

BRIEFLY

US to send agri experts to USSR: President George Bush announced Monday he would send two missions of agricultural experts to assess Soviet food requirements for the coming winter and facilitate aid distribution, reports AFP from Kennebunkport.

The teams of experts will share their findings with other members of the Group of Seven (G-7) industrialized countries in order to coordinate aid projects, the White House said.

Agriculture under Secretary Richard Crowder will head off with the first team this week to hold meetings with officials in Moscow and the republics.

24 Hindu worshippers hurt in blast: At least 24 Hindu worshippers were injured in a bomb blast at a temple, in the north Indian city of Jammu on Monday, Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported, says Reuter from New Delhi.

Quoting officials, PTI said a curfew had been imposed in some areas of Jammu, winter capital of India's Jammu and Kashmir state, to quell mobs who went on the rampage after the blast.

PTI said two people had been arrested, one of them when he attempted to leave the scene of the blast.

Venezuela recognizes Baltic states: Venezuela Monday recognized the independence of the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the Foreign Ministry announced, reports AFP.

President Carlos Andres Perez waited for President George Bush to extend US diplomatic recognition. Bush did so Monday — before making the same move, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Armando Duran indicated.

Sandinista army reduced to 21,000: Nicaragua's popular Sandinista army has been reduced to 21,000 men, making it the smallest of central America's Armed Forces, army leader General Humberto Ortega said on Monday, reports Reuter from Managua.

At the height of the war between Nicaragua's former leftist Sandinista government and US-backed Contra rebels it had over 100,000 men.

The army was reduced to 28,000 men last year after President Violeta Chamorro won the general elections and took over from the Sandinistas, ending the eight-year war.

Pope meets archbishop of Moscow: Pope John Paul II met Monday with the archbishop of Moscow, Monsignor Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Vatican media reported, reports AP from Vatican City.

The private encounter took place at the Pope's summer residence at Castelgandolfo, according to Vatican Radio.

No details about the talks were released.

Explosions rock Perth: Two big explosions rocked the centre of Perth, capital of western Australia, early Tuesday, reports AFP.

Police said the blasts, just before 4:00 am, extensively damaged two buildings — the western Australian government's lotteries commission headquarters and a cafe known as the Corfu.

There were no immediate reports of injuries. Police immediately sealed off a wide area because of fears of more explosions from gas leaking from ruptured pipes.

Arson squad detectives sifting through rubble said they found evidence of explosives.

But there were no firm theories on the cause of the blasts. The blasts came several hours before the morning rush hour.

China fears instability in USSR: China told visiting British Prime Minister John Major it fears instability in the Soviet Union following the dissolution of communist rule there after last month's abortive coup, British officials reported, says Reuter from Beijing.

They said Premier Li Peng told John Major, who arrived in Beijing on Monday after talks with the reformist leaders in Moscow, that he was "anxious to have stability in the Soviet Union and concerned about the borders."

One official said Li, whose hardline communist government tightened political control following the Soviet upheavals, stressed that the Soviet situation was not comparable to that in China.

Leftist leader's body found after 18 years: The body of leftist leader Bautista Van Schouwen was discovered Monday in a common grave at a Santiago cemetery, 18 years after he disappeared, reports AFP from Santiago.

The body of Van Schouwen, who was detained by military authorities in 1973 following the violent coup which ushered General Augusto Pinochet to power, was found with more than 100 others in the capital's main cemetery.

He was among 957 people listed as missing by the new government of Patricio Aylwin.

Another fraud case against Imelda filed

MANILA, Sept 3: The Philippines filed a fraud case on Tuesday against exiled former First Lady Imelda Marcos, saying she used more than 25 million dollars of government funds for her personal expenses in New York, reports Reuter.

Marcos "misappropriated" state-owned Philippine National Bank (PNB) funds, transferring the money into accounts she allegedly controlled, Francisco Chavez, the government's Chief Lawyer, said in the two-page complaint.

Marcos conspired with PNB officials in New York in 1977 to transfer the 25 million dollars into US accounts, he said.

