

BRIEFLY

European leaders praise Bush : President Bush's announcement on nuclear weapons cutbacks surprised the world and brought high words of praise from political leaders in Europe. It also apparently caught the military off guard.

Still, Germans themselves were thrilled about elimination of short-range nuclear weapons based in this country.

After intermediate-range missiles were installed in Germany in the early 1980s, leftist activists fought incessantly to have them removed. The last of those missiles were removed early this year.

Akihito leaves Thailand for Malaysia: Emperor Akihito of Japan left the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai for Malaysia Monday morning at the end of a five-day visit to Thailand, reports AFP from Bangkok.

Akihito and his wife, Empress Michiko, arrived in Thailand last Thursday on the first visit to southeast Asia by a Japanese monarch. It is also Akihito's first foreign trip since he assumed the throne following the death of his father Emperor Hirohito in 1989.

After Malaysia, Akihito will visit Indonesia.

UN, Iraqi experts finalize inventory : UN nuclear experts began a new inspection Sunday after completing an inventory of confiscated documents that were at the centre of a four-day showdown with Iraqi authorities, reports AFP from Baghdad.

The inspectors and Iraqi specialists finalized the inventory late Saturday after working all day, a US source said. He did not specify where the latest inspection was taking place.

The 44 nuclear experts, headed by American David Kay, returned to their hotel at dawn Saturday after spending four days and nights in a Baghdad car park at the site where they seized the documents and films.

They said the material related to Iraq's nuclear weapons capability.

Venezuelan Minister shot : Venezuelan Deputy Justice Minister Jose Alberto Morales Gomez was shot and wounded early on Sunday morning by an unknown man who opened fire in an apparent robbery attempt, reports Reuter from Caracas.

Police said four men drew up in a car and apparently tried to steal Morales Gomez's car as he was leaving a restaurant. One of the men fired on him when he resisted.

A spokesman at a private clinic in Caracas where Morales Gomez, shot in the leg, was taken for treatment, said he was out of danger.

MP shot dead in Punjab : Sikh militant Sunday shot dead a former state legislator in Punjab after a dozen people died in separatist-linked violence elsewhere in the northern state, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP from New Delhi.

Militants gunned down Nachattar Singh Gill at his house in the state's Moga town late Sunday, the news agency said.

A neighbour, Kirpal Singh, who was sitting with him was injured in the attack state government officials were quoted as saying, PTI did not say if the injuries were serious.

Gill, a Sikh, was father of a Deputy Inspector-General of Police in Punjab PTI said.

Blast in Georgia : Several people were slight injured Sunday evening by a violent explosion in front of television headquarters, an AFP correspondent saw on the spot, reports AFP from Tbilisi.

The armed opposition to Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia is holed up in that building.

AFP counted three slightly injured persons, including one member of national guard, which is reselling against Gamsakhurdia. The blast occurred at 10 p.m. (1900 GMT).

Doctors at the scene said there were "half a dozen" injured, mostly from flying glass, as the building's ground floor windows were blown out. One woman and one man were hospitalized.

Rockets fired on Kabul : Afghan Mujahideen fired rockets at the capital Kabul on Sunday for the second day running, wounding three children, official Kabul radio said.

The broadcast, monitored in Pakistan's capital Islamabad, said eight surface-to-air missiles fired from the west of Kabul hit residential areas in three districts, causing damage.

The attack followed on Saturday when Mujahideen fighting the Soviet-backed government fired six rockets into Kabul, killing three civilians.

Nepali CP to merge with Cong

KATHMANDU, Sept 30: The Nepal Communist Party has decided to merge with the ruling Nepali Congress, reports PTI.

At its sixth convention held recently, the Nepal Communist Party said it believed only the Nepali Congress could ensure the development and security of the country.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of the party General Secretary, Mahabir Prasad Singh. It also decided to urge the government to solve the problems facing the people and to uplift the poor.

