

Brazilian firm joins race to sell AWACS plane to India

NEW DELHI, Dec 10: A Brazilian aircraft manufacturer has joined the race to sell an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) plane to India, officials said today, reports AFP.

Officials from Brazil's Embraer company rejected speculation that the firm was negotiating with Islamabad for the sale of similar military hardware to the Pakistani armed forces.

"On the contrary, we are fully concentrated and focused on supporting Indian aviation and armed forces," Embraer Walter Nori told reporters.

Sources said the company was campaigning to sell its EMB-145 remote-sensing aircraft, which is capable of 360-degree detection and tracking of air and sea targets, to the Indian Air Force.

The Brazilian firm argues the EMB-145 compares favourably with Israel's Phalcon AWACS, which is also in the race in India.

Russia, India's closest political ally and which accounts for 70 percent of the military hardware in New Delhi's inventory, also hopes to fit India's airforce with an AWACS.

India began scouting around for AWACS for its air force, the world's fourth largest, after a locally-built prototype crashed in January 1999.

Israeli defence ministry's director general Amos Yaron visited India in September to try and promote several arms deals, including the sale of the Phalcon.

India needs at least two AWACS in the near future for its 1,200-aircraft air force.

64 immigrants detained in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 10: Malaysian authorities have detained 64 illegal immigrants from Myanmar who were being smuggled into the country to work as labourers, a report said today, reports AFP.

Officers from the anti-smuggling unit made the catch after following a car along the Malaysian border with Thailand in the northern state of Kedah, the New Sunday Times said.

A long queue of men was seen boarding a lorry as the car approached it, the report said.

The officers stopped the lorry after following it for a short distance and found 63 men packed into the back and one other next to the driver, the newspaper added.

A senior anti-smuggling unit official Jamaluddin Hussin was quoted as saying that this was the largest group of illegals to be detained this year.

None of the 64 had valid travel documents, he said, adding that one of the men was believed to be an agent from Myanmar with links to local syndicates.

The immigrants, aged between 13 and 35, were believed to be smuggled into the country to work as construction labourers, the newspaper said.

Kashmir leaders ask India to decide on Pakistan visit

NEW DELHI, India, Dec 10: Kashmir's main alliance of separatist parties urged Indian leaders today to decide on their request to visit Pakistan to hold peace talks on the disputed Himalayan region, reports AFP.

Kashmir's All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) also hinted it would try and dissuade Kashmiri separatist groups from attacking Indian forces and instead permit the APHC umbrella forum to negotiate with New Delhi.

APHC Chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said: "Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has said that the government would consider sending us to Pakistan."

"Let him decide, we are not going to ask for favours," Bhat said here.

Indian PM Vajpayee said Thursday that India was willing to consider any request from Kashmir's main alliance of separatist parties to visit Pakistan.

Pakistan welcomed Vajpayee's statement Friday and said Islamabad was prepared to be flexible on the "details" of its proposal for a three-way dialogue between Kashmiri leaders, India and Pakistan.

India has, however, rejected any possibility of "so-called tripartite talks," with Vajpayee's comments indicating an informal, indirect dialogue between the three parties might be considered.

The offer to the Hurriyat was the latest in several recent initiatives taken by India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

Vajpayee on November 27 ordered a ceasefire during the holy Islamic month of Ramadan in Kashmir. Pakistan then promised "maximum restraint" on the border and said it would talk to the Hurriyat to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

APHC chief Bhat said: "We understand the

times ahead may be harder and going forward may be tougher but then considering the situation, there is no alternative available to any of us other than a purposeful and substantive dialogue."

Bhat, who has been camping out in the Indian capital for the past seven days, said the Hurriyat's objectives were similar to those of the militants -- to secure self-rule for the Kashmiri people.

"To be very honest, the goal of Hurriyat and the militants is the same. While we fight with argument, they fight with gun," he told reporters.

"This is to say that there has to be an interaction between the militants and the politicians and this is the rationale behind our proposal to talk to the boys in that part of Kashmir (administered by Pakistan)," Bhat said.

122 countries agree on treaty to ban 'dirty dozen'

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 10: Delegates from 122 countries reached agreement in Johannesburg today on a convention to ban or severely restrict 12 of the world's most toxic chemicals, reports AFP.

The "dirty dozen" persistent organic pollutants (POPs) range from industrial chemicals to insecticides.

They are linked to birth defects, cancer, and developmental problems in children, and spread throughout the world, entering the food chain.

"This new treaty will protect present and future generations from the cancers, birth defects and other tragedies caused by POPs," said conference chairman John Buccini of Canada in a statement announcing the agreement.

Klaus Toepfer, executive director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), commented: "This is a sound and effective treaty that can be updated and expanded over the coming decades to maintain the best possible protection against POPs."