Marcos frequently travelled to the United States during the 20 years that her husband, the late former President Ferdinand Marcos, was in power. Her critics said she went on spending sprees, buying jewellery, perfume, designer clothes, paintings, and other luxury items.

The government has already charged her with more than 30 counts of tax evasion and graft.

President Corason Aquino last month lifted the ban on the return of Marcos and her three children to the Philippines so that they could stand trial for corruption charges.

Marcos is living in exile in New York. She has insisted on taking with her to Manila for burial the remains of her husband, who died in 1989, three years after the Marcoses fled in a popular revolt that ended their 20-year rule.

Manila has said it will not allow the return of his body. The government has accused the Marcoses and their business associates of stealing up to 10 billion dollars from the economy. They has denied the allegations.

Blast in Pak passenger train: 8 killed

QUETTA, Sept 3: Eight people were killed and 27 injured on Monday when a bomb exploded on a Pakistani passenger train near the Afghan border, police said, reports Reuter.

Four of the injured were in critical condition. Police said the bomb went off in one of the three carriages of a train travelling from the south western border town of Chaman and the Baluchistan provincial capital Quetta.

It was not immediately known who planted the bomb. The blast took place on the second day of a three-day visit to the province by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Crackdown on LTTE supporters in Tamil Nadu: 80 arrested

MADRAS (India), Sept 3: Police in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu have arrested about 80 people in a crackdown on supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), police said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The LTTE supporters were arrested as they arrived in the town of Vellore for a meeting.

The LTTE is fighting for a separate state for the three million Tamils in Sri Lanka and self-determination for the 55 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu.

The guerilla group is also suspected of being behind the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on May 21.

A one-eyed man called Sivarasan, the alleged mastermind of the assassination, and a woman accomplice called Subha killed themselves last month after police raided

their hideout near the southern city of Bangalore.

Both Sivarasan and Subha and a woman suicide bomber, who blew up Gandhi and herself at an election rally near Madras, were believed to be LTTE members.

The LTTE has denied involvement in Gandhi's killing but Indian officials believe the group ordered the killing because it was still angry at Gandhi's decision to send Indian troops to Sri Lanka in 1987 to enforce a Delhi-brokered peace accord.

The troops ended up fighting the LTTE until they were withdrawn in 1990.

Another report says: Eleven persons, six of them militants, were killed and a relative of a Punjab police head constable was kidnapped in Punjab since Monday night, police said here.

Militants stopped a private

bus of an Amritsar based company and shot dead two persons and injured another near Kukrewal village in Majitha district.

The killed were identified as driver, Chanchal Singh, and conductor, Harbhajan Singh. The injured person was ticket checker, Balwant Singh.

Three militants, one of them identified as Shingara Singh, were killed in an encounter near village Burj Dhillwan in Bhatinda district today. Two guns and some ammunition were recovered from the encounter scene, the police said.

Two militants of the Khalistan Commando Force (Penta Faction) and two persons were killed and three injured in an encounter near Sangeet Cinema in Ludhiana city, the police said.

The killed persons were identified as Ram Swarup, a

resident of Madhya Pradesh, and Sohan Kumar.

Three AK-47 rifles, one mauler and large quantity of ammunition were seized from the scene.

A suspected militant, Balwinder Singh, was killed in an inter-group clash near Pakhoke in Tarn Taran district and Sarpanch Sohan Singh was gunned down by militants in Taru Majra village in Jalandhar district.

Militants kidnapped Gurdev Singh a brother-in-law of head constable Amar Singh near Ropar.

Twelve militants in police uniforms went in a vehicle to the house of a CPM leader, Gurnam Singh, in village Lohkha in Amritsar district and escaped with seven rifles, one stengun, two maulers, two magazines and 250 cartridges of the security guards, who were asked to line up on the pretext of inspection.

Greece establishes ties with Baltic states

ATHENS, Sept 3: Greece on Monday established diplomatic relations with the three Baltic republics, the Greek Foreign Ministry said in a communique, reports AFP.

