

BRIEFLY

Western hostage to be released soon :

A western hostage held in Beirut will be released within a few days, Israel television said on Saturday, reports Reuter from Jerusalem.

There may also be "a limited release" of Shi'ite prisoners held under Israeli control in a south Lebanon prison, it added.

Earlier on Saturday, Israeli military authorities said they had received definite evidence of the death of Israeli serviceman Yossi Fink, kidnapped in 1986.

Cuellar's envoy to attend ME confce :

UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar said Saturday he would be sending an envoy to the Mideast peace talks in Madrid scheduled for October 30, reports AFP from New York.

Eduard Brunner, Switzerland's Ambassador to Washington, will attend the opening of the talks with a small diplomatic team. Perez de Cuellar said at a press conference on Yugoslavia.

He added that he was glad the peace talks would take place and congratulated US Secretary of State James Baker for his efforts to convene them.

Lankan forces capture strategic island :

Sri Lankan forces captured a strategic island off the north coast from Tamil separatist rebels, a military spokesman said on Saturday, reports Reuter from Colombo.

He said the forces launched a land, sea and air operation on Friday to take the island of Mandaitivu, five km (three miles) from the Jaffna peninsula, the guerrillas' stronghold.

Two smaller islands were also captured from the rebels after a fierce two-day battle, the spokesman said. The operations were part of a major thrust against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who are fighting for a Tamil homeland in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

The spokesman said the separatists were believed to have suffered heavy casualties.

Nine killed in Indian train mishap :

At least nine people were killed when a passenger express crashed headlong into a stationary freight train at a railway station in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh Saturday, reports AFP from New Delhi.

Some 60 other passengers in the Narasapur-Hyderabad express were injured, many of them seriously, in the accident in Vijaywada region, the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted officials as saying in the state capital Hyderabad.

No further details were available.

Mozambique govt, rebels to work for peace :

Efforts to end Mozambique's civil war took a step forward when government and rebel negotiators signed an agreement that both sides will form the basis of eventual peace accord, reports AP from Rome.

Under the terms of the agreement signed Friday, the rebels pledged, once both sides agree to a date for a truce, to honour a cease-fire and give up their armed struggle. For its part, the formerly Marxist government pledged not to interfere with rebel efforts to establish contacts outside the country and to allow the rebels to meet with mediators inside Mozambique. The government also pledged that when a series of other agreements are signed, it will not pass any laws contrary to the agreements.

Both sides agreed to work as rapidly as possible to reach a general peace agreement in the talks that are now in their eighth round in Rome.

Relief convoy in Croatia ends journey :

An international relief convoy evacuating 109 wounded civilians from the besieged Croatian town of Vukovar reached its destination Sunday after a dramatic 18-hour journey, reports Reuter from Zagreb.

A spokeswoman for the international humanitarian group Medicine Sans Frontiers said the 12-vehicle mercy convoy reached a makeshift hospital in the Croatian village of Novi Mikhanovci.

"It's really good news," spokeswoman Anne-Marie Huby said.

"The convoy reached Novi Mikhanovci at one am" (midnight).

The convoy ran a gauntlet of mortar and artillery fire on Saturday in Vukovar and two nurses were injured when one of the trucks ran over a landmine, both suffered broken legs and concussion.

Zaire's new cabinet meet held in blazing sun

KINSHASA, Oct 20: Zaire's new cabinet held its first meeting in the blazing sun on Saturday after Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi was barred from his office by troops loyal to strongarm President Mobutu Sese Seko, reports Reuter.

Kiro Kamate, Minister of Post, Telephone and Telecommunications, said Aquorum was present for the first meeting of an opposition-led cabinet in 26 years of Mobutu's rule.

"There was no communique after the meeting but some 200 supporters who rallied to support Tshisekedi in his latest confrontation with Mobutu made the 'V' for victory sign with their fingers.

Two military vehicles, including a fire truck, blocked access to the Prime Minister's office but troops made no attempt to

Lenin Museum faces uncertain future

MOSCOW, Oct 20: The Lenin Museum, a graceful turn-of-the-century red-brick building near Red Square, faces an uncertain future, but its employees are fighting to keep it just the way it is, reports AFP.

On Saturday, Tass news agency reported, the employees sent a letter to President Mikhail Gorbachev asking him "not to allow the disappearance of our museum which keeps alive the memory of the first Soviet Government leader, a world-class personality."

They said the museum, which was previously run by the Communist Party, ought to be renamed the Popular Independent V.I. Lenin Museum, with the emphasis on Lenin's historical importance rather than the relevance of his policies.

