India visit'

NEW DELHI, Nov 13: US Congressman Gary Ackerman yesterday asserted his country had not set any pre-condition like signing of CTBT for President Bill Clinton's visit to India and said the process of overcoming 'trust deficiency syndrome between the two countries had already begun, reports

Clinton intended to visit India and Pakistan, at the earliest possible time, he said but expressed doubts whether visit to Islamabad would take place in view of the military coup there.

There is no pre-condition. He (Clinton) intends to come here at the earliest possible time. Ackerman said in reply to question at a FICCI interaction whether there was any pre-condition set by the US for President Clinton's visit to In-

Stressing that both India and US have to create an enabling situation for a productive visit of Clinton possibly carly next year. Ackerman. however, said 'nuclear chilling' after Pokhran nuclear tests and signing of CTBT seem to be the crux of the problem for taking the bilateral relations to a higher point.

"I believe the process of overcoming the trust deficiency syndrome has already begun. The ongoing talks between US Secretary of State Strobe Tolbot and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh clearly indicate that we may at last be moving in the right direction," he said.

"I am very optimistic that these talks will usher in substantive shift in how we conduct our relations," he said adding "this shift in mindset and emphasis is very necessary to ensure us and India emerge as strategic partner." .

US deports record number of immigrants

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: Immigration officials said Friday they expelled 177,000 illegal immigrants from the United States in the last fiscal year - a third of whom had criminal records, reports AP.

The Immigration and Naturalisation Service said it was a record and a 3 per cent increase over the 171.154 undocumented aliens deported a year earlier.

There might have been more. but for the temporary suspension of deportations for Central American detainees whose homelands were devastated by Hurricane Mitch, officials said.

The INS' deported more even as undocumented population in the United States continued to grow. An estimated 5.5 million people live in the states illegally, a figure that swells by some 275,000 annually.

For the fiscal year ended on September 30, INS removed 62,359 criminal aliens — a 12 per cent increase over fiscal

INS Commissioner Doris Meissner attributed the increase to her agency's closer work with prisons to identify criminal aliens and start proceedings so deportation can occur immediately once the inmates finish their sentences.

The agency had been criticised for starting proceedings only after inmates were freed. with many of them slipping back into the community and failing to show up for deportation hearings.

Nearly half of last year's criminals expelled were immigrants with drug convictions.

Mexican nationals accounted for 83 per cent of removals and 77 per cent of criminal deportations. El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republican each accounted for 2 per cent of re-

ArchNet to provide resource on architecture

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: The Aga Khan yesterday addressed industry leaders, government officials and development executives from around the world at the World Bank on applying information technology to the problems of human capital and development needs, says a press

release. Lauding World Bank President James Wolfensohn's promotion of culture as a dimension of development, Aga Khan said, "For too long, culture was dismissed as either irrelevant or elitist, or was seen as an obstacle to development." He outlined three model ventures that President Wolfensohn characterised as "bridging the gap between technology and human-

Introducing ArchNet, an Internet-based network being developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. Aga Khan explained how it will provide students and professionals with a globally accessi-ble resource on architecture, urban design and related issues such as restoration, conservation and housing design and construction.

Health Maintenance, HIV and AIDS in a tropical region were challenges for which the international Aga Khan University's Advanced Nursing Programme in East Africa was being designed, using computerbased information technologies to link East African centres with the University's School of Nursing in Pakistan.

The programme, according to the Aga Khan, would "serve as a model of effective educational cooperation between two parts of the developing world" and "enhance the status of women by making them indispensable partners in societal advance-

'No precondition set for Clinton's US links Pak blasts to sanctions on Taliban

United States on Friday said it was unclear who fired rockets at US and UN facilities in Pakistan, but officials linked the attack to sanctions set to take effect in two days against Afghanistan's Taliban movement, reports Reuters.

"It's a barbaric way to send a message if that's what it is." White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said of the blasts in Islamabad on Friday.

"The United States strongly condemns these attacks." State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

State Department, White House and intelligence officials all said it was not yet clear who was responsible for the attacks. "We can't rule out anybody until

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: The the investigation continues," Rubin said.

But a US intelligence offi-cial, noting the attacks targeted UN offices, said, "It's looking like it's probably related somehow to the UN sanctions issue."