The Greek government intends to accredit diplomatic representatives from the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as "quickly as possible" and to develop close ties of friendship and cooperation, the statement said.

The government hoped the three Baltic states would settle the issue of relations with Moscow through "friendly, constructive and mutually accepted dialogue."

The Foreign Ministry said that relations between the Baltic states and Greece were interrupted in 1940 following their annexation by the Soviet Union.

Top management of Tass resigns

MOSCOW, Sept 3: The top management of Tass news agency submitted its resignation Monday to Vitaly Ignatenko, the agency's new director and a former spokesman for Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, Tass said in a statement, reports AFP.

"Understanding the need for a fundamental reorganisation, members of the leadership submitted their resignations in keeping with the reform process which favours freedom of speech and democracy, and requires a renewal of leading cadres," the statement said.

Ignatenko asked the managers to stay in their posts until replacements could be named.

The outgoing leaders suggested that "more effective use" should be made of the potential of the news agency, which they said could become competitive in the news business "thanks to the qualification of its journalists."

"It is more necessary than ever that Tass news dispatches should become objective, independent and truthful," the statement said.



BOROVO SELO: Serbian civil volunteer fighters in Borovo Selo help to load a cannon September 1 evening to shoot at the nearby village of Borovo Naselje in Eastern Croatia. Fighting between Serbs and Croats continued while the Yugoslavian Presidency discussed the new ceasefire agreement of the European Community in Belgrade. — AFP/UNB photo.

US likely to pressurise Pakistan to sign NPT

ISLAMABAD, Sept 3: An official US delegation is to visit Pakistan this month for talks on improving bilateral relations hurt by a suspension of US aid, an advisor to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said Monday, reports AFP.

Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, the Prime Minister's Information and Broadcasting Advisor, also blasted former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for saying Saturday that Pakistan had the capability to build a nuclear device.

In the government's first official reaction to Bhutto's remarks, Ahmed told the official Associated Press of Pakistan (AAP) that Bhutto's "irresponsible and malicious statement on Pakistan's peaceful nuclear programme" could seriously undermine national interests.

In her statement to foreign reporters here, Bhutto had

tried to create "complications in Pakistan-US... relations at a time when an American delegation is due in Islamabad on September 14 to consider improving bilateral relations," Ahmed said.

He did not disclose the composition of the US delegation but the independent English language daily Dawn said Under-secretary of State for International Security Affairs Reginald Bartholomew would take part, and that he intended to pressure Pakistan into signing the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Ahmed said the cutoff of about half a billion dollars in economic and military assistance by the US in October was the result of what he described as Bhutto's "vilification" campaign, following President Ghulam Ishaq Khan's decision in August 1990 to dismiss her from office on corruption

charges.

Washington then started pressuring Pakistan to give up its nuclear programme Ahmed said, adding that Sharif was determined to make Pakistan self-reliant.

"Pakistan would not alter its principled stand and would not put national interests at stake, irrespective of continuation or discontinuation of aid," Ahmed said.

Sharif proposed June 6 that the United States, China and the Soviet Union work for a regional Nuclear Non-proliferation agreement in South Asia.

Pakistan has so far insisted on including India, which tested a nuclear device in 1974, in any moves to check nuclear proliferation in the region.

But high-level talks between Islamabad and Washington have failed to break the deadlock over the nuclear issue.

Kuwaitis clamour for US bases

KUWAIT, Sept 3: Kuwaitis fearing a new Iraqi invasion are clamouring for US troops and bases in the Emirate but diplomats say this is ruled out under a protection agreement being negotiated with Washington, reports Reuter.

"We are still afraid even to open our water taps, because we think Saddam and not water would trickle out," said an editorial in Monday's Al-Qabas newspaper reflecting growing Kuwaiti fears.

A recent poll in the English-language Arab Times daily said 93 per cent of Kuwaitis wanted US bases in the Emirate and they did not trust fellow Arabs to protect

them.

Last month, Kuwait and its Arab Gulf allies shelved plans to create a joint security force to deter future Iraqi aggression.

The United States had made it clear it will not keep bases in Kuwait, but will maintain a naval presence in the Gulf.

