

BRIEFLY

Military rule in Romania urged:

The rightwing Romanian nationalist party Romania Mare called late Thursday for the creation of a "mainly military transitional government" as the only way to resolve the present crisis in the country, the news agency Rompress reported, reports AFP from Bucharest.

Romania Mare (Greater Romania) criticised the outgoing government led by Petre Roman for the crisis and said that "order, the reconstruction process, real democratisation, sovereignty and Romania's territorial integrity" could only be ensured by a military government.

It "warmly recommended" that President Ion Iliescu as the leader "democratically elected by the Romanian Nations" should "cooperate with the representatives of the army and all the patriotic forces of the country."

Ballet dancer Spesivtseva dead

The Russian ballet dancer Olga Spesivtseva, who partnered both Nijinsky and Serge Lifar, has died in New York aged 96, it was learned at the Paris opera Friday, reports AFP from Paris.

Retired since 1937, Spesivtseva, considered one of the great romantic stars of the 20th century, performed at the Paris opera ballet between 1924 and 1932.

Lifar, the choreographer and dancer, had praised the "lightness of her flight and the purity of her movements," so much so that "on her toes, one would think that she was suspended in air".

Her brilliance led to roles with Nijinsky, notably the "specter of the rose" in New York in 1916 and with Lifar in "giselle".

4 Arab states, PLO meet in US:

The four Arab states bordering Israel and the PLO have met at the UN General Assembly in New York to coordinate their stand on Middle East peace moves, the Arab League said Friday, reports AFP from Cairo.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid chaired Wednesday's meeting, attended by the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria as well as the PLO's permanent representative to the United Nations.

In Amman, Abdallah Nsour of Jordan said the participants were "unanimous in stressing the need for coordination" ahead of a Middle East peace conference planned for October.

The "frontline" states with Israel also discussed the possibility of holding another meeting at head-of-state level before a peace conference is convened, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's representative said.

Nasser al-Qadwa also told the Egyptian news agency MENA they were seeking a common Arab stand on US efforts to scrap a UN resolution that equates Zionism with racism.

End to army action in Assam demanded:

India's opposition parties on Thursday demanded an immediate end to army action in the troubled northeast Assam state and urged the government to begin talks with Maoist separatists there, reports Reuter from New Delhi.

Indian news agencies said opposition leaders at a protest sit in outside the parliament called for an end to the army's atrocities against civilians mostly Assamese tribes.

New Delhi ordered the army into Assamese on September 15 after the state government failed to secure the release of 15 hostages taken captive on July 1 by Maoist militants of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).

Some hostages were released but the ULFA killed a Soviet mining engineer and at least two oil workers it still holds six hostages including three oil workers.

Attack on Soviet troops slated:

The Commander in Chief of Soviet Forces in eastern Germany, General Matvei Burlakov, has denounced the "increasing number of attacks" being committed against the 270,000 troops remaining in former East Germany, reports AFP from Berlin.

A violent reaction by the troops had so far been avoided "but the patience of some of them is wearing thin," General Burlakov told the Die Welt newspaper in an interview published Friday.

General said he had asked German Defence Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg for special police protection for his men, subject to attacks by "various extremist forces".

Several incidents have been reported since the unification of West and East Germany last October involving inhabitants of the former Soviet bloc country and Soviet troops who are still often considered as occupiers.

Antarctic ozone hole getting larger:

Antarctic ozone hole is rapidly getting larger, New Zealand meteorological service expert Tom Clarkson said Thursday, reports AFP from Wellington.

Before the hole developed, the ozone layer was around 300 millimetres (12 inches) thick.

Measurements taken over New Zealand's Scott base in Antarctica 10 days ago showed an ozone layer the equivalent of 1.84 millimetres (0.11 inches) thick. By Wednesday it was 1.75 millimetres (0.07 inches), Clarkson said.

"At the moment about half the ozone is missing over the Antarctic, it has all disappeared in the last three weeks," he said.

"That is fairly similar to what we've had in the last two years. It covers the whole Antarctic continent and will probably last until November."

60 killed in Georgia as loyalists attack rebels

TBILISI, Sept 27: Dozens of people were killed early Friday when forces loyal to Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia attacked a rebel National Guard base at Shavnabada outside the Georgian capital, local journalists reported, reports AFP.

