prides itself in providing navigational precision.

"I felt sluggish (early Thursday) when I heard it," said Donna Shirley, the NASA manager who approved the project.

Everything was on track when the MCO concluded its 670 million km (416 million mile) voyage from Earth and fired its engines to enter an elliptic orbit 149.7 km (93 miles) above the Martian surface early Thursday.

That was the last contact between the engineers and the probe -- probably because the probe was not where NASA thought it was, said project manager Richard Cook.

DPRK takes small step to peace: US

TOKYO, Sept 24: North Korea was taking a small step forward by halting missile tests but much more needs to be done to resolve tensions on the peninsula, US special envoy William Perry said Friday, reports AFP.

Perry, who arrived here Thursday after a visit to South Korea, met Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi to explain his reassessment of policy towards North Korea.

Washington has promised to ease sanctions in response to Pyongyang's pledge to end long-range missile tests.

Shortly after Perry spoke, the North's official KCNA news agency said Pyongyang would not test-fire a missile during the current talks with the United States.

"In order to create an atmosphere more favourable for the talks we will not launch a missile for the duration of the talks," the agency quoted a foreign ministry spokesman as saying.

Perry had said the US side was expecting such a statement but a lot more work was still to be done.

"This was a small step but a positive one and I believe it will lead to more definitive actions in the weeks ahead," he told a news conference in Tokyo.

"Much more, much more remains to be done but we are started."

He said the halt on missile tests was likely only to include North Korea's long-range missiles, namely the new Taepodong II missiles.

It was not clear from the North's statement which missile test-firing they would halt.

Last August Pyongyang launched a medium-range Taepodong I missile, part of which flew over Japan, causing consternation in Seoul and Tokyo.

Nine killed in attacks Russian jets bomb Grozny

GROZNY, Russia, Sept 24: Russian warplanes blasted the capital of the breakaway republic of Chechnya on Friday the second day running, despite warnings from Grozny that it would riposte fresh strikes, reports AFP.

Four SU-25 ground-attack jets launched a dozen missiles at a former military base at Khamkale, which has been converted into a police headquarters, an AFP correspondent reported.

Bombing raids also targeted Chechen television installations in the village of Gulkaik, southeast of the capital, at around 10:25 a.m. (12:25 BST).

Chechen officials said nine people were killed in the attacks.

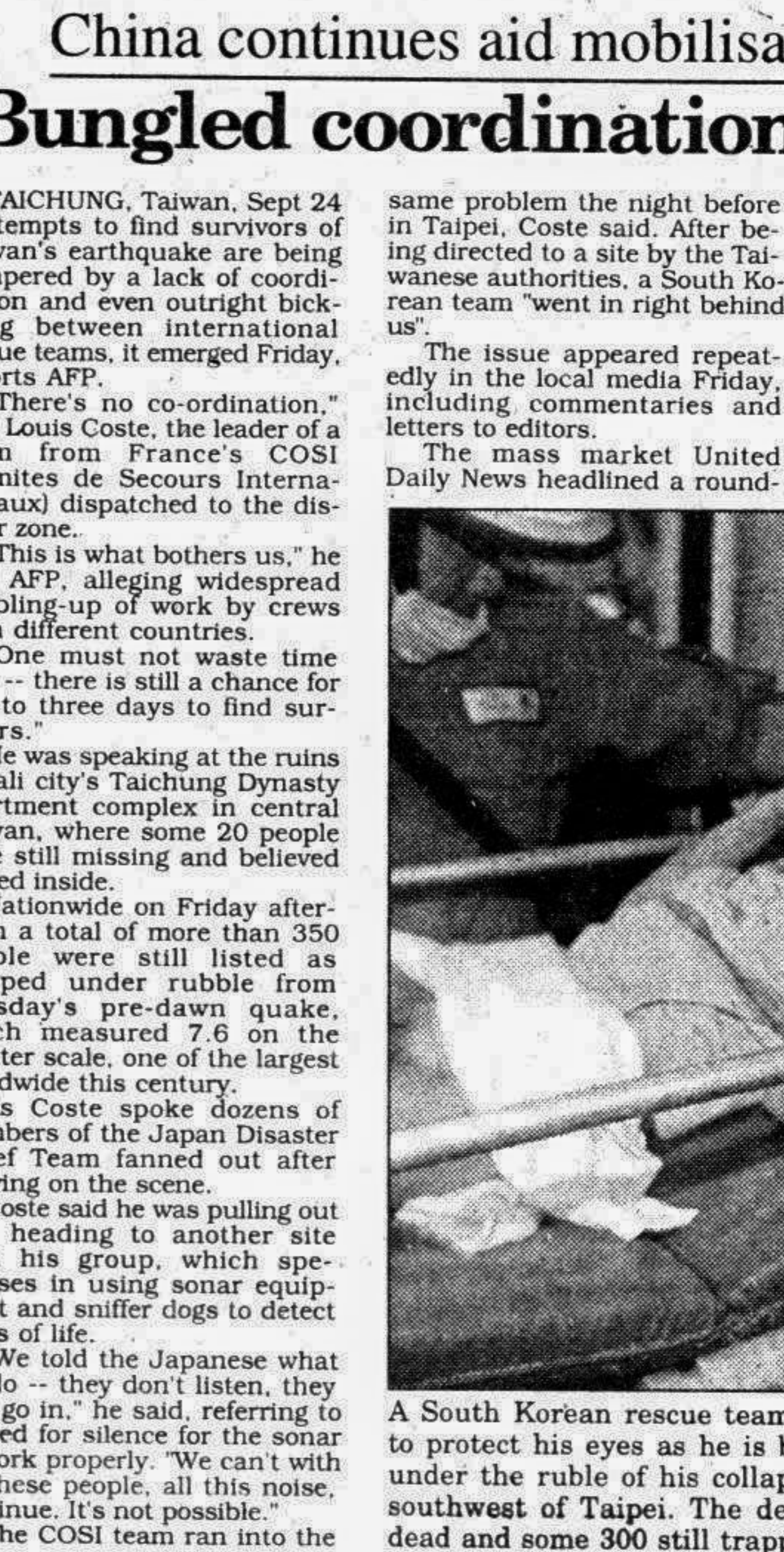
The latest strikes followed Russian airforce raids Thursday on Grozny's international Mansur airport and an oil refinery in a southwestern suburb, attacks which left eight people dead according to Chechen officials.

The blitz marks the first time Russian forces have attacked the Chechen capital since the end of the bloody 1994-96 war and edged Moscow closer to an all out war with its rebel republic.

Chechnya threatens action

Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov warned Thursday that Chechnya will take "measures" if Russia continues to bomb the breakaway province, Moscow Echo radio reported.

"Chechnya will take measures if Russia continues the air strikes," Maskhadov said after an emergency government meeting Thursday as Russian rockets hit the republic's only international airport.



A South Korean rescue team member (L) covers the face of six-year-old Chang Ching-hong to protect his eyes as he is being evacuated on a stretcher in an ambulance. He was found under the rubble of his collapsed apartment Friday after being buried for 87 hours in Tali, southwest of Taipei. The death toll from the 7.6 Richter scale quake has left over 2,100 dead and some 300 still trapped under debris from collapsed buildings.