The environmental organisation Greenpeace welcomed the agreement, commenting in a statement: "This agreement sends a clear message to industries that they must reform and stop using our Earth as a testing ground for their dangerous pollutants."

The agreement by the close to 600 delegates came around 7:30 a.m. (1130 BST) after they had met through the night.

It marked the end of five rounds of negotiations over two-and-a-half years.

The convention will be signed in Stockholm on May 22-23 and become a legally binding treaty once it has been ratified by 50 countries, a process that Buccini said would take four or five years.

The convention makes provision for adding chemicals to the POPs list in future.

It makes an exemption for DDT in the meantime to allow its use in

controlling malaria, a disease that kills more than a million people a year.

It also provides exemptions -- with deadlines -- for specific countries to phase out various POPs.

Governments may maintain until 2025, in a way which prevents leaks, existing electrical transformers and other equipment in which polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are used. They are no longer produced, but hundreds of thousands of tonnes of PCBs are still in use in such equipment.

Control mechanisms in the convention cover the production, import, export, disposal and use of POPs.

Governments are to promote the best available technologies and practices for replacing existing POPs while preventing the development of new POPs. UNEP said.

"They will draw up national legislation and develop action plans for carrying out their commitments."

Funding to allow developing countries to give up their reliance on POPs will come from a new "mechanism" -- a victory for the Third World, which had argued against the use of the existing Global Environmental Facility because it has failed to disburse all the money allocated. The text calls for regulation of such chemicals with the aim of preventing their production or use.

The United States and a number of other industrialised countries had argued for the precautionary principle to be restricted to the introductory preamble, where it would have had less force.

The 12 POPs comprise eight pesticides (aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex and toxaphene), two industrial chemicals (PCBs and hexachlorobenzene, which is also a pesticide) and two unwanted by-products of combustion and industrial processes (dioxins and furans).

Assam admin asks people to fight militants with 'sticks and stones'

Guwahati.

"This move can be a major deterrent against rebel attacks and prove to be very effective."

The violence has sparked panic within the Marwari business community from the northern Indian state of Rajasthan and people from the eastern state of Bihar, who have been the main targets of the recent murderous campaign.

Both communities control the bulk of trade and commerce in oil and timber-rich Assam, where their presence is long established.

The Assam governor said people's participation was necessary to end the bloodletting.

"What we need is the support of

the people to come forward and fight the terror unleashed by the militants," Sinha said.

"Already there has been a massive public outcry over the killings and with people taking to the streets to protest such massacres."

Governor Sinha said unarmed villagers had "lynched" or caught 43 suspected militants in the past three years in separate incidents.

"That is in itself an indication that people are revolting against militancy," the governor said, adding that the state government was also setting up "Village Defence Parties" across Assam.

The governor's prescription came a day after India put federal troops on maximum alert in

Assam and in the adjoining state of Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday to prevent more massacres.

Army, police and paramilitary soldiers in the two states have already launched a crackdown.

More than 10,000 people have died in separatist-linked violence in Assam during the last decade.

Besides being rich in resources, Assam is India's tea-producing heartland and accounts for 55 percent of the country's annual production of 806 million kilograms.

Separate homeland drives spearheaded by several militant outfits here have forced many traditional tea-growers to abandon businesses and shift to other states.



বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্প গবেষণা পরিষদ (বিশিগপ)

Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR)

Ref. Tender No.: MBL/com/Lib/soft/ten/2000-2001/2 Date: 10-12-2000

Corrigendum

It is notified for general information of all concern that the tender notice No MBL/com/Lib/soft/ten/2000-2001/1 published in The Daily Star, Sangbad, Observer and Muktakanta on 05 December 2000 and 06 December 2000 respectively is hereby informed that the tender(s) may be dropped in the tender box kept in the office of the Project Director or before 12:00 hours (noon) on 19 December 2000 and will be opened at 12:30 hours (noon) in the same date. Other terms & conditions will be remained same.

Dr Mirza Mohd Rezaul Islam
Project Director
Modernization of BCSIR Library.

GD-1142



Leon County sheriff's department officers Larry Folsom (L) and Paul Pruitt (C) remove ballots after counting was stopped at the public library on Saturday in Tallahassee, Florida. The US Supreme Court halted manual recounts of disputed presidential votes in Florida and scheduled hearings for December 11 on Republican George W. Bush's appeal of a Florida Supreme Court ruling. --AFP photo

BCIC Tender Notice

বিশিগিপসি র মা শিল্প গবেষণা পরিষদ (বিশিগপ)

Sealed tenders are hereby invited by the Managing Director, TSP Complex Ltd, Patenga, Chittagong from the BCIC enlisted contractors for the following works:

Sl No	Description of works	Estimated cost	Cost of tender documents (non-refundable)	Category of contractors participate
1	Renovation of TSP Bulk & Granulation Plant (Re-tender).	Tk. 9,90,020/00	Tk. 500/-	A-3 & Higher.