One Western diplomat in Kuwait said recent reports in local papers of an imminent pact with Washington involving US bases in the Emirate were aimed at domestic consumption, "because of a state of hysteria among the Kuwaitis that Saddam will attack".

Western diplomats said se-

curity arrangements between Kuwait and the United States would cover the use of Kuwaiti facilities, logistical support, joint exercises and training. The Americans would also keep military equipment in the Emirate.

They said Washington would repair Kuwait's two air bases, Ahmed Al-Jaber and Ali Al-Salem, damaged in the Gulf war.

"But there will not be any permanent bases as the Kuwaitis want and no permanent troop presence. The Kuwaitis should feel safe enough with the arrangements and with a continued naval presence," one diplomat said.

Kuwait's Defence Minister Sheikh Ali Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah was quoted on Saturday as saying the Emirate was about to sign an agreement guaranteeing US protection.

He said he would visit Washington soon to sign a pact under which the United States would store weapons and carry out joint exercises in Kuwait.

Sheikh Ali said the pact covered military cooperation to keep regional peace, protection "of the two countries", the storage of weapons and equipment, and joint land, sea and air manoeuvres in Kuwait.

He said Kuwait need external protection but he did not support the idea of foreign bases "because Kuwait is small and the presence of bases in it makes it threatened all the time because of its proximity to the enemy".

Fears of the Iraqi threat were heightened on Wednesday when Kuwait said it had thwarted an incursion by armed Iraqis onto the strategic island of Bubyan.

The United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) is investigating the Kuwaiti reports, which Iraq denied.

"The Kuwaitis are trying to use any such Iraqi action to point out their vulnerability and the fact that Saddam is still after them. It will take them some time to realise that Saddam is in no position to attack them any more," one diplomat said.

On Tuesday last Washington announced it would keep 1,500 ground troops in the Emirate for several months longer than scheduled.

The first of the 1,500 troops started arriving on Sunday to replace the 3,700 soldiers.



MOSCOW: A military officer joins a demonstration September 2 outside the Kremlin as the Congress of People's Deputies convened. The participation of the military in this kind of demonstration was very rare only two weeks ago. — AFP/UNB photo.

US mustn't try to rule the world: France

RAMATUELLE (France), Sept 3: France warned the United States on Monday against trying to rule the world and said the UN and Europe should counterbalance the influence of the only superpower left after the collapse of Soviet communism, reports Reuter.

"American might reigns... without balancing weight," French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas told political associates.

"I am telling our American friends: They must realise that being the world's top power creates not only possibilities and rights... but also duties," he told a meeting of the ruling Socialist Party in this southern

resort. Jacques Delors, the French President of the European Community Commission, also told the seminar Washington could not take charge of the whole world.

Both Dumas and Delors said the United Nations and the European Community should counterbalance American influence. They added that the role of the UN should be boosted and east European countries should join EC nations in a European federation.

"If Europe wants to share the world's leadership, it must equip itself to do so," Delors said.

Iraq starts destroying bombs, artillery shells

BAGHDAD, Sept 3: Iraq has started destroying bombs and shells designed to carry chemical weapons, the head of a UN inspection team said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Canadian James Knapp, leader of one of two teams supervising preparations for the disposal of Iraq's chemical arsenal, said destruction of the empty munitions began on Sunday.

The operation was being carried out at the Muthana storage site. A previous UN inspection team which visited Muthana, about 100 km (60 miles) northwest of Baghdad, described it as a chemical dustbin.

Knapp added: "Our mission is to observe and supervise if necessary the destruction by Iraq of its inert, non-filled munitions, for the last two days we have been witnessing Iraq destroying a lot of bombs and shells."

Knapp, from Ottawa, said: "We are not destroying any chemical agent this week at all. We are simply destroying bombs, artillery shells and the like that are not filled with any chemical agent. The destruc-

tion of chemical agents will be done at a later date.