Reuter adds: Nepal's first freely-elected Parliament in three decades adjourned for a holiday, vowing to defend itself against all break odds.

Akihito arrives in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 30: Emperor Akihito arrived Monday for the first visit by a Japanese emperor to Malaysia, which has sought closer trade ties and urges its people to emulate Japan's business success, reports AP.

On arrival at Parliament, Akihito was met by the Malaysian Yang Di-Pertuan Agong (King), Sultan Azlan Shah. Also present was the Raja Permaisuri Agong (Queen), Batun.

Unlike Akihito, a hereditary monarch, Malaysia's king is elected by secret ballot for a five-year term by the rulers of nine of Malaysia's 13 states. It is the only such elected monarchy in the world.

Several thousand students and others have been sent to study in Japan, and Mahathir has said many times he is happy with progress under the policy.

Sharif seeks US help to make South Asia nuclear-free

ISLAMABAD, Sept 30: India and Pakistan have fought three wars since 1947 and are at loggerheads in Kashmir. Pakistan has said it will sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty if New Delhi does the same.

The United States suspended economic and military aid to Pakistan in October 1990, accusing it of speeding up its nuclear programme. Since the Gulf war ended, Islamabad has however increased its gestures of goodwill toward Washington.

In his response, Sharif urged all nuclear states to follow the US example so as to "clear the globe of deadly weapons."

Rebels kill 10 soldiers in Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 30: Tamil Tiger rebels shot and killed 10 Sinhalese soldiers in an ambush in northeastern Sri Lanka Monday, military officials said, reports AP.

The soldiers were on a route clearing patrol when the rebels attacked them near Central Camp in the eastern Ampara district, officials said.

The rebels, fighting for an independent homeland, fled with the weapons of the dead soldiers, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Also in the northeast, five people, including a Tamil civilian, were killed during the past 24-hours in separate incidents.

The Tamil, Bastiampillai Jossy, was killed when he was being taken to a rebel hideout.



ISLAMABAD : Journalists, carrying placards condemning violence against newsmen demonstrate before the Pakistani Parliament September 29. Pakistani newspapers also observed a complete strike to protest attacks on two reporters in Karachi recently. —AFP/UNB/Photo

Washington to intervene in regional conflict US to keep enough force to mount operation abroad

NEW YORK, Sept 30: The United States will keep enough force to mount an operation abroad on the scale of the "Desert Storm" Gulf war campaign even with cuts in nuclear arms, Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Speaking after President George Bush's announcement on nuclear arms cuts, Cheney said Washington sought to keep enough forces deployed to resist aggression in any regional conflict when it was in the US interest to do so, such as in Korea — but not currently in Yugoslavia.

"I would say that the basic underlying assumptions by which we size our forces today is the need to prevail in a regional conflict like Desert Storm," he said in an interview on ABC television outlining his vision of future Defence Department operations.

More than half a million US troops fought in Operation Desert Storm, a six-week drive evicting Iraq from Kuwait by February 28.

"You have to preserve the kind of capability that you call upon when those unforeseen emergencies (like Iraq) arise, and they always do," Cheney said.

Asked where Washington would be sufficiently concerned to mount a Desert Storm-sized operation, Cheney said: "I think we clearly care, for example, in Korea, where we have got major commitments and major interests and had to fight a major conflict in the past."

But Cheney did not see the same situation as holding for Yugoslavia.

"We have not gotten militarily involved in the situation in Yugoslavia, even though the Serbs are committing aggression against the Croats. It is not in our interest to be involved in that conflict," he said.

Recognising that the Pentagon was to slash the number of troops by 25 per cent in five years, Cheney said any operation on the scale of Desert Storm would have to operate from a tinier base, leaving less capacity to operate elsewhere.

He said: "You would not have as much residual capability elsewhere in the world if you did Desert Storm with those smaller forces. You'd use a larger percentage of the smaller force that will then be available."