Beginning on Sunday, the United Nations is to impose US backed sanctions on the Taliban unless Afghanistan deports Saudi born dissident Osama bin Laden to face charges he masterminded the bombing of two US embassies in Africa last year that killed

more than 200 people.
"It could be Taliban-inspired or related, it could be Bin Laden, or it could be somebody who is a fundamentalist responding to statements made by the Taliban," said the intelligence

official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The weapons appear to be homemade," the official added. At about 1:25 am EST (12.25 BST) "nine projectiles were launched from three parked vehicles" near the US Embassy and the American Centre in Islamabad, Rubin said.

The vehicles contained "improvised launchers," and the rockets did not hit the US Embassy compound but struck the fence surrounding the American Centre, where some windows broke, and exterior walls were damaged, he said.

A Pakistani guard near the American Centre was wounded, but Rubin said he was out of danger. "There are no reports of any Americans injured."



Police remove tinted panels from the windows of a jeep as security is stepped up a day after a series of bomb blasts in the capital city of Islamabad yesterday. Security has been tightened across Pakistan following six blasts aimed at US and United Nations buildings. in Islamabad. -AFP photo

Russian troops kill 200 Chechen fighters

MOSCOW, Nov 13: Russian planes carried out a record number of bombing excursions over rebel republic Chechnya and its capital Grozny overnight Friday, Russian military sources said, claiming they had killed more than 200

Chechen fighters, reports AFP. Meanwhile, Russian troops flushed out rebels in recentlycaptured Gudermes, Chechnya's second city, the same sources

reported Saturday, cited by ITAR-TASS news agency. The sources said they had forced Chechen rebels who were

hiding in Gudermes, 30 km east of the capital Grozny, to flee. Regular troops seized Gudermes Friday after poundtillery fire for more than a The army high command for

ing the city with rocket and ar-

the northern Caucasus said favourable weather overnight Friday led to the success of the bombing missions over Chechnya

SU-24 and SU-25 aeroplanes and helicopters left on a total of 180 missions, bombing Grozny, the village of Argun, south of the capital and the western Chechen villages of Bamut and

Samachki. The attacks destroyed three rebel communication centres, 30 cars belonging to the rebels and two Chechen regiments, as well as killing 200 rebels.

Russian military sources also reported Saturday they had fought off an attack by 400 rebel fighters to the south of the capi-

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Saturday the Russian military offensive in Chechnya would continue until peace was restored in the region, according to the Interfax news agency.

In a telephone conversation with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, Putin said Moscow was ready to consider a diplomatic solution to the conflict, but that he would not negotiate with "those photographed in front of the bodies of our citizens."

BRIFFIE trials

Myanmar frees 21 NLD members: Myanmar's junta has freed 21 members of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) after more than a year in

jail, party sources said Saturday, AFP reports from Yangon. An NLD official said the members of the party's youth and women's central work committees, along with Yangon-based NLD organisers, had been detained since September 1998. The last of the group was freed on November 4, he said, adding that some 40 NLD members were still imprisoned in Myanmar's notorious jails.

Russia bans neo-Nazi party: A Russian court Friday banned the neo-Nazi party Spas (Salvation) from taking part in parliamentary elections in December, granting an application by the justice ministry, the Interfax news agency reported, AFP says from Moscow.

The cancellation of the party's registration for the elections was made on the basis that some of the documentation presented contained false information on its regional branches. The party's lawyer said he would appeal the ruling, Interfax

Mafia boss arrested in S Africa: Alleged Sicilian Mafia kingpin Vito Palazzolo, who has lived in South Africa for 13 years, was arrested Friday by the South African crack police Scorpions unit on a fraud charge, the Saturday Star newspaper reported, Xinhua reports from Johannesburg.

Palazzolo was arrested in Western Cape where he has a home. But he was later granted bail of 500,000 rand (83,000 US dollars) in the Cape Town Regional Court at a short bail hearing. The fraud charge relates to his application for South African citizenship in 1994. He had allegedly given false information.

300 Falungong members face

BEIJING Nov 13: At least 300 members of the banned Falungong group are awaiting trial in China, while up to 1,000 are expected to be sent without trial for "education through labour" in camps, a Hong Kongbased rights group said today, reports AFP.

A detailed report on the fate of the outlawed group was issued by the Information Center for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China early Saturday, a day after four Falungong leaders were jailed for between two to 12 years.

