

Najibullah pardons jailed opponents:
Afghan President Najibullah pardoned some jailed opponents of his Soviet backed government on Friday, the official Kabul

radio reported, reports Reuter from Islamabad. The broadcast, monitored in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, said a presidential decree would benefit prisoners sentenced for actions against the Afghan government and internal and external security.

There was no indication of How many people would be freed under the amnesty, which marked the birth and the death anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM).

16 Russians die after eating mushroom: Sixteen people have died and 80 are seriously ill after eating contaminated mushroom in southern Russia, news reports from the area said on Saturday, reports Reuter from Moscow.

The Russian information agency said authorities in the Krasnodar region had banned the sale of mushrooms and restricted access to local forests following the deaths.

Officials from the Russian republic's health ministry had been sent to the area to determine the causes of the poisoning, it said.

Tass news agency said the victims had eaten both fresh and processed mushrooms.

Shamsul Islam meets IFC VP in USA: Shamsul Islam Khan, Minister of Industries, met with Wilfried E. Kaffenberger, Vice-President of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Washington on Wednesday, reports BSS from Washington.

The Industries Minister, during the meeting, laid stress on increased investment in Bangladesh and observed that congenial climate for industrial investment has been created in Bangladesh by the policies of the newly elected democratic government.

He also had extensive discussions with the officials of World Bank and IFC in a lunch hosted in his honour by MA Syed, alternative Executive Director of the World Bank.

Iran concerned over Kuwait-US pact: Iran expressed concern on Saturday over a 10-year security pact between Kuwait and the United States, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported, reports Reuter from Nicosia.

IRNA, in a report monitored in Cyprus, said the Supreme National Security Council had asked the Foreign Ministry to seek an explanation from Kuwait on the contents of the agreement.

"Iran on Saturday voiced concern over the signing of the 10-year security accord between Kuwait and the United States, saying it would lead to the deployment of foreign forces in the region," it added.

The Supreme Council session was chaired by President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and attended by political advisors and top military commanders.

The pact, designed to bolster Kuwait's defences after Iraq's invasion and seven-month occupation of the Emirate, was signed on Thursday. It gives US troops access to Kuwaiti ports and allows them to train and conduct military exercises with Kuwaiti forces. US military equipment will also be stored in Kuwait.

262 Maoists arrested in Madras:

Police in India's southern Tamil Nadu state banned a Maoist rally on Saturday and arrested scores of protesters expressing support for the killers of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, police said, reports Reuter from Madras.

Police said 262 Maoists, known as Naxalites, were arrested in Dharmapuri district when they tried to attend a meeting intended to show approval of Gandhi's assassination on May

Gandhi was killed by a woman suicide bomber as she bowed to greet him at an election rally near Madras, state capital of Tamil Nadu.

Police and Indian officials say the killing was carried out by militants of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

guerrilla group, which denies responsibility. Police said the arrested Maoists belonged to the revolutionary young forum, which supports the LTTE.

Bosnia orders move against Croatia: The central Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina Friday ordered a mobilisation of its territorial desence units amid fears that violence would spill onto its territory from neighbouring Croatia, reports Reuter from Belgrade.

The presidency of the republic - which comprises a volatile mix of Muslims, Serbs and Croats - ordered the move as columns of Yugoslav Army tanks and troops rumbled through the republic in a major offensive against Croatia.

"The presidency demands that the competent military authorities order a mobilisation of territorial defence (home guard) on the whole of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina," it said in a statement.

Democrats predict Bush's defeat in '92

LOS ANGELES, Sept 22: Democratic leaders winding up a three-day meeting confidently predicted on Saturday that they can retire a popular republican President George Bush in next year's US presidential election, reports Reuter.

"We think George Bush can, must and will be beaten in 1992," said Democratic Party Chairman Ron Brown. Others

echoed his optimism. "And we plan to mount a tough, aggressive, professional and successful campaign to assure that," Brown told a news

conference. He spoke as seven Democratic presidential hope fuls lined up to woo the 413 members of the Democratic National Committee here - an

important bloc of voting delegates to the democratic presidential nominating convention

in New York next July. Brown also urged would-be candidate to get into the race sooner rather than later so democrats can start making up their minds on their choice.