The cuts Bush announced on Friday include the destruction of all US ground-launched tactical nuclear missiles and the removal of nuclear cruise missiles from submarines and warships.

Cheney said in the future the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), a space-based anti-missile system popularly known as "Star Wars", would be more important than before.

"We have to anticipate that the world of 15 or 20 years from now will be one in which there has been a proliferation not only of nuclear weapons, but also the means to deliver them — ballistic missiles."

NAM to be kept free from communism : Soeharto 'Overdose of democracy to breed unrest in Indonesia'

JAKARTA, Sept 30 : An overdose of democracy could lead the country into a period of prolonged unrest, warned Wahono, the Chairman of Indonesia's ruling Golkar party, reports AFP.

"We should learn our lesson, an overdose and too liberal democracy has been unable to guarantee security and peace for people but has instead drawn nations into prolonged unrest," Antara news agency today quoted Wahono as saying.

Addressing a youth organization in Bandar Lampung, southern Sumatra, on Saturday, Wahono said several countries in south and south-east Asia have fallen into prolonged unrest because the democratic process and changes that took place there proved to be too much for their national resilience.

He warned that the wind of democracy which was now blowing throughout the world could also "poison" the minds of unsatisfied people in Indonesia.

"We should remain alert against the existence of a group of people who are unsatisfied with present conditions because their interests have been put into disadvantage and who want radical changes," Wahono said.

He did not elaborate nor name any group or country.

Reuter adds: Indonesia's President Soeharto said Jakarta had accepted chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement to save the organisation from communism, Antara news agency said on Sunday.

The 102-member movement already had a number of communist and socialist-oriented countries, Soeharto was quoted as saying on Saturday.

"Their strategy is to make countries of the world to be communist nations," he added.

Indonesia, elected leader of the movement earlier this month, will host a summit next September.

Thai army chief retires

BANGKOK, Sept 30 : The head of Thailand's military Junta officially retired as chief of the Armed Forces today (Monday) but kept his position on the Junta, reports Reuter.

General Sunthorn Konggongpon gave up the title of Supreme Commander to General Suchinda Kraprayoon, the Army Chief and powerful number two in the Junta, having reached the statutory military retirement age of 60.

Suchinda, who is two years younger, is widely believed to exert more influence than Sunthorn.



BEJLOVAR, Yugoslavia : Yugoslav Federal Army soldiers are escorted by a Croatian National Guard after being captured during fighting in this east Croatian town. Fighting broke out between opposing forces after Yugoslav Airforce jets bombed the town centre. —AFP/UNB Photo

Imelda puts off plan to return to Manila

MANILA, Sept 30 : Exiled former First Lady Imelda Marcos has put off her plans to return to the Philippines after President Corazon Aquino's government extended her entry permit for one month, her lawyer said today, reports Reuter.

Aquino last month gave Marcos a one-way travel permit to return to her homeland by October 5, but extended it on Sunday until November 5 at Marcos's request, Attorney Antonio Coronel said by telephone.

Marcos said in Honolulu last weekend she would return to Manila on Friday with the body of her late husband, deposed President Ferdinand Marcos, if her request for an extension was not granted.

"Definitely she is not coming on October 4. We have one month within which to decide when she will return," Coronel said.

Marcos, speaking on Sunday to a crowd of 400 supporters at a memorial service marking the second anniversary of her husband's death, vowed to bury her husband's remains in her homeland by November 1.

She said she would return to the US mainland to settle some business and keep a medical appointment in Boston and to clear up some matters in Washington.

She would return to Hawaii by October 19 to accompany her husband's body back to the Philippines, she said.

AFP says : Exiled former First Lady Imelda Marcos cannot bring the corpse of her husband home legally, and her only resort is to smuggle it into the country, a senior Filipino official said in Manila.

The Marcos widow said in Honolulu on Sunday that she was returning to the Philippines as early as Friday with the remains of her husband, deposed President Ferdinand Marcos, who died in exile in Hawaii in 1989, two years after he was ousted from office by a popular revolt.