China's State Council announced earlier this week that 111 followers of the group had been formally arrested as of November 4. On Saturday, the centre said scores of others had been arrested since.

On November 11, seven people in Shijiazhuang, in the northern province of Hebei, were formally charged with "using evil religion to violate the law," a charge similar to that on which Friday's four were convicted in the southern city of Haikou.



British Prime Minister Tony Blair (L) listens during an executive session meeting at the Commonwealth heads of state summit in Durban yesterday. - AFP photo

New computer virus threatens servers, PCs

SANTA CLARA, California, Nov 13: A warning was issued Friday on the new computer virus FunLove, after the antivirus emergency response team (AVERT) of the company Network Associates upgraded in "medium risk, on

watch, reports AFP. The symptoms of the virus are "subtle" and may take days to detect, according to Network Associates.

Computers know they have the virus when the message "Fun Loving Criminal" appears on the screen, and network servers are especially at risk

"AVERT, who discovered the virus on November 9, has increased concern as it has seen the virus rapidly infect and spread on both desktop and server systems." Network Associates said.

Technically known as W32, FunLove was first identified in Britain, and is spread on the Windows 95 and 98, and Windows NT operating systems using networks to spread itself.

The virus works by copying a file called flcss.exe into the system folder, and when the file is "executed" under DOS it tries to reset the computer to load Windows, slowing up the entire process and spreading the virus between systems.

Clinton, Yeltsin to meet at OSCE summit

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: US President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin will meet next week in Istanbul. where the two leaders will be attending a summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) US national security adviser Samuel Berger said Friday, reports AFP.

Arrangements for the meeting were made after Yeltsin informed Washington of his intention to attend the Istanbul forum, which will bring together leaders of 55 membernations of the OSCE, Berger

Yeltsin's summit participation had been in question because the Russian president has not been seen at the Kremlin since October 27, when he attended a medal presentation ceremony before taking a vacation at the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

The vacation and his subsequent stay at his country home has led to rumours about possible new health troubles for the ailing Russian leader.

But Berger said Yeltsin "has indicated that he intends to attend, and the president will meet with him.

"In addition to Chechnya, we will discuss with President Yeltsin arms control, ABM-NMD (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and missile defence) issues, and the importance of the Russian elections coming up in December, and again, the presidential elections next year." the US national security adviser pointed out.

Bandit Queen mugged

NEW DELHI, Nov 13: India's "Bandit Queen" Phoolan Devi. still facing charges for murdering 20 men to avenge her gang rape, was robbed in New Delhi by two armed teenagers, her husband said here today.

"Perhaps the pair did not recognise her," Ummaid Singh told AFP of the 37-year-old Devi whose life on the run in the ravines of central India's Hindu heartland has become the subject of movies and books.

"She was absolutely alone yesterday night when the two miscreants pounced on her and took her purse which contained not only 30,000 rupees (700 dol-lars) but also her passport." Singh said. "This is all yery embarrass-

ing." the husband said and added that Devi after the Friday night mugging at an upscale Belhi district left for her conndian state of Uttar Pradesh. Devi won back her Mirzapur

parliamentary seat by defeating her Hindu nationalist rival by a margin of 84,492 votes in the September-October general elections this year.

The bandit queen's husband said he has sought the help of the police to recover her pass-

"We are not bothered about the money but we hope the police can find the passport and other vital papers," Singh said.

Spice Girls again on top

LONDON, Nov 13: The Spice Girls, Britain's biggest pop export since the Beatles, have topped the charts again — with the biggest selling album of the decade, reports Reuters.

A new list compiled by industry expert Cliff Dane in Rock Accounts '99 showed that sales

of the Spice Girls' 1996 debut album topped 20 million pounds (32 million dollars). Second in the chart was Elton John for his soundtrack

"The Lion King." And then — to rub in their superiority — The Spice Girls made third in the list with their followup album "Spiceworld" which also became a huge hit

from the Disney cartoon classic

The multi-million selling pop sensations - down to four after their acrimonious split with "Ginger Spice" Gcri Haliiwell - have vowed to stay together despite branching out to make a string of solo hits. They are now working on a third album.

around the world.