Showcased here were oldfashioned liberal senator Tom Harkin of lowa, former Massachusetts Senator Paul Songas, a Liberal Party reformer and former California Governor Jerry Brown, another Liberal Party reformer.

Other potential candidates on the agenda included Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. a moderate, representative Dave Mccurdy of Oklahoma, a little-known moderate, and Jesse Jackson.

Yugoslav warplanes, tanks pound Croatian towns

ZAGREB, Sept 22 : Federal warplanes, tanks and artillery pounded several Croatian towns on Saturday, and leaders of the breakaway republic tried desperately to get the military to call off its deadly offensive, reports AP.

The Croatian government met in emergency session after its president offered to lift a blockade of federal military barracks if the army Saturday stopped attacking eastern strongholds.

Battles were under way Saturday in several parts of Croatia, the republic's Defence

MOSCOW, Sept 22: Presi-

dent Mikhail Gorbachev set up

a committee on Saturday to

oversee sweeping reforms of

the Soviet Union's huge

armed forces and named as its

head a hero of the resistance

to last month's hardline coup

news agency said the new

body was subordinate to the

state council set up to rule the

Soviet Union following the

General Konstantin Kobets to

head the committee for the

preparation and implementa-

tion of military reforms, which

will carry out one of the

biggest shake-ups the armed

Russian President Boris Yeltsin

named Kobets to lead the de-

fence of his White House

headquarters, the centre of

the job on the condition he

could command the firing

squad dealing with the coup

leaders. Fourteen people are to

go on trial for treason, poten-

tially a capital offence. But no

Friday, new Defence Minister

Yevgeny Shaposhnikov outlined

plans to relig the Soviet

Union's vast military budget to

improve the lot of officers and

said he even favoured opening

up secret zones to foreigners.

Sweeping military reforms

"I hope to be able to say that

would go before the state

from January 1 next year these

(overall) reforms have indeed

started," said Shaposhnickov,

appointed after Marshal

Dmitry Yazov was sacked for

had about three million men.

Western estimates have put

the figure nearer to four mil-

Simply put, the meeting

million Palestinians, as it has

been for nearly three decades,

or whether it will vote to at-

any cost to the Palestinians'

claim for a homeland.

tend the peace conference at

So far, no consensus has

He said the armed forces

helping to plot the coup.

lion.

council this month, he said.

At a news conference on

one has been convicted yet.

Kobets said later he took

resistance in Moscow.

During the coup attempt,

Gorbachev appointed army

A decree published by Tass

attempt, reports Reuter.

abortive putsch.

forces have seen.

Ministry said, but it provided only sketchy information and failed to give casualty figures.

In Bosnia, Croatia's southern neighbour and a potential flash point of ethnic violence, four people were reported killed.

Tanjug, the Yugoslav news agency, reported Saturday that Croatian mortar fire from across the border killed three and wounded four in Bosanska Gradiska. It also reported that a federal soldier died when his convoy was fired on in Trebinje, a mostly Serb town near Dubrovník.

died in violence between Croats, ethnic Serbs and the army since Croatia declared independence June 25. The independence campaign exacerbated the longstanding rivalry between Serbs and Croats, Yugoslavia's two largest ethic groups.

Croatia repeatedly has accused the Serb-dominated federal army of siding with the Serbs, which has battled repeatedly against Croatian forces - and not against Serbs.

If the military offensive succeeds in gaining control of all



BREST (Yugoslavia): Ivanka (L) and Jagica Berakovic walk crying near the column of vehicles full of Croatian soldiers retreating from Petrinja September 21. The women tried to find their husbands who came under heavy bombing in Petrinja today. - AFP/UNB photo

Gorbachev sets up body to

oversee armed forces' shake-up

ideas included halving military

service to a year, allowing con-

scripts to serve in their own

republics and opening large

areas off-limits to foreigners

for decades because of their

Russian President Boris Yeltsin

today presses on with a deli-

cate mission to resolve the

Soviet Union's bloodiest ethnic

conflict, the struggle for con-

amid few signs of progress.

trol over Nagorno-Karabakh.

ident Nursultan Nazarbayev

the two most powerful

republican leaders in the

fragmented Soviet Union, held

their first day of talks in

Azerbaijan, which is locked in

conflict with Armenia over the

mountainous enclave.

