

Arafat re-elected PLO chief: Abu Abbas resigns

ALOIERS, Sept 28: The Palestine National Council (PNC), ending a five-day meeting before dawn, elected a new 17-member PLO executive committee and confirmed Arafat, 62, as President of the state the Palestinians proclaimed in 1988.

Seven of the members of the executive committee, which takes day to day decisions for the PLO, were new. Abu Abbas' group carried out 1990 raid on an Israeli beach after which the United States broke off dialogue with the PLO.

had resigned so as not to be an obstacle to dialogue. "Abu Abbas offered to resign from the day the United States suspended talks with the PLO. I told him it was up to the PNC to accept this," he said. "Today he has preferred to stand down for the good of Palestine". Abbas was replaced by Ali Ishak, his deputy in the Baghdad-based front. The young generation of moderate leaders around Arafat did not get onto the committee as they were expected to do. Arafat, according to delegates speaking after the PNC session, preferred not to upset the current balance of forces within the PLO by attacking the preponderance of (traditional) factions there as he tried to push ahead with efforts to back a US-proposed peace conference.

Fresh miners' strike in Romania

BUCHAREST, Romania, Sept 28: Miners whose protests forced Premier Petre Roman to resign left the capital Saturday, while a news report said thousands more miners launched a strike for better working conditions, reports AP.

A trainload of miners left Bucharest after police used tear gas to break up a demonstration in University Square, marking the end of three days of violent protests against the government of President Ion Iliescu. The Rompres news agency did not give details of the new coal mine strikes but said the miners appeared to be from different regions than those who descended on Bucharest on Wednesday.

The protests began Wednesday when about 4,000 striking miners who arrived aboard commandeered trains rioted in the capital, killing at least 100 people and injuring more than 300 more, about 100 seriously.

Hectic parleys on Tin Bigha issue Forward Bloc backs plea to make Kuchlibari a corridor

CALCUTTA, Sept 28: The Forward Bloc leader, Kamal Guha, who is spearheading the movement against the proposed transfer of Tin Bigha in Coochbihar districts to Bangladesh, Friday held a second round of discussions with the State's Minister for Information and Cultural Affairs, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee in a bid to find a solution to the issue, reports AFP. The meeting, follow-up of Friday's discussions between the Chief Minister, Joyti Basu and the Forward Bloc leader here, touched upon various aspects in regard to the transfer. The Chief Minister has decided to visit Tin Bigha on November 12 to make an on-the-spot study of the situation there. Mr Guha, a former State Agriculture Minister, told newsmen after the meeting that his party stuck to its earlier stand on the issue. He, however, said that Bangladesh's demand of making Kuchlibari a corridor area could be considered without disturbing the present status of Tin Bigha. Mr Guha, who is also the Chairman of the Tin Bigha Sangram Committee, said that his party would continue its movement against the transfer till an acceptable solution was reached. "Some of the Bangladesh

demands might be reasonable, but nothing could be done at the cost of Tin Bigha," he said adding that proper transfer of enclaves to respective countries was the only solution to the problem. However, the Forward Bloc leader said that he had requested the Minister at the meeting to convey "our stand and suggestions" on the issue to the Prime Minister so as to take up the matter with the Bangladesh government accordingly. Besides, Buddhadev Bhattacharjee, the state's Chief Secretary, N Krishnamurthy and the Home Secretary, Manish Gupta were present at the meeting.

7 Indian lawyers charged for chanting death to judges

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: New Delhi's High Court judges yesterday charged seven lawyers with contempt, alleging the advocates stormed into their courtrooms chanting "death to judges," the Press Trust of India said, reports Reuter.

These advocates, aided and abetted by others in large numbers, stormed various court rooms," the agency quoted the judges as saying in a summons.

(They) individually and together stood on the chairs, tables and dais of the court masters and acted in a menacing manner towards the Judges," said the summons, which was filed by all 26 of the High Court's judges.

(They) shouted slogans such as 'Chief Justice and Judges, Murdabad (death to them),' the summons said.

The lawyers, who could face up to six months in jail if convicted, are leaders of a High Court Lawyers' Association that held demonstrations on Thursday in a long-running battle against official attempts to transfer many cases to lower courts.

The scheme is aimed at casting a massive backlog of cases that plaintiffs say may take up to 15 years to be heard.



ZAGREB, Yugoslavia: A Croatian soldier shows the gun to his son who came September 27 to visit his father who is serving in the National Guard. — AFP/UNB photo

Defence Minister to be a civilian Sweeping changes in Soviet Army planned

MOSCOW, Sept 28: The Soviet Union soon will have a civilian Defence Minister and is planning other sweeping changes for the military, the Chief of Staff told an assemblage of foreign military attaches on Thursday, reports AP.