After the failed August 19 coup attempt, the Moscow municipality ordered the museum's contents transferred elsewhere so it could take over the building for use by the Moscow Municipal Council, but since then it has begun considering other possibilities.



MADRID: File picture shows the Madrid Royal Palace where the Middle East peace conference will take place on October 30. —AFP/UNB photo.

Arafat convenes mini Arab summit soon

DAMASCUS, Oct 20: PLO chief Yasser Arafat today concluded a 24-hour visit here and left for Jordan after agreeing with Syrian officials to convene a mini-Arab summit ahead of a Middle East peace conference later this month, reports AFP.

Arafat agreed Saturday in talks with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to convene a five-party Arab summit to forge common strategy ahead of the conference due to open in Madrid on October 30, a PLO official source said.

Yasser Abed Rabbo said officials from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organisation would be met in the next few days. The mini-summit would also ensure that no Arab parties would broker separate agreements at the Middle East peace conference and ensure that the forum be based on US Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 stipulating an Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory, Abed Rabbo said.

The United States and the Soviet Union on Friday invited Arab and Israeli leaders to a peace conference to settle their 43-year-old conflict. A 72-year-old doctor from the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip will lead the 14-member Palestinian delegation to a Middle East peace conference, Arab sources said here Saturday.

Haidar Abdel Shaif's name figures among 14 others in a complete list of potential Palestinian delegates to the forum, which was handed earlier Saturday to US Consul General Molly Williamson, she said. The list is the second given to the Americans by Palestinian representative Faisal Hussein.

Hussein on Friday gave US Secretary of State James Baker

C'wealth to continue monitoring polls in member-countries

HARARE, Oct 20: The Commonwealth leaders were yesterday reported to have agreed to a recommendation to have facility to monitor elections in member-countries, reports PTI.

The 10-nation high-level appraisal group, including India, felt that such a facility would help member-countries reinforce democracy.

The Commonwealth Secretariat plans to send a 13-member observer team to monitor Zambia's first multi-party elections in about two decades.

The Secretariat is quite happy about the results achieved by sending similar teams to observe elections in Bangladesh and Malaysia recently.

India feels that the Commonwealth should provide such an assistance on request, but does not see a merit in

Pakistan, N. Korea to become nuclear powers : UN experts

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 20: Iraq's surprising success in secretly building a nuclear weapons programme makes experts fear that other countries could vault into the nuclear club, reports AP.

Baghdad had the advantage of oil money to finance its 10 billion dollar nuclear programme and its closed society under Saddam Hussein kept the programme a secret, UN experts say Iraq might have perfected an atom bomb given another 15 months.

Only Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, which forced it to open its laboratories and military bases to UN inspectors, resulted in the discovery of a weapons programme that astonished scientists with its

breadth, complexity and advanced stage of development. As for other countries that could surprise the West with advanced atomic and thermonuclear weapons programme, "There are plenty," said Dianna Edensword, research analyst for the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control in Washington.

"The obvious suspects are North Korea, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan, India, Libya, Taiwan, the Soviet republics South Korea, Algeria, Israel and Iran," she said.

Michael Brower, director of research of the Union of Concerned Scientists, nominated North Korea and Pakistan as the two countries

most likely to cross the nuclear threshold next. "Pakistan is fairly well understood, but I think we don't know very much about North Korea's programme. They might well surprise us with the extent of their programme," he said in a telephone interview from his Cambridge, Mass office.

"Other countries have the disadvantage that they don't have Iraq's immense oil revenues, so it's a little hard to imagine that any other country would have such a vast nuclear complex," Brower said.

UN weapons experts found the "smoking gun" in Iraq's thermonuclear weapons programme in a Sept 23 raid in Baghdad.

Experts said American tax laws which require international businessmen to pay taxes on their overseas, as well as domestic, income will discourage some would-be investors. And the programme rules out borrowing, the common practice of most Americans seeking the best tax breaks when raising capital.

"The INS is saying to potential investors — go do something stupid," Allen said. "But Canada is still the sec-

Two Harijans killed in Orissa

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: At least two Harijans, or Hindu untouchables, were killed and 15 injured when a rival group attacked a Harijan residential district in the eastern state of Orissa, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said Saturday, reports AFP.

Twenty-two houses set on fire or razed to the ground in the attack that took place late Friday in Gaudiabarda village in Orissa's Berhampur district.

Of the two dead, one was burnt alive, police were quoted as saying.

Fifteen people were arrested in connection with violence, which followed an unexplained row between the Harijans and the rival group, who were from the same village, police were reported as saying.

The news agency did not say if the late night raiders were from an upper caste.