Yeltsin and Kazakh Pres-

Another report adds:

perceived strategic value."

Shaposhnikov said reform

More than 500 people have Serb-dominated areas, it would reduce Croatia to a smaller and weaker republic. ' In Paris, the Foreign

Ministry announced Saturday that France has asked the foreign ministers of countries on the U.N. Security Council to meet next week on the worsening conflict in Yugoslavia.

A Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the question of sending a U.N. peacekeeping force to Yugoslavia would almost certainly be raised.

In Rome, the government said Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic and Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis has spoken by telephone Saturday and agreed to urge an EC envoy to return to the war-torn Balkan country to try to stitch together a new cease-fire accord.

In Croatia, at least four federal air force planes blasted Sibenik, on the Dalmatian coast, Saturday morning in two raids, Croatian radio reported. A military warehouse was hit, and the city was under artillery

The port authority in Ancona, Italy, picked up a message Saturday from Split radio, also on the Dalmatian coast. "The cities of Zdar, Sibenik and Split are being bombarded everyday by the Yugoslav air force and are attacked by the army and by the navy," it said.

"We are without water and light, our ports, streets and airports are blockaded: appeal to your ministers, end the war in Croatia," the message said.

Late Friday, Croatian president Franjo Tudjman sent a letter to Yugoslav Defence Minister to lift the blockade of army barracks if the army ended its offensive.

Long March veteran dead BEIJING, Sept 22 : Long

March veteran General Song Shilun has died following an illness, the Xinhua news agency said late Friday. Song was 84, reports AFP.

Born in 1907 in the central province of Hunan, Song entered the Whampoa military Academy in 1926, the same year he joined the Chinese Communist Party Youth League. He became a full-fledged

party member in 1927. After fighting alongside Mao Zedong against the nationalist Kuomintang during the 1934-35 Long March. Song also took part in the anti-Japanese war. Song served as Deputy

Commander-in chief of the Chinese Expeditionary Force from 1950-52 during the Korean war and in 1957 bechief Political Administrator of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

From 1957 to 1982, he served first as Vice President and then President of the PLA Military Academy and became a member of the Communist Party Central Committee.

21 killed in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, Sept 22: At least 21 people were killed in battles between militants and Indian forces in the Muslim Kashmir valley and in a bomb blast in the Hindu area of the troubled Himalayan territory, police said Saturday, reports Reuter.

Two militants and nine civilians were killed in a fierce gunbattle outside the southern valley town of Shopian on Friday night, said police in Srinagar, summer capital of India's Jammu and Kashmir

turned fire, police said.

US offers defence pact with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 22: The United States has offered to sign a new defence pact with Pakistan, provided Islamabad agrees to abandon its weapongrade nuclear programme, it was reported here Friday, says

In a front page story Karach's Daily Dawn said the US administration had indicated its willingness to revise the 1959 defence agreement which assures Pakistan of US support, against "communist aggression."

Observers said the agreement had become redundant with the collapse of communist regimes and the political changes in the Soviet Union.

Dawn said Washington had told both Prime Minister Newaz Sharif's government and major opposition leaders that Pakistan would be assured of full protection against external aggression if it agrees to give up its uranium enrichment programme.

Quoting informed sources it said, Washington had offered full guarantees to provide a defence umbrella against Indian aggressions as well as supplying "highly sophisticated weapons systems" to Pakistan.

No official or diplomatic confirmation was immediately available on the report which follows the suspension in October last year of some 500,000 dollars in annual US economic and military aid because of suspicions Pakistan

Gorbachev frees Balts from army obligations

MOSCOW, Sept 22: Soviet President Mikhail S Gorbachev in a decree issued Saturday, has freed citizens of the newly independent Baltic states from all Soviet military obligations, reports AP. The decree was a signifi-

cant step toward detaching Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia from the Soviet Union

had accelerated its programme to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Islamabad claims if is pursuing a peaceful nuclear policy but refuses to sign a nuclear non-proliferation treaty unless its traditional rival India does

A high level Pakistani delegation led by Geneate Chairman Wasim Sajjad visited Washington in June but press reports said he failed to break the ice.