Tender documents will be available from (i) Accounts Department, BCIC 30-31, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka, (ii) BCIC branch office, 6, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong, & (iii) TSP Complex Ltd, Patenga, Chittagong up to 24-12-2000. Tender will be received on 25-12-2000 in the tender box kept at (i) Construction Division, BCIC, 30-31, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka, (ii) TSP Complex Ltd, Patenga, Chittagong up to 12:00 Noon & will be opened immediately thereafter in presence of tenderers, if any. In case the tender could not be opened due to unavoidable circumstance the same shall be opened on next govt office working day at the mentioned time & venue.

The authority reserves the right to accept/reject any or the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

BCIC 1094-4/12/2000
DFF-29610-6/12
G-2163

Managing Director

World's longest fingernails up for sale

HONG KONG, Dec 10: A retired Indian photographer who has grown his fingernails for almost half a century is finally calling it quits and will auction them off to the highest bidder, reports Reuters.

Shridhar Chillal from Pune, near Bombay, has been a permanent fixture in the Guinness Book of World Records for the last 20 years as the man with the world's longest nails.

Each one measuring over one metre, they sprout like snakes from a misshapen left hand, which is permanently disfigured from the extra weight that Chillal, now 64, has been carrying around.

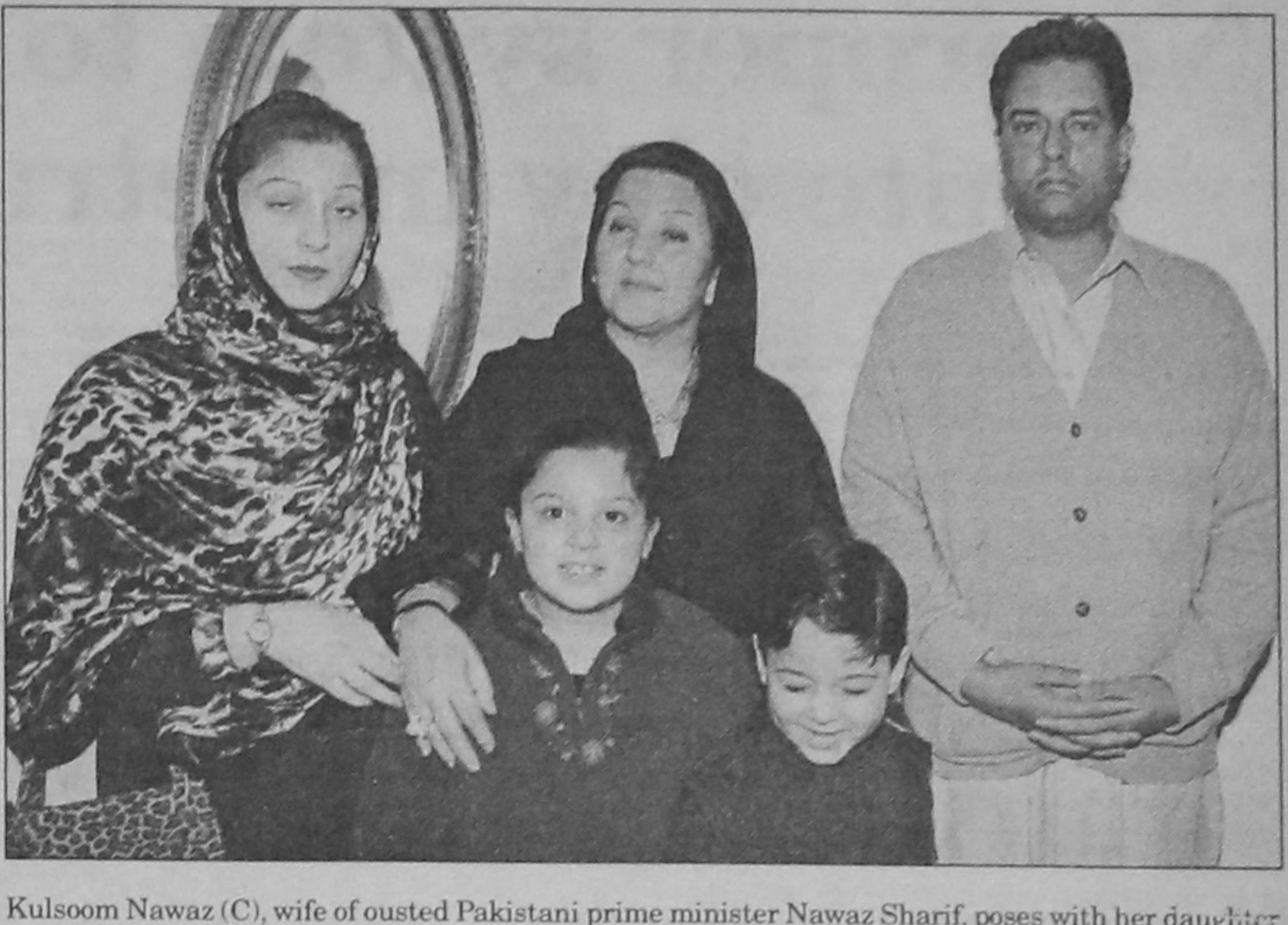
Unsheathing them recently for Reuters from what looks like an oversized protective golf club case, Chillal's five precious appendages hardly resemble fingernails upon close examination.