Bodies of former Romanian CP leaders shifted from mausoleum

BUCHAREST, Oct 20: The bodies of former Romanian Communist Party leaders were transferred Saturday from a mausoleum in the centre of Bucharest to a cemetery on the outskirts to make way for the Romanian unknown soldier, reports AFP.

The transfer was carried out by city hall officials in line with a government decision taken last month.

The huge red and black marble mausoleum built in the 1950's in Liberty Park, served as a resting place for Romanian Communist leaders including Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, General Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party and D Ptru Groza, the first Prime Minister of the Stalinist regime installed in 1945.

According to a western diplomat here, Hussein will in effect lead the delegation although his name will not be on the list and he will not be present at the conference hall.

This, the diplomat said, would allow the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to claim control over the Palestinian delegates.

Trailer-bus collision in Karachi: 9 killed, 45 hurt

KARACHI, Oct 20: At least nine people were killed and 45 injured in a collision between a passenger bus and a trailer, police said today, reports AFP.

The collision occurred late Saturday when a bus tyre burst as the vehicle was travelling from Hyderabad to Karachi on the super highway about 100 kilometre (60 miles) north of here.

The injured were rushed to hospitals where several people were listed in serious condition.

Turks go to poll to elect new govt

ANKARA, (Turkey) Oct 20: Thirty million Turks went to the polls Sunday to elect a new government to steer the country through difficult economic times and changing conditions in the unstable region, reports AP.

At stake are 450 seats in a single-chamber parliament. Six main parties are fielding candidates. The polls close at 5 pm (1500 GMT) and unofficial results expected Monday morning.

The poll is widely expected to end the eight-year monopoly on power enjoyed by the Motherland Party led by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz. Opposition figures have promised to oust President Turgut Ozal, Motherland's founder, if they win.

Yilmaz, a 44-year-old economist, called the elections a year earlier than required to give the opposition less time to capitalize on persistent 70-percent inflation and other resurgent economic problems.

But despite a big-budget campaign focusing on Yilmaz's youth and dynamism, pre-election opinion polls indicated the Motherland would lose its lead.

James Mayock, a San Francisco immigration lawyer, said, 2,000 to 3,000 projects, from family restaurants to multimillion-dollar resorts, have been envisioned in his area.

Compared to the more than 50 billion Dollars in foreign investment in the United States every year, the impact of investment immigrants "should not be overstated," Mayock said. "But it does offer creative financing for cash-strapped

Off the Record

Boeing lets Baker down

SHANNON (Ireland) : US Secretary of State James Baker was stranded for several hours in a Irish airport on Saturday after an engine in his 30-year-old plane was damaged on landing for a refueling stop, reports Reuter.

Baker, on his way back to Washington after a gruelling Middle East peace mission, wandered around the deserted lobby of the airport while technicians tried to fix the fault.

Baker's ageing boeing 707, commissioned in the late 1950s, has broken down several times in the past. The plane entered service during the Eisenhower administration and is older than some of the pilots who fly it.

The crew said a small object entered and damaged one of the engine fans. They contacted boeing headquarters in Seattle for advice and were told to file the damaged part by hand.

Baker leaves Washington again on Tuesday for the Paris peace conference on Cambodia.

Panda's mid-air dinner

LONDON: An 11-year-old giant panda called Ming Ming was flown into Britain yesterday after an mid-air dinner of bamboo shoots and apples, reports Reuter.

Like anyone who has just flown from China via Hong Kong and Alaska, said an airline official, "I would imagine she's looking forward to having a good stretch and a good sleep."

Ming-Ming, a gift from China to replace London zoo's Chia-Chia who died at the age of 19 in Mexico City a week ago, is expected to boost the fortunes of the debt-laden zoo.

"She has eaten bamboo shoots and apples during the journey. It's now a matter of getting her settled in before she's ready to meet the public next week," said head keeper Mick Carman.

Looking lively and alert, Ming-Ming sniffed the air as the aircraft doors opened. "She seems to have travelled very well," said Carman.

Clarence Thomas says he's now a better person

WASHINGTON: Clarence Thomas joined the US Supreme Court on Friday in an elaborate swearing-in ceremony on the White House lawn, saying the bitter battle over his confirmation had made him a better person, reports Reuter.

Thomas, 43, held one hand up and put the other on a Bible as he took the oath from Supreme Court Justice Byron White with President George Bush and about 1,000 relatives, friends and officials looking on in warm sunshine. Clarence Thomas has endured America at its worst, and he's answered with America at its best, he brings that hard-won experience to the High Court, and America will be the better for it, Bush told the crowd.

Alluding carefully to the ideological fight over his nomination to the country's highest arbiter of laws, the bespectacled Thomas said he had been through many difficult days. But on this sunny day in October at the White House, this is joy, joy in the morning, he said to applause.