Rebel commander Tengiz Kitovani gave the news over Georgian television at 3 am (2300 GMT) the journalists said.

He claimed that some 60 people had been killed in the attack.

3 lakh immigrants 'undesirable' in US

WASHINGTON, Sept 27: Congress has given the administration three years to purge its list of 300,000 foreigners deemed "undesirable" because of their political beliefs, reports AFP.

A bill approved last year stipulated that immigrants could no longer be refused entry on the basis of beliefs and political affiliations as long as they were "legal", but the list of those so-classified still exists.

A joint Senate and house of Representatives Committee voted Tuesday to reduce the list to less than 50,000 within three years, according to the

Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights.

The private organisation said that the State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization service kept a list of more than 300,000 names and that the administration has added another 68,310 in the past two and a half years.

Last year's bill concerns only those rejected for political reasons and does not alter restrictions regarding terrorists, drug traffickers, criminals, the mentally ill, prostitutes, those with contagious diseases and those who engage in "immoral" sexual activities.

Jyoti visits Tin Bigha Nov 12 to talk transfer of corridor

CALCUTTA, Sept 27: In the face of strong opposition by the Forward Bloc, a ruling Left Front partner, against the proposed transfer of the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh, the West Bengal Chief Minister Mr Jyoti Basu will undertake a visit to Tin Bigha on November 12 for an on-the-spot study and talk to the local people, reports PTI.

The decision to this effect was taken at high-level bilateral meeting between the leaders of the CPI-M and the Forward Bloc.

Besides the Chief Minister,

the meeting was attended by the CPI-M leaders, Mr Salten Dasgupta (Secretary of the state unit of the party), Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharjee (state's Urban Development Minister) and Mr Shyamal Chakraborty (Transport Minister).

The Forward Bloc leaders who participated in the meeting were its All-India General Secretary, Mr Chitta Basu, MP, General Secretary of the state unit Mr Ashoke Ghosh, party MP Mr Amar Roy Pradhan, and an MLA from Coochbihar Mr Kamal Guha.

Forward Bloc sources said the stand to be adopted on the proposed transfer of the Tin Bigha corridor would be taken at subsequent bilateral discussions between the two parties.

The sources said that the Chief Minister briefed the meeting on the proposed move of the centre to transfer Tin Bigha.

The Forward Bloc leader and the former Agriculture Minister, Mr Kamal Guha also briefed the Chief Minister on the latest situation in the area in the wake of the centre's decision to hand over Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh.



LONDON: Salman Rushdie making a rare public appearance in London to accept the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award for his children's novel Haroun and the Sea of Stories. Salman Rushdie, who is under a death threat for his novel, The Satanic Verses, told guests at the ceremony that he had received reliable reports in recent weeks that teams of paid killers were actively seeking him out.

Bush improves prospects for ME peace, says Arafat

ALGIERS, Sept 27: PLO Chief Yasser Arafat said on Friday that US President George Bush had improved the prospects for Middle East peace with a call for recognition of the Palestinians' political rights, reports Reuter.

Bush told Morocco's King Hassan on Thursday the peace conference Washington hopes to hold next month should be based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338, which call on Israel to exchange captured Arab land for peace.

Bush also called for "recognition of legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people."

"This boosts the chances for peace," Palestine Liberation Organisation Chief Arafat told Reuter.

Arafat took the stand to brief delegates at the end of an overnight session of the Palestinian Parliament-in-Exile in Algiers. The parliament will decide whether Palestinians, the last group still to announce their intentions, should attend the peace conference.

Arafat told delegates: "I received a message from his

majesty the King of Morocco in which he told me that President Bush concentrated on the fact that the United States seeks the achievement of peace and security on the basis of UN Resolutions and recognising the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people..."

"Now for the first time President Bush announced today in addition to UN Resolutions the Palestinian people."

The PLO leader later told Reuter: "We record with all gratitude these positive points."

A senior member of the Committee seeking a formula to put to parliament for a vote on whether to back US peace plans said: "This is fantastic this strengthens the chances of our draft passing."

