

## International

## Three Baltic states seek UN membership

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 4: The Three Baltic states took the first step towards United Nations membership by submitting applications to the Secretary-General on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which were independent states between the world wars, could become members of the world body this month.

French Ambassador Jean-Bernard Marimée accompanied by British Ambassador Sir David Hannay handed the three letters to the Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. No representative from the Baltic states was present.

This is a big and rather historic step, Hannay said. Before becoming members,

## Seven killed as troops, Kurds clash in Turkey

ANKARA (Turkey), Sept 4: Clashes between Turkish troops and Kurdish rebels has killed at least seven people, as a wide-scale military operation continued in eastern Turkey to locate five abducted Westerners, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Three Americans, a Briton and an Australian were abducted Friday night from their vehicles by Kurdish rebels in Bingol province. They were on an expedition seeking the site of Noah's ark, which the Bible says landed on Mount Ararat in present-day eastern Turkey after the great flood.

A Turkish driver told police that the kidnappers identified themselves as guerrillas belonging to the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

Turkish officials have maintained a strict silence about the search, which involves about 2,500 soldiers and police and covers several provinces.

But a senior government official in the provincial center of Diyarbakir told the Associated Press that the securi-

ties had so far not made any contact with the kidnappers.

He said no American or other Western troops or experts were assisting in the search.

About 2,500 Western troops are based at Silopi on the Iraqi border to protect Iraqi Kurds from another crack-

down by Baghdad after their failed March uprising. Last month, a PKK guerrilla com-

mander expressed the group's displeasure with what he de-

scribed as a US plot to stifle Kurdish independence.

The Turkish official in

Diyarbakir, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he did not know why the PKK has not officially claimed responsibility for the abduction.

## BRIEFLY

### Fire claims 25 lives in US

Fire engulfed a chicken processing plant Tuesday, creating an inferno in which panicked workers were trapped by blocked or locked doors, witnesses said. Authorities reported 25 people killed and more than 45 injured, AP from Hamlet says.

They were screaming 'Let me out' said passer-by Sam Breeden. They were beating on the door.

Blackened footprints marked a door where workers tried to kick their way out to escape the fire, which gutted the building's interior. Workers apparently did escape through that door. A reporter found a padlock on a door marked 'Fire Door - Do Not Block.'

Some of the victims' bodies were found at exits, and others were found in a meat locker, Hamlet Fire Chief David Fuller said at a news conference. He wouldn't confirm that the exit doors were locked.

Witnesses said a 26-foot (eight-meter) fryer at the Imperial Food Products plant caught fire about 1230 (GMT). The company makes chicken nuggets and marinated chicken breasts sold at fast-food restaurants and grocery stores.

### Baker plans to visit Moscow

Secretary of State James A. Baker III plans to go to Moscow next week to make a firsthand appraisal of fast-moving developments in the Soviet Union, US officials disclosed Tuesday, reports AP from Washington.

Baker also is likely to go to the Middle East to try to advance preparations for an Arab-Israeli peace conference, and he may visit the Baltic Republics, as well, the officials told the Associated Press.

The trip to Moscow will be centred on a 35-nation human rights conference that opens Sept 10 and runs through Oct 4. Baker is expected to spend three days at the meeting and to hold talks with the new Soviet Foreign Minister, Boris Pankin.

### Managua recognises Baltic states

Nicaragua has formally recognised Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as independent states and will establish diplomatic relations with the Baltic countries, the Foreign Ministry announced, Reuter says from Managua.

Nicaragua, along with other countries of Latin America and the world, has taken the decision to support the legitimate aspirations of independence, sovereignty and self-determination of the three Baltic republics, said a ministry statement issued late on Monday.

### Bush returns to White House

President George Bush Tuesday returned to the White House after a month of work-filled vacations highlighted by historic development in the Soviet Union in the wake of the failed coup on August 19, reports AP from Washington.

The failed putsch caused Bush to leave his seaside summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, on August 20 for a 24-hour trip to Washington, where he swore in Robert Strauss as the new US ambassador to Moscow.

### Israeli settlements deplored

The nation's largest Lutheran denomination on Tuesday urged US economic pressure to stop Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip despite warnings the action would offend American Jews, reports AP from Orlando.

The biennial assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America also continued to wrestle with a proposed policy statement on abortion that declares the practice to be an 'option only of last resort.'