But Press Secretary Tomas Gomez said that under US laws, no aircraft or vessel will carry a corpse without the official consular seal of the country to which the cargo is destined.

The Filipino consul in Hawaii is under instructions to deny any request from the Marcos family to affix the consular seal on the Marcos coffin, he added.

Major the sexiest man in Parliament

LONDON : Britons have voted Prime Minister John Major the sexiest man in Parliament but also find him the most boring of politicians according to an opinion poll, reports Reuter.

The poll for the Sunday tabloid the news of the world rated the personal appeal of Britain's political leaders.

Major the conservative party's choice of leader to succeed Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, roundly defeated his rivals in sex appeal, honesty and trustworthiness.

But his wish does not appear to match his other charms the survey found. He was voted Britain's most boring politician while Labour party leader Neil Kinnock was declared the wittiest.

The survey, by polling organisation continental research, was based on interview with 1,029 people asked to name their top politician in a series of categories.

Although Major won on sex appeal, he did not command a majority, he polled 22 per cent, while Paddy Ashdown, the ex-commander who head the Centrist Liberal Democrats and former Labour Foreign Secretary David Owen each gained 17 per cent.

Major's best score was 38 per cent for most trusted politician.

Kinnock was named the politician who most evades the issues, with 26 per cent, but Major came second on 17 per cent.

In more conventional polls, Labour and the Conservatives are running neck-and-neck with about 40 per cent of the electorate. Major must call a general election by mid 1992 at the latest.

Salary to be paid in bricks

MOSCOW : Workers in the northern Russian city of Tver will soon be getting heavier pay packets — part of their monthly salary will be paid in bricks, reports Reuter from Moscow.

Under a new system introduced by building materials factory Number One in Tver, workers with more than 10 years service can exchange every rouble they earn for four bricks. The rest will get three bricks per rouble.

Tass news agency said the workers were pleased because, in the current climate of shortages, bricks were worth far more than the near worthless Soviet currency.

Off the Record

Teresa embarrassed

CALCUTTA (India) : Mother Teresa, whose work among the destitute and dying of Calcutta won her the Nobel peace prize, on Sunday denounced a newspaper report that Rajiv Gandhi's widow Sonia might work for her charity, reports Reuter.

"This is not nice," said the 81-year-old nun, whose modest mission to help in India's poorest and most populous city has turned her into the head of an international organisation.

"This is not the truth," she said in a telephone interview. "What is the idea of such news? Anybody who is trying to say it is trying to embarrass her as well as me."



The banner headline in India's Tribune newspaper, "Sonia to join Mother Teresa," was the latest attempt to find a role for the Italian-born widow who now represents the dynasty that ruled India for four decades.

Sonia Gandhi has become India's favourite enigma since her husband, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was blown up by a woman suicide bomber on May 21, ending his family's dominance of Indian politics since independence from Britain in 1947.

His widow's silence on her future has led to articles like the Tribune's, which stopped short of suggesting the elegant 44-year-old should become a nun but did say Mother Teresa had asked her to head the trusts which fund the missionary's work.

"I have never had any contact with Mrs Sonia Gandhi," Mother Teresa said. "I've never seen her, never spoken to her and she has never written to me."