He said Bush's general commitment to UN Resolutions obviously included those on Jerusalem, the illegality of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and

rights of return for Palestinians expelled from there.

AFP from Algiers adds: Palestinian delegates appeared set today to "react positively" to US Middle East peace plans, according to drafts of a political statement circulating at a meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the Palestinian Parliament-in-Exile.

The reaction would offer implicit acceptance, without prior conditions, of the plans involving the holding of a Middle East peace conference next month, informed sources said here.

However the reaction would include a statement of what the Palestine Liberation Organisation would consider a successful outcome to the conference.

The drafts, which reflect moderate views, have in common the setting of the main objective as "the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people."

Israel arrests 460 Palestinian activists

JERUSALEM, Sept 27: Israel has arrested 460 suspected Palestinian activists over the last two months in its fight against the uprising in the occupied territories, a military spokesman said Thursday, reports AFP.

He said the security services had mounted simultaneous operations in several sectors of the West Bank Gaza strip and in Jerusalem to capture Palestinians responsible for killing Israeli civilians or alleged Arab collaborators.

The killers of a Jewish religious scholar in Jerusalem on February 28 and of an Israeli civilian in Gaza city on July 7 were among those arrested, the spokesman said.

Militants kidnap police official in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Sept 27: Muslim separatists kidnaped a senior police official in Srinagar and threatened to kill a hostage they seized earlier this week, their spokesman said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Separatist guerrillas of the Al-Omer group, captured police Deputy Superintendent Puran Chand on Wednesday, just three days after they abducted a close relative of Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

The spokesman said Tasaddug Dev, younger brother of Azad's wife, will be killed (at 0330 GMT) on Saturday unless the government released 20 jailed militants and returned their captured weapons.

Dev is a Kashmiri Muslim but Chand is a Hindu.

His kidnappers have warned security forces against any rescue attempts to free Dav

The various drafts also make a point of not referring to current peace plans as a proposal by US Secretary of State James Baker but of speaking of "the current peace efforts" or "the peace conference" without referring to its initiators.

The PLO was not directly consulted by Washington over the proposed peace conference.

Lanka calls off military action

COLOMBO, Sept 27: The Sri Lankan government today called off military operations against separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas, the military said, reports AFP.

Security forces "temporarily called off" an offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a military spokesman said, adding that troops continued to occupy areas captured from the rebels.

The surprise announcement came as a Tamil party aligned to the LTTE vote Wednesday with Colombo to extend emergency laws across the country in an apparent move to boost President Ranasinghe Premadasa crisis-hit administration.

The spokesman said there were no clashes between troops and the LTTE in the past 24 hours in the jungles of northeastern Mullativu region, where 75 soldiers and nearly 700 rebels have died in heavy battles since September 2.

There were also no reports of fighting in other parts of the embattled northeast where the LTTE is trying to establish a separate state for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority concentrated there.

The latest development came a day after a senior government minister, S Thondaman, announced that he had asked for clarifications from the LTTE supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran on an invitation for fresh peace talks.

"I have asked them to specify a basis for resuming talks", Thondaman told reporters here after receiving a letter from Prabhakaran. He had earlier said his initiative was the final one to resolve the dragging ethnic crisis.

The government is facing a no-confidence motion and President Premadasa himself is under impeachment charges for allegedly arming the LTTE during an earlier round of peace talks which failed in June last year.

Colombo has been trying hard to distance itself from the LTTE amid persistent charges from dissidents, including a former National Security Minister Lalith Athulathudumali, that it gave weapons and vehicles to the rebels.

Off the Record

'Nothing more prominent than their stomachs'

STOCKHOLM: A new book of interviews with Raisa Gorbachev depicts a woman startled by the corruption and self-seeking which she and her husband found when they arrived in Moscow, reports AP.

Mrs Gorbachev's 200-page book, I hope, is a series of interviews she gave from December, 1990, through last April. It also contains some letters. Due to be released today, it is being published in English by Harper Collins and in Swedish by Forum. Mrs Gorbachev, 59, describes her childhood, her work as sociology researcher and her life at the side of Soviet President Mikhail S Gorbachev.

Mrs Gorbachev said quitting her career was "downright painful. But what is most important to me... is to be part of the great tasks that have been allotted to my husband."