The eight-day assembly continues through Wednesday.

In a resolution on the Middle East, the assembly backed continued UN peacekeeping efforts to establish 'mutually satisfactory and just solutions' for Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab states.

But representatives of the 5.2 million-member denomination also opposed further housing loan guarantees to Israel unless it stops expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank.

### Finnish made new Greenpeace chief

Matti Wuori, an attorney from Finland has been elected President of the Greenpeace Ecological Organization, the group's Finnish Branch said in Helsinki Tuesday, reports AP.

He replaces Canadian David MacTaggart, who has retired. Wuori served previously as Head of the Board of Directors of the Finnish and Swedish Branches of Greenpeace, as well as a member of the group's International Board.

## Yeltsin wants to scrap Soviet nuclear weapons

NEW YORK, Sept 4: Russian

Federation President Boris Yeltsin said on Tuesday he

wanted to scrap Soviet nuclear

weapons and that 14 of the 15

republics were ready to sign an

economic accord, reports

Reuter.

The only criteria for mem-

bership is a declaration that a

state is willing to uphold the

principles of the UN charter.

Normal diplomatic practice,

however, assumes that a state

controls its own territory and

can sign international treaties.

All three were part of

Russia before the 1917 revolution

and were annexed by the

Soviet Union in 1940.

In Washington, the state

department said it supported

the applications and would

sponsor a resolution to cut the

usual waiting period from 35

to seven days in time for the

46th general assembly session

it opens on September 17.

whole world," Yeltsin said in

an interview with Cable News

Network in the Russian

Parliament.

"We need to continue our

work to eliminate all nuclear

weapons."

The Russian leader said the

Soviet republics where nuclear

arms are stationed were working

on an accord to return them

all to his republic and that he

wanted to stop all under-

ground testing.

Asked what he felt his re-

sponsibility was during the

coup Yeltsin said, "To save

Russia, to save this country, to

save democracy and the whole

world from cold war, or a hot

war for that matter. And that

hot war would have been dis-

astrous for the whole world."

Yeltsin said almost all of the

15 Soviet republics were ready

to sign an accord to limit them

all to his republic and that he

wanted to have him arrested.

On his relations with

Gorbachev since the coup was

foiled, Yeltsin said, "I trust him

entirely, almost entirely ...

much more than three weeks

ago when he was still capable

of manoeuvring."

Yeltsin, who led popular re-

sistance to the revolt, said he

felt the worst during the coup

when his five-year-old grand-

daughter asked him: "Will they

shoot us right in the head?"

"This shows that the roots

of totalitarianism are still there

and we need to pull them out."



OSIJEK (Yugoslavia) : A petrol station attendant covers the advance of a Croatian soldier advancing on a Serbian sniper position Sept 3. Serbian forces have now infiltrated populated areas within Osijek while the Yugoslav Army continues bombardment. — AFP/UNB photo

## Lankan troops go on offensive against Tigers : 82 killed

COLOMBO, Sept 4: Government troops backed by air cover continued Wednesday to trade heavy fire with Tamil guerrillas in northeastern Sri Lanka after fresh battles in the region left dozens dead, officials here said, reports AFP.

A military spokesman here

confirmed the government was

waging a major offensive in

Mullaitivu District against

Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas which

was under a 25-day

LTTE siege before elite troops

ended the blockade a month ago.

There must be a big threat

to security forces in the area

for us to start such a big operation," the spokesman said.

Tamil sources said heavy air

raids continued Wednesday in

Mullaitivu, parts of which has

been under an indefinite curfew since Sunday.

The numerous jungles and

lagoons in Mullaitivu afford

perfect terrain for the LTTE to wage its guerrilla war against government troops.

Officials in neighbouring

Vavuniya District said four sol-

diers were killed and at least

40 others wounded in fierce

clashes Tuesday while press

reports Wednesday put army

losses at 12 dead and LTTE

the spokesman said.

Mullaitivu is also one of the

main strongholds of the LTTE

which is battling security

forces to set up a separate

state called Eelam in the

northeast of Sri Lanka's two-

million Tamil minority con-

centrated in the region.

The latest clashes were the

worst since the army routed

LTTE guerrillas in the recent

battle for control of the north-

ern Elephant Pass Army Camp

which was under a 25-day

LTTE siege before elite troops

ended the blockade a month ago.

More than 70 killed.