Nuclear weapons will be controlled by the Kremlin, said General Vladimir N Lobov, the second-in-command in the Soviet Defence Ministry, but the republics will have much greater say than before over most other military questions, including the budget. "The nuclear forces would all be under the control of one

person, in the hands of the President," Lobov told attaches from the United States and its NATO allies, China, former Warsaw Pact nations, neutral European nations, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. The military, Lobov said, will meet its responsibilities under recently signed — but still not ratified — treaties slashing nuclear and conventional forces. The Soviet military likely will start moving to an all-volunteer force next year. At first, the volunteers will make up 10 per cent of the total, with the proportion growing yearly, he said.

Off the Record

Couple finds marriage invalid after 7 years

PAVIA (Italy): The "seven-year itch" took on a different meaning for an Italian couple who discovered their marriage was invalid because it had been performed by a bogus priest, reports Reuter. The couple, identified only as Franca and Luciano in Italian newspapers on Friday, saw a magazine article about a man wanted by police for fraud. They recognised him in a photo as "Father Sandro," the "priest" who officiated at their Roman Catholic wedding seven years ago in northern Italy. Police said the man, Rosario Nastasi, had a long record of masquerading as a public official or priest in various parts of Italy. A local Church official told the couple, who have a three-year-old son, they would have to get married again.

Furor over Diana's dress

ISLAMABAD: Princess Diaria flew out of Pakistan on Friday leaving behind a storm over the clothes she wore to visit the grand mosque in Lahore during her official visit this week, reports AFP.

The Princes of Wales visited the 17th-century Mogul mosque Wednesday wearing a dress that ended at the knees with a white dopatta (scarf) to cover her head and a black shawl presented to her by the Head Imam Maulana Abdul Qadir Azad.

The daily paper Jang of Lahore in a prominent story, said "the Princess needed trousers, the Mullah gave her a shawl."

For most Pakistanis it was the first time they had seen a woman walk through the grand mosque with her legs uncovered. "No other woman could dare to walk bare-legged in a house of Allah," said one Imam who leads prayers at a mosque. But opinion on the Princess's choice of clothes was divided. Imam Maulana apparently did not object to her attire. He told Jang that the Prophet Mohammed had once given a shawl to a Christian woman when she called on him.

Malcha Lodhi, Editor of Islamabad's English-language daily the News, told AFP "for me there is no problem, they (the clergy) have a problem. Her head was covered and she is a foreigner and from a royal family," Lodhi said. But she admitted she would not herself have entered a mosque "like this."

Most Pakistanis would have preferred to see her wear trousers, said Mian Abdul Wahid, a member of the ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance.



King George buried after 17 years of his death

LONDON: The body of Britain's King George VI lay unburied for 17 years after his death in 1952, according to a new book on the monarchy, reports Reuter.

The lead-lined coffin containing the body of Queen Elizabeth's father was lowered beneath the stone floor of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle at his funeral in 1952 as a temporary measure while a final resting place was prepared. Author Douglas Keay says it was then kept in a passageway under the deanery where it remained for years, apparently to avoid inflicting the pain of a second funeral on his widow Elizabeth, the present Queen Mother.

Ten years after the King's death a new Dean of Windsor, Robin Woods, was astonished to get a letter from a Royal Secretary saying that among his immediate tasks was that he "bury the King." Eventually, in 1969, a vault was created at the present Queen's wishes with room for George VI, for the Queen Mother and for herself, as well as her husband the Duke of Edinburgh, their son, the future King Charles, and his consort, Diana. Shelves in the locked, underground passageway also held the dusty coffins of George II, George III, and William IV who reigned in the 18th and 19th centuries.

8 lakh Italian women suffer 'domestic accidents'

ROME: An estimated 800,000 Italian women were hospitalised over a one-year period, officially for "domestic accidents" but in fact after being beaten by their husbands in most cases, a seminar was told here Thursday, reports AFP.

In a report presented to the seminar on violence towards women, feminist groups and the Democratic Party of the Left said one woman in three may be maltreated by her husband. Battered women who go to hospitals for treatment for cuts, bruises and fractures often prefer to report their injuries as the result of household accidents or falls, inconsistent with the nature of their wounds.

Since the beginning of 1991 we have received more than 6,000 telephone calls, said Director of the Distress Centre for Women Telephona Rosa. But the callers represent a tiny minority, the seminar was told, most women prefer to remain silent. Battered wives are found in all walks of life and in all regions of Italy. Working women and women in the home, women from the industrialised north and the poorer south are all equally potential victims, the report said.