She underestimated the conservative power elite which 13 years later caused her to fear her family's life during last month's attempted coup.

When the interviews were conducted, Mr Gorbachev's early reformist colleagues were warning him of dangers from conservatives he was placing in key posts.

At that time, she predicted "difficulties will continue to arise" but appeared confident her husband would ride out the storms with the help of his associates.

Many of those who plotted, or went along with the August 18-21 coup were Mr Gorbachev's closest associates. Mrs Gorbachev on Tuesday, in her first public statement since the failed coup, said she felt "bitterness and betrayal" and had suffered a sharp increase in blood pressure that left her temporarily unable to speak.

She and her husband came to Moscow from the quiet farming town of Stavropol in 1978. Mr Gorbachev's career had advanced rapidly and he was named secretary of the Communist Party central committee under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

Mrs Gorbachev said the system of privileges practiced by the party apparatchiks "was big news to me" and she was astonished by the leaders attitude of stony-faced indifference toward the people and each other. She said they did not greet each other, and feared anyone above them in the hierarchy.

"In social life there were pretensions of superiority, to be chosen. In statements, one was categorical and sometimes rude," she said.

Among excerpts from letters published in the book, is one from Mr Gorbachev in 1953, shortly before the couple were married. He was a law student trainee at a prosecutor's office.

"When you look at any of the bosses here, there is nothing more prominent than their stomachs," the future Soviet President said.

By George, Bush has names in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY: The US President, Mr George Bush is causing a fuss in Kuwait. The name, that is, not the man, reports AP.

A few Kuwaitis have named their babies after the US President in gratitude for America's help in freeing their country from Iraqi occupation, but the practice has met opposition from Arab traditionalists.

"I was so impressed with Bush's determination to free Kuwait, and once I swore to god I would call my baby after him if it were a boy," said Boudour Al-Mutawa, the mother of 3-month-old Abdullah George Bush Al-Mutawa. She said she expected criticism from friends and family for using a non-Arab name and had second thoughts about it.

Bader Al-Shimmiri, a Kuwaiti whose son was named George Bush when he was born in the US, took the criticism to heart and renamed the boy Nasser. But Al-Shimmiri still calls his son Bush.

"If another dictator even thinks of invading Kuwait, we will have our own Bush to protect us," he said.

She's my Prime Minister: Yeltsin

NEW YORK: Make no mistake about it. Boris Yeltsin's wife, Naina, is a nice person and all. But "she is no Raisa," the Russian republic's president said in a gentle dig at the wife of Soviet President Mikhail S Gorbachev, reports AP.

In this Sunday's Parade magazine, Yeltsin referred obliquely to Mrs Gorbachev's reputation for trying to meddle in her husband's political affairs.

Yeltsin said of his own wife: "She is my prime minister, my finance minister and every other minister, but she is no Raisa."

The magazine also said the 60-year-old Yeltsin likes to play tennis and cook in the kitchen. His favorite dish: fried eggs and tomatoes.

Yeltsin and his wife share a three-room apartment in Moscow with their daughter, Tatiana, son-in-law Alexei and 9-year-old grandson, Boris Jr.

After being elected president of Russia, Yeltsin was offered a government-owned country house, but he refused, saying, "A man's home should be his own castle, not the government's."

111 Thai Muslim guerillas surrender

PATTANI (Thailand), Sept 27: A group of 111 Muslim separatist jungle fighters formally surrendered to the Thai military today, saying their movement was finished.

"We are absolutely turning our backs on the movement," said Hu Seng Kor Seng, 26, a former commander of the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO).