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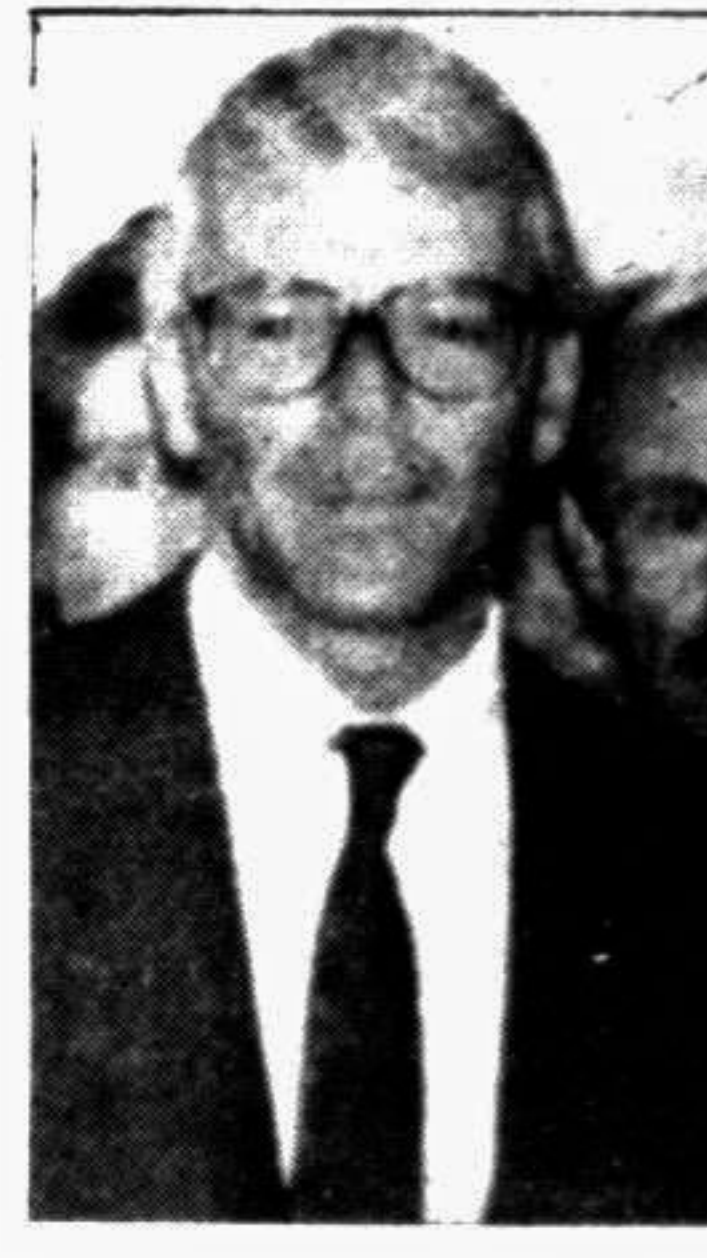
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Fresh attacks on immigrants in Germany

BONN, Sept 30 : A German television cameraman was seriously injured during violence that broke out during an anti-racist demonstration in the troubled eastern German town of Hoyerswerda on Sunday, police said, reports AFP.

They said around 50 cars were burned by far-left protesters at the march, which was called to protest recent attacks on immigrants by pro-Nazi groups in the Saxony town.

Most of the 3,000 to 4,000 demonstrators were said to be leftists who had travelled from Berlin and western Germany for the occasion.

Fighting broke out when police tried to disarm a minority of the protesters, who were carrying clubs and wearing masks.

Several police officers were hit by stones, officials said.

Meanwhile officials reported more attacks on immigrants hostels over the weekend and said one woman and a young girl were injured and several "right-wing extremists" arrested.

Hoyerswerda has been the scene of numerous attacks by right-wing groups in the past few weeks in which several immigrants were injured.

On Sunday, German President Richard von Weizsaecker described the attacks as "appalling and shameful" and said he would visit foreign workers next week to show his support.

Some 91,000 people, mainly from eastern Europe, have sought asylum in Germany over the past six months.

Canadian PM hails Bush's plan to cut N-arms

STANFORD, Calif, Sept 30 : Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on Sunday praised President Bush's nuclear weapons standoff and urged the United States to show similar initiative on economic matters, reports AP.

"The world is looking to the United States to provide the same enlightened leadership on the integration of the newly emerging democracies into the global economy as it is now providing on the reduction of nuclear arms," said Mulroney, keynote speaker at Stanford University's Centennial Convocation.