Japan seeks peace in S-E Asia

BANGKOK, Sept 28: Japanese Emperor Akihito told Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun here Friday that Japan strongly desired peace and stability in Southeast Asia, a senior Japanese official said, reports AFP.

Speaking to a press conference, Hideo Kagami, Press Secretary to the Emperor, said Emperor Akihito's remarks were made during a reception hosted by the Thai Premier at government house.

Kagami said the 30-minute talks between the two men were held in a "very warm atmosphere" and both sides exchanged views on "close relations, economic and cultural fields" enjoyed by both countries. Several senior Japanese officials, including Japanese Ambassador to Thailand Hisahiko Okazaki, also attended the reception, he said.

Emperor Akihito and his wife Empress Michiko arrived here Thursday on the first-ever visit to Southeast Asia by a Japanese monarch and Akihito's first foreign trip since assuming the throne following the death of his father Emperor Hirohito in 1989.

They are to travel to Malaysia and Indonesia after completing their visit to Thailand. Praising Emperor Akihito's visit, Anand was quoted as saying that it would create "peace, goodwill and mutual understanding" in the region. Prior to meeting Anand, the Emperor laid a wreath at the victory monument in central Bangkok, built in memory of Thai soldiers killed during the World War II. However, Kagami stressed that the wreath laying had "nothing to do" with Japan's role in the war. Upon his arrival, Akihito vowed that Japan would never repeat the "horrors" committed by Japan's imperial army under the command of his father during the war.

Unofficial truce in Lanka on

COLOMBO, Sept 28: Sri Lankan troops and Tamil Tiger guerrillas were holding their fire today the second day of their unofficial truce, the military here said, reports AFP. There have been no reports of hostilities between security force and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a military spokesman said. Troops "temporarily called off" offensive operations against tigers on Friday after a month of heavy bloodletting which left some 75 soldiers and an estimated 700 guerrillas dead in northeastern Mullativu region. Before Friday's suspension of operations there had been clashes in several parts of the northeast.

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko hosted a dinner for the Thai King and Queen Sirikit on Thursday evening. Japan's imperial couple will visit Thailand's former capital at Sukhothai and the northern town of Chiang Mai on Saturday. They will fly to Malaysia on Monday.

UN inspectors in Iraq released US halts fresh military build-up in Saudi Arabia

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: Following the agreement between the United Nations and Iraq for unimpeded access to inspectors, the Bush administration halted plans Thursday to send helicopters and additional warplanes to Saudi Arabia, reports PTI. One reason for the sudden US decision, according to press reports here, was that

Saudi Arabia became uneasy over what it regarded as an unnecessary crisis. In halting major military movements, Bush administration officials went out of their way to disclose that preparations for possible new military missions inside Iraq and bombing raids had been both advanced and extensive. A helicopter base was being estab-

lished in northeast Saudi Arabia to support any UN helicopter searches inside Iraq. General Joseph Hoar, the new Chief of the US Central Command had received presidential authority recently to begin drawing up a list of targets in Iraq should President Bush decide to order punitive air strikes. The New York Times said that one reason why Bush decided to halt a further build up in Saudi Arabia after Iraq's agreements with the UN was that the Saudis wanted to defuse the crisis.

AFP from Baghdad says: A team of United Nations nuclear inspection specialists returned to its hotel here early on Saturday after spending four days on a Baghdad car park surrounded by Iraqi troops.

Team leader David Kay expressed pleasure at returning to his hotel, and said the end of the four-day stand off could be attributed to pressure from the UN Security Council on Iraq, and to the continued interest of world media.

The 44-member team arrived back at its hotel, The Palestine, just as dawn was breaking. "I'm very glad to be back", a tired Kay told the press from the hotel, located just 400 meters (yards) from the car park.

The group owed its release to the "very serious activity" in the UN Security Council and the role of the press. Which focused attention on this situation, "Kay said.

He also praised "modern technology" — his cellular telephone — which allowed him to remain in contact with the outside world while he and his crew were detained at the car park. He said the team had undergone the ordeal as a tight-knit group which was in agreement on the objectives of its mission.

BRIEFLY

Typhoon kills 38 in Japan: At least 38 people were killed and 617 injured as a powerful typhoon lashed Japan, police said Saturday, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

Police said nine people were unaccounted for after Typhoon Mireille swept across Japan from Friday afternoon until early Saturday with winds up to 144 KPH (90 MPH). Last weekend, Typhoon Luke pounded eastern Japan, killing 14 people.