Evidence found against Sharif: Karachi police

KARACHI, Nov 13: Police investigating allegations that ousted Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif plotted to kill the country's military ruler said today they had found evidence against him and would arrest him soon.

idence against Nawaz Sharif and he will be arrested any moment," Karachi police chief Javed Igbal told AFP. "The evidence came after

three witnesses recorded their statements before the police officials investigating the case."
Sharif was ousted in a military coup last month and has been held in detention since.

Late Wednesday he was accused of conspiring to kill the country's military ruler Sharif and other's involvement

as mentioned in the FIR," Iqbal

"He has not been formally arrested as yet as lots of logis-tics are involved because he has to be brought to Karachi. But now his arrest is certain."

Sharif, 50, was pushed from office on October 12 after he tried to sack Musharraf, then head of the army, while Musharraf was out of the coun-

Sharif was accused of trying to prevent a commercial jet carrying the returning general and 198 passengers from landing at Karachi airport on the night of the coup.

Police sources said the three witnesses were staffers of the Civil Aviation Authority and were present at Karachi's Air Traffic Control centre on the

Staff from Pakistan was operating the flight, were due to give evidence Saturday. the sources said.

paper said in an editorial Saturday Sharif should not face a show trial but should be given a fair hearing.

UN plane crashes in Kosovo: 24 killed

PLANA, Yugoslavia, Nov 13: All 24 people on board the UN plane which crashed in northern Kosovo on Friday are dead, a spokesman for the NATO-led KFOR said today, reports AFP. He said the bodies would be left at the scene of the crash un-

til French and Italian investigators arrived later Saturday. But other KFOR sources said the bodies had been removed to Pristina.

The wreckage of the plane was located late Friday by helicopters in a landmine-riddled area close to Kosovska Mitrovica.

It had crashed into a steep hillside 12 km from the town, Major Roland Lavoie, a Pristing-based spokesman for the KFOR peacekeeping force said late Friday.

Chief UN spokesman Fred

Eckhard told reporters in New York the plane was in pieces "None of the people on board are believed to have survived," he The plane carried 21 passen-

gers and three crew when it dis-

appeared on Friday. It is a daily

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: The

State Department is urging US

citizens traveling abroad to be

alert to any action that the

Taliban-led government in

Afghanistan may take as UN

Security Council sanctions

against the regime take effect

In a "worldwide caution" is-

sued Friday, the department

noted that the sanctions will

take effect unless Taliban au-

thorities turn over for trial sus-

pected terrorist Osama bin

Laden who is wanted by US law

enforcement agencies for the

bombings of the US embassies

in Kenya and Tanzania last

The statement noted that

Taliban leader Mullah Omar

warned of unspecified retribu-

of the planned sanctions.

their homes.

tion against US citizens because

In separate announcements.

the State Department reaf-

firmed its warning to US citi-

zens not to travel to

Afghanistan and warned Amer-

icans residing in or travelling

to Pakistan to exercise extreme

caution and limit travel outside

it is not known if the rockets

launched at UN and US Em-

bassy offices in Pakistan are

Dismissing the Taliban's

condemnation of a string of

rocket attacks on US and other

installations in Pakistan's

capital, Islamabad, Clinton

connected with the sanctions.

The announcement also said

this weekend, reports AP.

"The plane has apparently crashed into a steep hillside 12 km northeast of Mitrovica," the NATO-led KFOR peacekeeping force said in a statement released in Kosovo the early hours of Saturday morning,

soon after the crash site was lo-

Rome, where the WFP has its

province since June.

headquarters.

the crash.

on Afghanistan

Weather conditions were relatively normal when the plane disappeared around midday, KFOR said.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, visiting Beijing, issued a statement through Eckhard late on Friday New York time saying he was "shocked and deeply saddened by the news of

administration officials said

Friday that no group is being

ruled out in an investigation

dent, Ambassador Danilo Turk

of Slovenia, said in New York

that "sanctions will go into ef-

fect automatically" if the Tal-

that controls most of

Afghanistan - does not hand

over Bin Laden, the fugitive

Saudi accused of running a ter-

range of reasons, is outside even

the most reasonable, most elas-

tic definition of acceptable in-

ternational behaviour," said

White House national security

into effect on the 14th," Berger

noted, adding: "We're glad that

the international community is

now about to embrace the sanc-

tions that we imposed upon the

Taliban unilaterally some

cott of Afghanistan's airline, a

freeze on the Taliban's assets

abroad and a ban on invest-

ments in the South Asian

by the United States last

month, permits exemptions to

the flight ban for humanitarian

reasons or to allow Afghan citi-

zens to go on a religious pil-

grimage to Mecca. Saudi Ara-

The UN resolution, drafted

The sanctions include a boy-

"The UN resolution will go

adviser Sandy Berger.

