

EC deploys ceasefire monitors in Croatian war zone Macedonians vote for freedom, fighting flares in Croatia

BELGRADE, Sept 9: Early referendum results show Macedonians overwhelmingly favour making their southern republic the third in Yugoslavia to choose independence, as fighting raged in secessionist Croatia, reports AP.

Although official results were not expected before Tuesday, Macedonians began planning fireworks and celebration, the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug reported Sunday.

Macedonia, the poorest area of Yugoslavia, would join the two richest republics to the north that seek to abandon the fragmenting federation. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence June 25, setting

off fighting with ethnic Serbs and the army.

The ballot asked voters whether the republic should declare independence, with an option to rejoin a looser Yugoslav alliance of sovereign states.

Macedonia's leaders fear that if Croatia and Slovenia gain complete independence, their republic would be absorbed by neighboring Serbia, the largest republic that dominates the military and includes the federal capital Belgrade.

In Croatia, after a one-day lull for the opening of a 12-nation European Community peace conference, battles broke out again Sunday. Serb rebel leaders had joined the army and Croats in observing a cease-fire to allow negotiations to resolve the crisis.

Heavy fighting was reported around the town of Pakrac in the ethnically mixed Slavonia region.

The Tanjug news agency quoted police sources as saying there were "dead, wounded and captured" in the area, about 70 miles (110 kilometers) southeast of Zagreb, Croatia's capital. The report gave no details, and the

Croatian Defense Ministry said it had no casualty figures.

Fighting continued around Okucani, 70 miles (110 kilometers) east of Zagreb near a strategic stretch of the Belgrade-Zagreb highway, Tanjug and Croatian authorities said. The battle has closed the road, Europe's main land link with Turkey and the Middle East, since Wednesday.

Heavy fighting also was reported in the town of Sunja southeast of Zagreb.

The federal air force fired on an airfield in the Croatian stronghold of Osijek, 140 miles (220 kilometers) east of Zagreb, the Croatian Defense Ministry said. The air force said its planes were shot at first.

Serb militants in Croatia have been fighting Croatian security forces for weeks and control about a quarter of the republic's territory. The federal, Serb-dominated, army also has fought the Croats, but it denies Croatia's charges that it backs the rebels.

More than 300 people have died in the fighting in Croatia. A cease-fire has held in Slovenia, which is ethnically homogeneous, since the early

days of the secession crisis.

Reuters adds: The European Community has deployed ceasefire monitors in a Croatian war zone for the first time since it began a diplomatic campaign to restore peace between Yugoslavia's feuding republics.

EC special envoy Henri Wijnacendts told reporters on Sunday five monitors were sent to Osijek the embattled capital of eastern Croatia which is surrounded by Serbian guerrillas and the Yugoslav army.

They were drafted into the city despite repeated violations of a ceasefire signed by EC with Yugoslav leaders last Monday and assurances to EC countries that their monitors would not be exposed to danger.

Wijnacendts, who has spent several days negotiating around Croatia with the warring sides in the conflict, said he was confident they would be safe.

The ceasefire is extremely fragile and we are not dupes, he said. But we have seen that if we announce beforehand that we are coming then there is no shooting.



PODRAVSK SLATINA (Yugoslavia): Relatives of mostly civilian Croatian victims of the recent fighting in Croatia mourn, September 8 during a funeral ceremony of 22 victims in Podravska Slatina. — AFP/UNB photo

Ishaq will visit Iran Thursday

NICOSIA, Sept 9: President Ghulam Ishaq Khan of Pakistan will pay a three-day visit to Tehran beginning Thursday at the invitation of Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported Monday, reports AP.

A delegation of six members of Pakistan's parliament and senior officials including Finance Minister Sartaj Aziz, Railways Minister Hazar Khan Bijrani and Nisar Ali Khan, the minister of petroleum and natural resources, will accompany the president, IRNA said.

The president also will address Iran's parliament and pay pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, the news agency said.

High-level Soviet team to visit Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 9: The first high-level Soviet delegation to visit Afghanistan since last month's failed coup in Moscow pledged on Sunday to continue giving aid to the Afghan government, Kabul Radio reported, says Reuter.

The delegation of unnamed Soviet parliamentarians told Afghan Ministers and officials worried about continuing aid that the new Soviet Union would stick to its guarantees.

Kabul Radio monitored in Islamabad quoted the Soviet delegation as pledging unbreakable friendship and saying Moscow would continue to provide vital assistance.

The Afghan government has received massive shipments of food fuel and weapons from Moscow, whose troops withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 after a nine-year occupation.

Islamic Mujahideen commanders ended a three-day meeting on Sunday called to decide military strategy.