Tiger cub undergoes heart surgery

COLLEGE STATION, Texas, Dec 10: A 5-month-old tiger cub is recovering in intensive care after undergoing heart bypass surgery to correct a congenital heart defect, the first time the operation has been performed on a tiger, reports AP.

Karma, the Bengal tiger cub, was on a ventilator at Texas A&M University's Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital after a veterinary surgeon and a heart surgeon conducted the five-hour operation on Saturday.

"This is the first time such a procedure has been performed on a tiger and the next 48 hours are crucial," said Dr Terry Fossom, chief of surgery at the College of Veterinary Medicine, who performed the surgery along with Dr Charles D Fraser Jr, chief of cardiovascular surgery at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.



Kulsoom Nawaz (C), wife of ousted Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif, poses with her daughter Maryam Safdar (L), son-in-law Mohammad safdar (R), grandson Junaid and granddaughter Mehrun Nisa, before leaving Pakistan for Saudi Arabia yesterday. Sharif and his family left Pakistan for Saudi Arabia after being granted a presidential pardon and sent into exile.

-- AFP photo

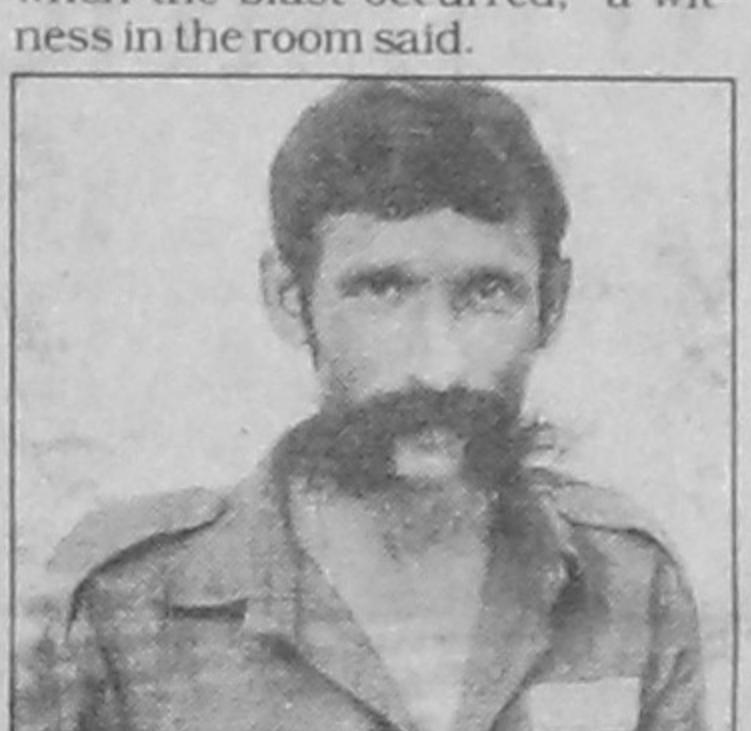
Grenade attack on governor's home in Aceh

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia, Dec 10: Suspected separatist rebels in the Indonesian province of Aceh have launched a grenade attack on the governor's home, as elsewhere sporadic violence claimed two lives, reports AFP.

A grenade exploded outside the governor's official residence as visiting Forestry Minister Nurmaluddin Ismail and other guests were inside, Aceh police chief Superintendent Sayed Husaini said Sunday.

No one was injured in the attack Saturday evening. But security guards firing at a van that carried the attackers injured two other men in a passing car, Husaini said.

"Everyone, including the minister, who were in the residence's main hall dropped to the floor when the blast occurred," a witness in the room said.



BSF joins manhunt for Veerappan

NEW DELHI, Dec 10: Indian border troops are to join a manhunt for the country's most wanted bandit who last month freed a matinee idol after holding him hostage for 108 days, officials said today, reports AFP.

A spokesman for the Border Security Force (BSF) said three battalions of around 3,000 soldiers would join the manhunt for Veerappan in forests along the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

"One battalion is likely to be flown out today and two more would go in the next three days," a BSF official said in New Delhi.

<p