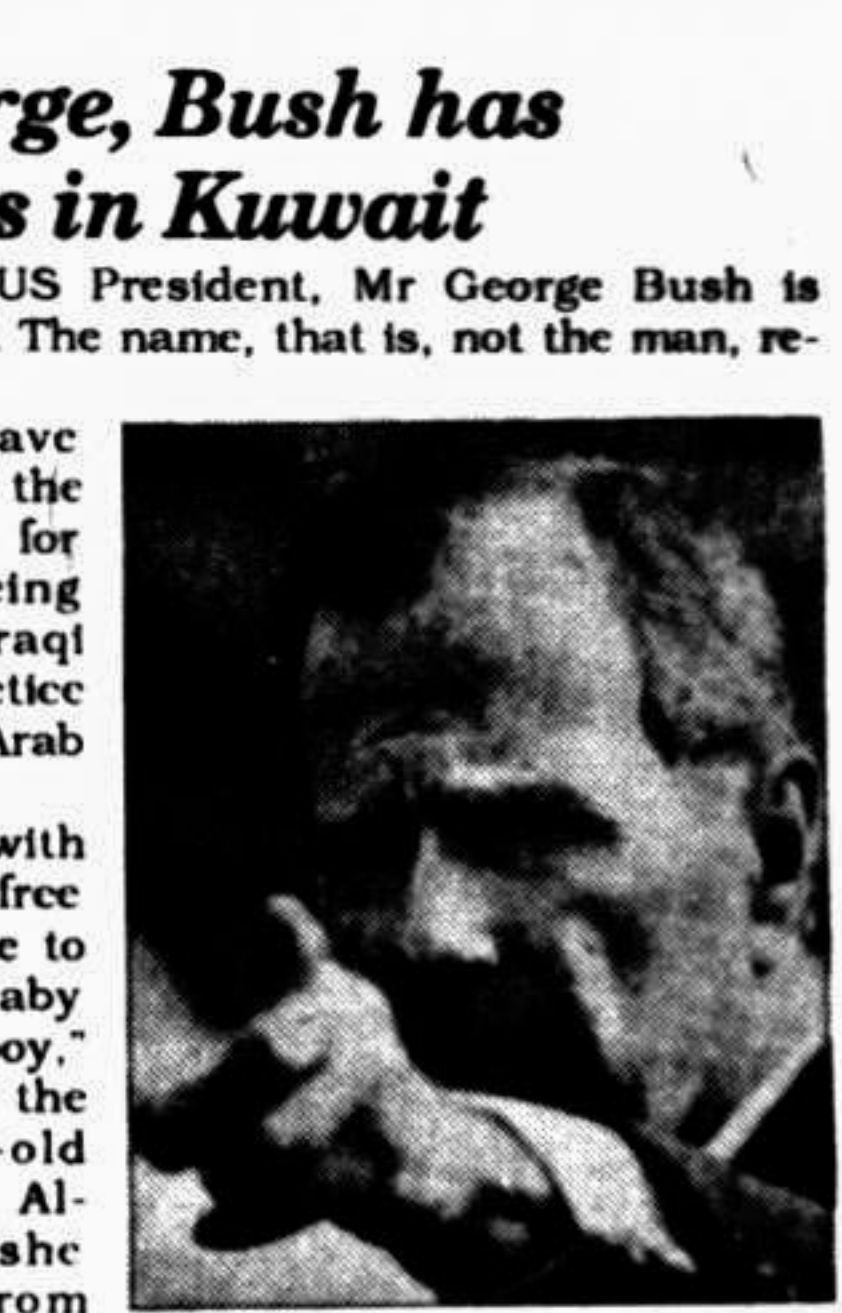
He was addressing soldiers and other officials gathered for the surrender ceremony at an Army base in this southern town close to the Malaysian border.

"I think the movement has come to its end after this," Hu told Reuter.

PULO was formed in 1957 to fight for an autonomous Islamic state in the four mainly Muslim southern provinces of Thailand. At its peak in 1981 the guerrilla movement had a strength of about 1,800.



Portrait of Raisa Gorbachev, wife of Soviet President Mikhail S Gorbachev.



Portrait of George Bush, US President.



CHITRAL(Pakistan): The Princess of Wales wears a turban and embroidered coat September 26 given to her when she was made an honorary Chitral Scout.

-AFP/UNB photo

USSR endorses 4-nation meet on N-weapons

NEW YORK, Sept 27: Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin Thursday endorsed a proposed meeting of the four countries with nuclear weapons stationed in Europe, a French Foreign Ministry spokesman said, reports AFP.

Today's defection was the fourth PULO mass surrender in five years. Local Thai officials said only a few dozen guerillas were still active and their main activity was extortion.

Hu said the guerillas used the Malaysia border province of Kedah and the town of Kota Bahru as bases for their operations in Thailand.