Black factions battle: 57 killed in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 9: At least 57 people were killed and dozens injured as black factions battled with guns, grenades and knives after a political march was ambushed, police said Monday, reports AP.

Police and army reinforcements were moved into black townships around Johannesburg Monday after fighting erupted when a procession of the Inkatha Freedom Party was ambushed. Three gunmen opened fire on the march Sunday in Tokoza township, killing 23 people.

Fighting flared in other townships as word of the ambush spread. Zulus linked to the IFP battled mostly Xhosa speakers of the rival African National Congress. Both sides randomly attacked people as fighting spread to central Johannesburg at one point.

A second Inkatha procession was ambushed later Sunday in Soweto township

Kissinger optimistic of Sino-US ties

BEIJING, Sept 9: Premier Li Peng met former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on Sunday and spoke optimistically about the future of Sino-US relations, reports AP.

"I believe that with concerted efforts on both sides, those difficulties can be overcome," Li told Kissinger in the first few minutes of the meeting in the presence of re-

Talks on Kurds' autonomy reach dead end

DAMASCUS, Sept 9: Negotiations between Iraq and Kurdish representatives to secure autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan and greater democracy for the entire country, have reached a dead end, a senior Kurdish source has disclosed here.

The talks that began four months ago after a Kurdish rebellion in northern Iraq are limping along but have made no progress... even if the dialogue is continuing, a source representing the Kurdistan Front told AFP here on condition that he not be named.

The front, an eight-party coalition of Iraqi Kurdish groups, has been speaking for Iraqi Kurdistan in talks with Baghdad authorities aimed at ending more than 20 years of clashes between Kurdish rebels and government forces.

The Iraqi regime is not prepared to accept the Kurdish plan for democracy, civil rights, the constitution and autonomy for Kurdistan, the source charged.

He said the front was convinced that the realization of the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people can only come about under a democratic regime.

"If the regime persists in its stubbornness and in its rejection, the talks will go now here."

But he acknowledged that some "positive but insufficient" points had been raised in the talks.

Indian bureaucracy termed "well-trained animal"

NEW DELHI, Sept 9: Political developments in the Soviet Union in recent weeks have affected the delivery of Soviet-made arms to India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said Sunday, reports AFP.

Defence Minister Shree Pawar was quoted as saying in Bangalore that he proposed to visit Moscow to discuss bottlenecks which have cropped up in the supply of military hardware from the Soviet Union, India's principal overseas arms supplier.

Soviet supplies of military hardware and spares have suffered in recent months, Pawar said, answering questions at a meeting of local Congress (I) activists in the southern Indian city.

Pawar recalled that his junior colleague, Minister of State S Krishna Kumar, got firm assurances during a visit to Moscow recently that military relations between India and the Soviet Union would remain unchanged.

Soviet arms supplies to India include Mig-21 and Mig-29 fighter aircraft and battle tanks.

India and the Soviet Union are signatories to a 1971 bilateral peace and friendship treaty which they extended by another 20 years last month.

Soviet collapse hits arms delivery to India

Minister Narasimha Rao came home from Germany on Sunday to charges that he tried too hard to woo potential investors by calling India's powerful bureaucracy "a well-trained animal."

Rao, a 70-year-old political veteran, is trying to wean India from a dream of socialist self-sufficiency which has left it with a 71-billion-dollar foreign debt.

During his trip, newspaper reports say Rao responded to German fears that red tape would tie up their deutschmarks by saying: "The Indian bureaucrat is a very well-trained animal. Once you tell him what to do, he will do it."

At an airport news conference, Rao showed no sign of being shaken by the turbulence he has created.

"I do not think there is any need for distortion," he said impassively. "Those who know the language I was speaking know the spirit (of the remark) very well."

Rao broke with Indian tradition by making his first overseas trip to Bonn, not Moscow, after initiating a minor revolution in his country's economy by acting to slash the bureaucratic controls which have deterred foreign investors.

Organized labour, confined largely to the nationalised

sector, says free enterprise cannot funnel wealth down to the 40 per cent or more of India's 850 million people below the poverty line.

Newspapers have unleashed demands for a new, quality-controlled work culture and an assault on official ambivalence during the Gulf war and the abortive Soviet coup.

Off the Record

A rare security system

COLOMBO: A poisonous cobra is guarding the world's largest sapphire from theft at a jewellery exhibition in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, reports Reuter.

"We thought this would be a better security system than anything else," a spokesman for the Sri Lanka Gem Corporation said today.

The snake, in a glass cage, is protecting two gems worth 45 million rupees (1.1 million dollars) at an international gem and jewellery exhibition that opened today.