"The Taliban, for a whole

iban — a militant Islamic group

The Security Council presi-

that has barely begun.

rorist network.

weeks ago.'

country.

A mother sits beside her child in the children's ward of a

Kabul hospital on Wednesday. Afghanistan's war-ravaged

people fear United Nations sanctions will push them

further into poverty with winter fast approaching and

the prices of food and medicine soaring in street markets.

hand over indicted terrorist Osama bin Laden.

US warns travellers ahead of sanctions

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 13: today, reports AFP.

Senior party officials said that while the ruling front is

coalition told AFP that Mahathir has to pick election

Anwar's boys. A lot of jockeying is going on. Mahathir is busy."

sacking and subsequent jailing of former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim has divided the politically dominant Malays. Mahathir is expected to reveal the list of candidates

within the next four days after party.

isters of their ability to win if picked," an aide to a minister from Mahathir's ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) told AFP.

nated on November 20, nine days before the general election. There will be 193 parliamentary seats for the country's lower house, and 394 state seats for the 13 state assemblies up for grabs.

woman jumped into the burning funeral pyre of her husband in a northern Indian village as hundreds of people watched the ancient practice of 'Sati', a newspaper reported Saturday.

The government of Uttar Pradesh, where the incident took place Thursday, said the woman was alone at the funeral

The Hindu rite was banned in 1829, but still persists in rare cases, usually in remote villages in northern India.

In 1987, a woman jumped into the burning pyre of her husband in the village of Deorala in Rajasthan state, egged on by hundreds of people who hailed her sacrifice.

The Pioneer newspaper said hundreds of villagers gathered in Satpurwa village in Mohaba district after it was publicised that the woman would commit

bridal attire and joined villagers at the cremation site, considered in itself unusual in India, where only men attend funerals. As villagers chanted "Jai Sati Maiya" or "Hail Sati

Mother Goddess," the woman

The woman, whose name not

given, dressed herself in her

jumped into the flames and died quickly, the report said. The government tried to play down the incident, some 100

The UN Security Council will impose sanctions on Afghamistan today unless the ruling Taliban militias kilometres south of state capital Lucknow, saying it was a sudden decision and police did -AFP photo not know about it.

General Pervez Musharraf in a First Information Report, the first step in lodging a criminal case in Pakistan. He is also being investigated for kidnapping and attempting to hijack a plane. If convicted he could face the death penalty. "We have found the direct ev-"The evidence clearly shows

night. International Airlines, which

The influential Dawn news-

Storms leave 10 dead in France flight, used by many of the aid workers, UN officials and jour-TOULOUSE, France, Nov 13:

nalists who have poured into night and 10 were missing after the war-scarred Serbian storms and flooding in southwest France where emergency measures had been put in The twin turbo-propellered ATR-42 had been chartered by place, authorities said today, the UN's World Food Proreports AFP. gramme agency to fly to the Kosovo capital Pristina from

Four members of the same family died overnight Friday when their house was buried under a mudslide, caused by the heavy rains in the town of Labastide-Rouairoux, in the Tarn department. Another person was missing. In the Aude region, a mother and her three children died

Ten people were killed over-

driver was declared missing in the same area. Another victim fell and drowned after suffering a seizure.

when their was carried away by

torrential waters, a fireman at

the scene said. Another car-

Ten other people were described as missing in the region, according to local authorities, who said witnesses had seen cars falling into overflowing rivers and being swept

Mahathir 'cool' but battle for seats heats up

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is shoring up his political power-base despite challenges to his leadership in the build-up to this month's election, officials said

the favourite to win the November 29 polls, Mahathir's effort to secure the presidency of his party has just began. A top member of the ruling

candidates he can trust to stay loyal at party elections next "He has to push aside

Political analysts say the

intense lobbying within the "The jockeying of seats is intense at the state level as UMNO candidates will have to convince the various chief min-

Candidates will be nomi-

Hindu practice of 'Sati' still persists NEW DELHI, Nov 13: A