

BRIEFLY

Najibullah pardons jailed opponents: Afghan President Najibullah pardoned some jailed opponents of his Soviet backed government on Friday...

16 Russians die after eating mushroom: Sixteen people have died and 80 are seriously ill after eating contaminated mushroom in southern Russia...

Shamsul Islam meets IFC VP in USA: Shamsul Islam Khan, Minister of Industries, met with Wilfried E. Kaffenberger, Vice-President of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Washington on Wednesday...

Iran concerned over Kuwait-US pact: Iran expressed concern on Saturday over a 10-year security pact between Kuwait and the United States...

262 Maoists arrested in Madras: Police in India's southern Tamil Nadu state banned a Maoist rally on Saturday and arrested scores of protesters...

Bosnia orders move against Croatia: The central Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Friday ordered a mobilisation of its territorial defence units...

Democrats predict Bush's defeat in '92: Democratic leaders winding up a three-day meeting confidently predicted on Saturday that they can retire a popular republican President George Bush in next year's US presidential election...

US terms for peace talks pose dilemma for Palestinians: DAMASCUS, Sept 22: Only days away from a key meeting of the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, their leaders are in disarray over the US-proposed Middle East peace conference...

Official of the radical Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the largest groups with in the Palestine Liberation Organisation...

In Jerusalem earlier this week, US Secretary of State James A. Baker handed a Palestinian delegation a letter outlining conditions for their attendance at the proposed conference...

The Palestinian council now will have to hammer out fateful decisions on how Palestinians will be represented, whether they should even take part and what minimum result they could accept from any conference...

Many Palestinians fear that if they compromise too much, the PLO, long riven by rivalries and seriously undermined because of Chairman Yasser Arafat's support for Iraq during the Gulf war, could be doomed...

Simply put, the meeting may have to decide whether the PLO should remain the main voice of the world's 5 million Palestinians, as it has been for nearly three decades, or whether it will vote to attend the peace conference at any cost to the Palestinians' claim for a homeland...

So far, no consensus has emerged. "Most are leaving the door open for maneuvering until the last minute," explained Abu Leyla...

The Palestinians have in the past insisted that they should go to any peace conference as an independent delegation. But Arab support for that has waned and Baker is suggesting that the Palestinians and Jordanians form a joint delegation, a move that would undercut the PLO's longtime claim to be the Palestinians' sole representative...

Under the Baker proposal, Palestinian representatives would be chosen only from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Jordanians and would not include a delegate from east Jerusalem, also captured in 1967...

Palestinian officials said the conditions only cut out the PLO, but ignore demands for an Israeli withdrawal from east Jerusalem and the right of return for more than 1 million people who fled the 1948-49 war and ensuing conflicts...

In other words, the Palestinian hard-liners complain, the conditions fail to address their demand for recognition as a people with the right to determine their own future...

Some PLO officials have already rejected the US conditions because there are no provisions for a PLO role, an independent Palestinian delegation at the conference or eventual Palestinian statehood...

"This letter will provoke a negative Palestinian position," Yasser Abed-Rabbo, a member of the PLO's executive committee, said in Tunisia...

The Democratic Front, the third largest of the nine PLO factions, suggested Friday it might walk out of the Palestinian council session if it does not clearly reject the plan...

Yugoslav warplanes, tanks pound Croatian towns

ZAGREB, Sept 22: Federal warplanes, tanks and artillery pounded several Croatian towns on Saturday, and leaders of the breakaway republic tried desperately to get the military to call off its deadly offensive...



BREST (Yugoslavia): Ivanka (L) and Jagica Berakovic walk crying near the column of vehicles full of Croatian soldiers retreating from Petrinja September 21. The women tried to find their husbands who came under heavy bombing in Petrinja today. — AFP/UNB photo

More than 500 people have died in violence between Croats, ethnic Serbs and the army since Croatia declared independence June 25. The independence campaign exacerbated the longstanding rivalry between Serbs and Croats, Yugoslavia's two largest ethnic groups...

In Rome, the government said Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic and Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis has spoken by telephone Saturday and agreed to urge an EC envoy to return to the war-torn Balkan country to try to stitch together a new cease-fire accord...

"We are without water and light, our ports, streets and airports are blockaded: appeal to your ministers, end the war in Croatia," the message said...

Gorbachev sets up body to oversee armed forces' shake-up

MOSCOW, Sept 22: President Mikhail Gorbachev set up a committee on Saturday to oversee sweeping reforms of the Soviet Union's huge armed forces and named as its head a hero of the resistance to last month's hardline coup attempt...

Long March veteran dead

BEIJING, Sept 22: Long March veteran General Song Shilun has died following an illness, the Xinhua news agency said late Friday. Song was 84, reports AFP...

ME peace conference uncertain: Primakov

MOSCOW, Sept 22: Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's envoy to the Middle East said on Saturday prospects for a Middle East peace conference in October were uncertain and blamed his doubts on Israel, reports Reuter...

21 killed in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, Sept 22: At least 21 people were killed in battles between militants and Indian forces in the Muslim Kashmir valley and in a bomb blast in the Hindu area of the troubled Himalayan territory, police said Saturday, reports Reuter...

US offers defence pact with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 22: The United States has offered to sign a new defence pact with Pakistan, provided Islamabad agrees to abandon its weapon-grade nuclear programme...

In a front page story Karachi's Daily Dawn said the US administration had indicated its willingness to revise the 1959 defence agreement which assures Pakistan of US support, against communist aggression...

Bush predicts fall of Castro

CHICAGO, Sept 22: President George Bush predicted Friday the rapid fall of Cuban President Fidel Castro, saying he could hear the creaking and crumbling of his Marxist government, reports AFP...

Gorbachev frees Balts from army obligations

MOSCOW, Sept 22: Soviet President Mikhail S Gorbachev, in a decree issued Saturday, has freed citizens of the newly independent Baltic states from all Soviet military obligations, reports AP...

Off the Record

Sheep too old for Aussies bound for Russian tables

SYDNEY: Sheep considered too old for pampered Australians to eat may help save millions of Russians from a hungry winter next year under a barter deal planned by a new Australian-Soviet joint venture, reports AFP...

Coffin from recycled paper

SYDNEY: Environmentalists soon will get the chance to demonstrate their convictions to the very end with a coffin made primarily from recycled paper, reports AP...

World War II dog tags

RANGOON: Burma has given US officials photographs of the wreckage of a World War II military transport plane and of the dog tags of three American servicemen, a newspaper reported Saturday, reports AP...