The stones, which belong to the Corporation and are not for sale, are a 393 carat star sapphire — the world's largest — and a 103 carat star sapphire, the spokesman said.

The cobra has been used once before at a similar exhibition in Sweden.

AIDS from mosquito bite?

TOKYO: More than 62 per cent of Japanese think they can get AIDS from a mosquito bite, a government survey showed today, reports AFP.

Those who thought they could get AIDS from a mosquito believed the insect must first have bitten a virus carrier, according to the survey by the Prime Minister's office.

The figure was up from 52.2 per cent in a previous survey in 1987.

Those mistakenly believing they can catch the deadly virus by sharing bath and toilet items with AIDS carriers rose sharply to 40.9 per cent from 29.8 per cent in 1987, the survey showed.

AIDS is transmitted only through the direct transfer of body fluids, such as in sexual intercourse, blood transfusions and sharing hypodermic needles.

The survey was carried out in May covering 10,000 people 20 years old or older, and 76.4 per cent of them divorced.

A total of 16.2 per cent replied that they would divorce or live separately from their spouses if their husbands or wives were found to be AIDS virus carriers, while 32.7 per cent said they would continue living together. The comparison figures with the previous survey were not available.

'Anyone who goes into politics is a fool'

WELLINGTON: Anybody who goes into politics is a fool, the 89-year-old Irish-born mother of New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger said Monday, reports AFP.

Cecilia Bolger said she was really annoyed when her son went into politics.

"I told him only a madman would be in politics," she said in an interview with the Taranaki daily news.

"I always criticise them, that's my style. I wouldn't be a politician for all the tea in China." "I think anyone who goes into politics is a fool, but someone has to do it."

She said the Irish were always against government and they had great imaginations. "It was probably from his father he got the talk."

Mrs Bolger says she gets angry when she hears it said that her son has never worked hard. "They say Jim doesn't know how to work. Jim knows how to work all right. We all had to work to survive and Jim worked the hardest of the lot."

300 killed, 700 hurt in Somalian fighting

NAIROBI, Sept 9: At least 300 people were killed and 700 others wounded in fighting between rival factions of the governing Unified Somali Congress (USC) between Thursday and Saturday, humanitarian sources here said today, reports AFP.

The sources, which were in radio contact with their staff in Mogadishu, said that the total of casualties was provisional.

The fighting had stopped but continuing tension was preventing humanitarian workers from travelling to evaluate the overall damage done, they said.

AP adds from Somalia: Fighting between rival factions of the ruling Unified Somali Congress in Somalia's capital appeared to be tapering off

Monday, although sporadic shooting continued, according to sources.

Relief agencies with representatives in Mogadishu said the city remained tense, but had calmed considerably since the clashes erupted Thursday. The sources spoke on condition they not be identified further.

The fighting pits forces loyal to President Ali Mahdi Mohamed against those of Gen Farrah Mohamed Aidid, the USC's chairman and military commander.

Ali Mahdi and Aidid belong to different sub-groups of the Hawiye clan, from which the USC draws its support. Clan elders were reportedly meeting to negotiate a peaceful solution to the conflict.

N-arms race on despite communism's fall

WASHINGTON, Sept 9: The Cold War is over. The Warsaw Pact is dead. The old communist threat is gone. Can the end of the nuclear arms race be far behind? Yes. But at least there's more reason to think it may not end in Armageddon, says AP.

Since the early 1950s, when the Soviet Union ended the American nuclear monopoly and the arms race began in earnest, the superpowers have bristled with ever more powerful nuclear weapons — enough to destroy the world as we know it.

The rapid transformation of the former Soviet empire since last month's failed coup would seem to open new possibilities for reversing the arms race.

Yet it seems unlikely that this new era in global relations

will be nuclear-free.

The Bush administration says it's not ready to stop testing new nuclear weapons, much less dismantle more than the most obsolete ones already in the US arsenal. It's too early to make any change in nuclear policy, officials say.

After all, thousands of Soviet missiles still arc aimed at America.

"We ought to at least begin a security dialogue with them," Secretary of State James A Baker said last week, offering no new ideas on arms control.

"What's required is some unilateral action" by Moscow or Washington to lower nuclear tensions, said Thomas Cochran, a nuclear arms specialist with the Natural Resources Defense Council, which favours drastic cuts in such weapons.

Coup if treaty on Subic base not ratified: Ramos

MANILA, Sept 9: Military coup attempts could be launched against the government if the Philippine Senate fails to ratify a new treaty extending the US military presence in the country, a former Defense Secretary said today (Monday), reports AFP.

Fidel Ramos said, "the modernization of our Armed Forces will not be realised" if the new treaty extending the lease on Subic naval base for 10 years is not ratified.