North forced to lie

NEW YORK: Oliver North says in a new book he is convinced Ronald Reagan "knew everything" about the Iran-Contra affair when he was President, and that he was pressed by an aide to then Vice President, George Bush, a US Senator and a millionaire to say Reagan knew nothing of the scheme, reports Reuter.

North, the former White House aide at the heart of the scandal that shook the Reagan administration, wrote that at the time the scandal broke, in November 1986, he thought Reagan knew about the illegal arms sales to Iran and the diversion of the proceeds to Nicaraguan Contra rebels fighting the leftist Sandinista government.

"And now, five years later, I am even more convinced President Reagan knew everything," North says in excerpt from the book, "Under Fire." The excerpts, to be published in next week's Time magazine, were released on Saturday.

"Ronald Reagan knew and approved a great deal of what went on with both the Iranian initiative and the private supply efforts on behalf of the Contras and he received regular, detailed briefings on both topics," North wrote.

Yeltsin orders Chechen-Ingush rebels to surrender arms

MOSCOW, Oct 20: Boris Yeltsin, facing a wave of ethnic unrest along Russia's southern rim, demanded on Saturday that separatist leaders in the Chechen-Ingush republic hand over their weapons and evacuate captured government

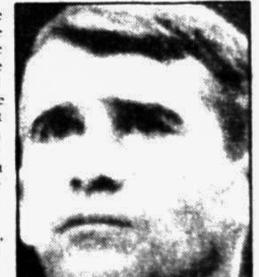
buildings, reports Reuter. In a statement addressed to the National Congress of Chechen people, in open armed rebellion in the northern Transcaucasian capital Grozny, he said he would take all legal measures to enforce his order after a three-day grace period.

In the course of recent weeks, the peaceful land of the Chechen-Ingush (republic) has become an arena for mass disorders and armed clashes, Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, said in a statement, reported by Tass news agency.

The autonomous Chechen-Ingush republic, home to 1.3 million mostly Sunni Muslim inhabitants, is the latest hotspot of ethnic unrest to boil over in what remains of the Soviet Union.

Armed opposition groups, which have surrounded the KGB and other buildings in Grozny, are locked in a struggle with the area's Russian-backed government.

The Russian parliament, responding to an escalation of violence, threatened military action last week unless opposition forces surrendered their weapons.



Foreign millionaires refuse to jostle for US citizenship

WASHINGTON, Oct 20: Ordinary people line up, wait it out or even sneak in. But a new immigration programme so far has shown that foreign millionaires do not jostle for American citizenship, reports AP.

Immigration lawyers say delays in releasing details of the programme, and some tax disincentives, are responsible for the slow start in a novel approach to attracting wealthy foreigners to American shores.

The Immigration Act of 1990, which went into effect October 1, includes an allotment of 10,000 permanent residence visas annually to the families of those who invest at least one million dollar in enterprises that create 10 or more new jobs.

But more than two weeks into the programme the Immigration and Naturalisation Service says it has received only about 100 applications, led by nine from Taiwan.

"People are sniffing but not biting," said Washington immigration lawyer Paul Allen.

The hesitation of the rich contrasts to the scene outside a suburban Washington post office recently, when thousands lined up for days to file millions of applications for a special dispensation of 40,000 permanent residence visas to be granted on a first-come, first serve basis.

Applications should pick up after the INS publishes regulations on the programme which may reduce the investment ceiling to 500,000 Dollar for rural or inner-city areas and

should better define the investor's legal and financial obligations. The INS says the regulations will be published "soon."

Harold Ezell, a former INS Western region commissioner and now an immigrant consultant in Los Angeles, said in a phone, call from Austria that he was finding "solid kinds of interest" among Europeans.

Ezell, who was conducting seminars in Germany and Austria on the programme said potential investors had proposed enterprises in commercial printing a chain of Bavarian restaurants and highway safety equipment.

Allen said he had received 80 to 90 inquiries from Hong Kong, where thousands of investors already have sought

havens in Canada and Australia in anticipation of China's 1997 takeover of the British colony.

Canada's programme, started in 1986, requires only 220,000 Dollars. Australia, with a smaller ceiling in 1990 attracted 10,000 settlers who brought 1.3 billion Dollars in to the economy.

Experts said American tax laws which require international businessmen to pay taxes on their overseas, as well as domestic, income will discourage some would-be investors. And the programme rules out borrowing, the common practice of most Americans seeking the best tax breaks when raising capital.

"The INS is saying to potential investors — go do something stupid," Allen said.

"But Canada is still the sec-