The 10-man team led by Knapp, and a 26-member team led by Swedish World Health Organisation official John Santesson, are the third and fourth chemical weapons inspections teams to visit Iraq under terms of the Gulf war ceasefire, which orders Baghdad to eliminate all its weapons of mass destruction.

The two missions arrived on Saturday and will spend seven days at Muthana and other chemical weapon sites.

Santesson's team inspected 30 chemical missile warheads on Sunday. It visited three more secret locations on Monday and took samples.

Everything is going according to programme. I'm quite pleased with how it develops. We inspected some missile warheads and also some other chemical weapons but I don't want to go into details, Santesson said.

Other inspectors have visited Iraq to hunt for nuclear and biological weapons and Ballistic missiles.

Noriega goes on trial today

MIAMI (Florida), Sept 3: Deposed Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega goes on trial tomorrow with prosecutors charging he turned his country into a way station for US-bound drugs and the defence arguing he was a pawn in American intelligence operation, reports AFP.

The first head of state to be captured for trial in the United States is accused by US officials of accepting nearly five million dollars in cash bribes from Colombia's Medellin drug cartel in return for help in cocaine distribution and money laundering.

Noriega could face 145 years in prison if convicted of the 11 counts against him.

The legal process against Noriega began with his surrender to US troops who invaded Panama December 20, 1989, putting end to two decades of de facto military rule in the strategic isthmus nation. But the process has dragged on with battles over the release of information concerning the trial.

The first dispute was over whether the cable news network should be allowed to broadcast taped jailhouse telephone conversations between Noriega and his lawyers, but the central controversy has been over the use of classified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) documents.

Off the Record

UN catastrophe adviser

STOCKHOLM: Lisbet Palme, widow of the late assassinated Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme has been appointed special catastrophe adviser at the UN, reports PTI.

The UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has chosen Lisbet Palme as an adviser to a group that is going to explore the possibilities and make recommendations that can pre-empt natural catastrophes. The group will work within the framework of the United Nations "Nature-Catastrophe Decade".

Lisbet Palme has been, for some time past, chairperson of the UNICEF.

Lies supreme at Venice Festival

ROME: Lies — sexual, political, racial and optical will rule supreme this week at the Venice International Film Festival, the grandfather of movie shows, reports AP.

"It wasn't until we were finished selecting the 21 films in competition that we realized lying was the common theme of many of the works," said Guglielmo Biraghi, who ends his five years as festival president this year.

Sexual lies grab the lion's share of the show. The films with this theme include: — Ben Kingsley of "Gandhi" fame and his wife, Marie Christine Barrault, who betray each other in "L'Amore Necessario" (Necessary Love) by Fabio Carpi, to keep their marriage alive. The film has already created a censorship storm over its Italian Parental Guidance rating.

Lying as a political tool also gets a drubbing in an Italian thriller, "Il Muro di Gomma" (The Rubber Wall) by Marco Risi, a docu-drama on the cover up and mysterious downing of an Italian airliner in 1980.

Falsehoods and racial tension are explored in the current, American crop of films, including "Mississippi Nasala" by India's Mira Nair, whose "Salaam Bombay" was a critical success in 1988.

It stars Oscar-winner Dezel Washington in a film about black-Indian relations in Jackson, Mississippi, with scenes shot in Uganda for the first time since "The African Queen" 40 years ago.

Another film shot in the United States, "The Fisher King" by Terry Gilliam, also is touted as a possible winner.

A nugget too precious

MELBOURNE: Robbers broke into Australia's museum of Victoria and stole the 256-ounce (7.2 kg) pride of Australia gold nugget worth 250,000 dollars (195,000 US), a museum official said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"It's the second largest gold nugget left in Australia, and the largest Victorian nugget," acting minerals curator Dermot Henry said.

Thieves stole the nugget on Friday, smashing a high security glass cabinet with a sledgehammer without setting off two alarm systems or being detected by twice-hourly patrols.

The nugget was found in 1981 by a gold prospector in the state of Victoria. The largest Australian gold nugget, the 845-ounce (24 kg) Hand of Faith, was bought by US interests and is on display at a casino in Las Vegas, Henry said.