A Senate vote on the treaty is expected on September 14, two days before the current bases agreement expires. The new treaty also provides for a pullout from Clark air base, damaged by a volcanic eruption, before September 1992.

Asked whether a new coup attempt was possible if the treaty was rejected, Ramos

said: "As of now, I don't see such a situation, but I will not put it beyond the realm of possibility."

President Corason Aquino has survived seven coup attempts by rebel soldiers since she assumed power in 1986. She would have been toppled in the December 1989 coup bid if not for the help of US authorities who sent Phantom jets to chase the rebels away.

Ramos said the abrupt removal of Subic could set back the military's campaign against communist rebels and Muslim secessionists by 10 to 15 years.

He also belittled the promise of communist guerrillas to declare a unilateral ceasefire if the treaty was rejected, saying the rebels were the first to violate their previous announcements.

and to maintain the credibility of the US nuclear arsenal, Williams said.

But even the cuts required by the START pact leave both Moscow and Washington with more than enough nuclear firepower to destroy each other's nation many times over.

Now, however, some in Congress say the democratization of the Soviet Union provides new reason to consider drastically lower levels of nuclear arms.

Sen Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a New York Democrat, wrote in the US-based Newsweek magazine that he favoured striking a "grand bargain" with Moscow: give the Soviets economic aid on condition they dismantle all or most of their nuclear forces aimed at the United States.

BRIEFLY

9 killed, 21 injured in Srinagar:

Nine people were killed and 21 more injured in violence in Kashmir late Saturday and Sunday, officials said, reports AFP from Srinagar.

Paramilitary Border Security Forces (BSF) shot dead five militants in areas along the line of control separating Indian and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir early Sunday.

In addition, seven militants, a BSF trooper and a civilian caught in cross-fire were injured, when militants were intercepted by the BSF, the officials in Kashmir's summer capital said.

The officials alleged the incident took place when the militants tried to cross the line of control into India.

New Delhi has accused Islamabad of arming and training Muslim separatists fighting for the secession of Kashmir from India.

Two more people were killed and a dozen others injured elsewhere in the Muslim majority Kashmir valley late Saturday and Sunday, the officials said.

Edwin McMillan dead:

Nobel laureate Edwin McMillan, a co-discoverer of plutonium who worked on the World War II project that developed the atomic bomb, has died at the age of 83, reports AFP from California.

He died at home after a long illness.

He and nuclear chemist Glenn Seaborg won the Nobel prize for their co-discovery of plutonium or element 94, the radioactive element found in 1940 that is essential for atomic bombs.

McMillan, a physicist, helped create nuclear weapons but had expressed doubts about controlling them.

This country has in its hands some incredibly powerful weapons, McMillan had said. The way our government deals with the question of nuclear disarmament is shameful a disgrace to our nation.

He retired in 1973 as head of the University of California's Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. Last year he was awarded the national medal of science. The nation's highest award for scientific achievement.

Perez in Iran to talk hostage issue:

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar goes to Iran this week in his quest to win the release of 11 Western hostages in Lebanon and hundreds of Arabs held by Israel and its Lebanese allies, reports AP from United Nations.

He is scheduled to arrive Tuesday night in Tehran and will talk to Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani and other officials.

Perez de Cuellar has declined to disclose the specifics of his hostage discussions with various parties, saying only that he remains optimistic freedom can be gained for all prisoners.

All or most of the five Americans, three Britons, two Germans and one Italian held hostage in Lebanon are thought to be in the hands of pro-Iranian Shiite Muslims. The longest held is Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press.

Russian Speaker in Japan: Acting Russian Parliamentary Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov arrived in Tokyo for a five-day visit at the invitation of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), party officials said, reports AFP from Tokyo.

Khasbulatov is the first key Soviet official to visit Japan since last month's failed coup bid by Soviet communist hardliners. His visit had been put off several times because of the developments in the Soviet Union.

The Russian official is set to meet Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama, LDP Secretary General Keizo Obuchi and parliamentary and business leaders.

He is expected to deliver a letter from Russian President Boris Yeltsin to Kaifu explaining Yeltsin's position on a Japan-Soviet peace treaty and a territorial dispute over four Soviet-held islands of northeastern Hokkaido.

Quayle in Nigeria: US Vice President Dan Quayle arrived in Nigeria from Cape Verde on Sunday for talks with the country's military leaders expected to focus on issues ranging from democracy to debt, reports Reuter from Abuja.

Quayle, on the second leg of a five nation African tour, was met by Vice President Augustus Abkhonu in Abuja, the planned new capital of Africa's most populous nation.

His two day working visit coincides with major changes in the world order following upheavals in the Soviet Union, as well as popular support for democracy in a growing number of African countries.