Four of the 10-member crew of a South Korean freighter were missing on Friday night after high waves capsized the 270-ton 7 Jinyung anchored at Iikata port, about 900 km (560 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

Police said the typhoon victims were mostly hit by flying debris or killed by collapsing houses. The typhoon triggered an extensive blackout in western and northern Japan which affected more than four million homes and paralysed air, land and sea traffic.

Sandinists clash with Contras: Former Sandinist soldiers and Contra guerrillas fought a gunbattle in northern Nicaragua leaving three wounded, the Interior Ministry said. It was apparently the first such skirmish since elections last year brought a democratic government to power, reports AP from Managua.

A spokesman for the ministry said former Sandinista soldiers and former members of the US-backed Contra guerrillas fought Thursday in the district of San Antonio, some 150 miles (225 kilometers) north of the capital.

He said a former Contra fighter, as well as a woman and a 9-month-old girl were wounded.

The Contras disbanded last year after an opposition coalition led by Violeta Chamorro defeated the leftist Sandinistas in a nationwide election, ending an eight-year civil war. But the government estimates that about 700 former rebels, dubbed the Recontras, have returned to the field in recent months, angered by the government's failure to distribute as much land and aid as promised and by continuing Sandinista control of the police and army.

Former Washington Mayor jailed: Rejecting pleas for leniency, a federal judge decided on Friday that flamboyant former Washington Mayor Marion Barry should serve six months in jail for his cocaine-possession conviction, reports Reuter from Washington.

US District Judge Thomas Jackson dismissed arguments that Barry, one of the nation's most prominent democratic blacks politicians, be spared from going to jail and imposed the same tough sentence he originally handed down a year ago.

Jackson had been ordered by a federal appeals court to sentence Barry and to more fully explain his reasons in imposing punishment.

The sensational six-week trial of Barry, who left office in January after 12 years as the top elected official in the US capital, was dominated by sex-and-drug allegations.

20 jailed for spraying acid at police: Twenty workers were sentenced up to seven years in jail Friday for spraying poisonous chemicals at riot police trying to block a violent labour strike, reports AP from Seoul.

The 20 were accused of spraying hydrochloric acid and sulphuric acid and other poisonous chemicals, injuring 45 police officers in a battle at Dongyoung Aluminum Co. in June. One police officer was blinded in the two-hour fight.

Jong Chang-sok, 29, and two others were sentenced to seven years and 17 others were given up to five-year prison terms.

The case was heard in Suwon, and industrial area 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of Seoul. Workers at the aluminium company staged a walkout demanding higher wages and have since returned to work.

The government has stepped up efforts to curb violent labour protests, accusing unions of creating social unrest and damaging the international competitiveness of South Korean companies.

Violence continues in Zaire: Soldiers continued looting in Zaire's capital Kinshasa overnight despite a curfew and the presence of foreign troops, national radio said Friday, reports Reuter.

The radio in its mid-day news bulletin said mutinous troops who led rioting that wrecked the city on Monday and Tuesday, had broken into homes and buildings in various parts of the city.

It said one doctor reported troops stole his radio and television. Doctors at the hospital where he worked decided not to treat any patients because of the lack of security.

The radio said looters had taken laboratory refrigerators containing samples of blood contaminated with the HIV virus which causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It said the blood samples were extremely dangerous.

Lady Oona to be buried near Chaplin

CORSIER-SUR-VEVEY, Switzerland, Sept 28: Lady Oona Chaplin, widow of international comic hero Charlie Chaplin, will be buried in a simple ceremony near her late husband, police said Saturday, reports AP.

Lady Oona died at her home Friday of natural causes at the age of 66. She had reportedly been in poor health for some time.

The daughter of American-Irish playwright Eugene O'Neill, she married Chaplin in 1943 at the age of 18. He was then 54 and had been divorced three times. O'Neill objected strongly to the match and never reconciled with his daughter.

Lady Oona subsequently renounced her American citizenship in favor of Chaplin's British nationality.

She is survived by eight children from her 34-year marriage to Chaplin, and 17 grandchildren.

Corrier spokesman Michael Riedo said the funeral, open just to family members, would be held Tuesday afternoon in this hillside village overlooking Lake Geneva.

He said the ceremony, featuring two prayers, would be "very simple," and would last about ten minutes. He said Lady Oona would be buried near her beloved "Charlie," who died in 1977.



PARIS (Files): Undated picture of Oona Chaplin with her husband Charlie Chaplin. Lady Oona Chaplin died September 27 in Corsier-sur-vevey, Switzerland. — AFP/UNB photo