Dawn said India's continued refusal to sign the treaty had led the US authorities to believe that New Delhi with whom Pakistan has fought three war since 1947, does possess nuclear capability.

Bush predicts fall of Castro

CHICAGO, Sept 22: President George Bush predicted Friday the rapid fall of Cuban President Fidel Castro. saying he could hear the creaking and crumbling of his Marxist government, reports

One more event will demonstrate to open and all that we really have entered in a new era of freedom and opportunity. I am speaking of Cuba's becoming free and democratic, Bush told the US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce here.

Today we hear the creaking and crumbling of Castro's dictatorship, Bush said. The day is coming sooner

than Castro dares to believe. when the people of Cuba will reclaim their destiny and rejoin the western hemisphere family of free nations, he The United States which

has worked to uproot Cuban communism for decades, applauded a Soviet decision last week to begin withdrawing troops from the island and reviewing bilateral economic relations.

Off the Record

Sheep too old for Aussies bound for Russian tables

SYDNEY: Sheep considered too old for pampered Australians to eat may help save millions of Russians from a hungry winter next year under a barter deal planned by a new Australian-Soviet joint venture, reports AFP. Up to 10 million sheep that would otherwise be

slaughtered and buried in vast pits will be sold in roubles, which will buy Soviet products such as oil, timber, fish and The products, in turn, will be sold internationally for hard

currency to pay for the sheep at prices ranging from one to stx dollars a head. Millions of sheep were slaughtered and buried in Australia last year because of depression in the wool industry and the

lack of demand for mutton in Australia. "Sheep for which there is no demand here will help feed people who might otherwise have no meat at all," one of the

joint venture partners Lindsay Criddle said by phone from the western Australian capital of Perth on Thursday. "The Australian preference is for younger meat, but that doesn't mean there is anything wrong with the sheep we will

be selling to the Russians. They will be five years old with a value of anything from

one to six dollars depending on where they are sold."

Coffin from recycled paper SYDNEY: Environmentalists soon will get the chance to

demonstrate their convictions to the very end with a coffin made primarily from recycled paper, reports AP. But banish any thoughts of mourners being distracted by the latest sports or stock-market reports while paying their

final respects. "I'm afraid the Sunday comics will be quite pulverized by the time they get to the finished product," said Geoff Allen, a director of Sullivan Machinery.

Sullivan, whose employees design and make mining equipment, already is getting hundreds of orders of the new coffins - and the company is still six months away from beginning production.

"We've had inquiries from all over Australia and from such far-away places as Canada, South Africa, Spain and England," Allen said Friday. "We've been taken a bit by storm by the reaction."

The attention sprang from the announcement this week that the company in the small town of Ebenezer northwest of Sydney had won a 33,000-dollar (26,000 US dollars) grant

from the New South Wales state government for the project. Environment Minister Tim Moore said the new coffins would save trees and let environmentalists to make the

Allen said the recycled model isn't much different than the traditional coffin. "On the contrary, it's virtually indistinguishable," he said.

Terry Fowler, another company director, said there's also no doubt about its strength. I jumped up and down in one being held up by two supports, and it showed no signs of

weakening at all," he said. The question is whether the public will accept the idea of being buried or cremated in yesterday's news.

pressured, and in their traumatic state, they're not thinking of striking a bargain," he said.

RANGOON: Burma has given US officials photographs of the wreckage of a World War II military transport plane and

Ohn Gyaw turned over the photographs and a list of the debris from the wreckage.

telephone from Bangkok, said he was not familiar with the matter. Working People's Daily said the material included photographs of the wreckage of a US C-47A transport aircraft,

of two damaged pistols, of pieces of a US Army first-aid kit, and of the identification tags of three American soldiers. The newspaper did not report the names on the dog tags. It said the wreckage was found by Burmese soldiers in a

World War II.

ME peace conference uncertain: Primakov

reports Reuter. Yevgeny Primakov, return-

But he said he opposed for the moment any suggestion that it be postponed. Primakov said Israel was

reticent to take part "despite real pressure being put on Israel by the United States. So far this has not led to any major changes in the Israeli post

The United States and

Soviet Union announced at

their Moscow summit last

Eastern issues, including Palestinians' desire for homeland. The Soviet and US Foreign

Tass news agency denied

suggestions that Yeltsin had

suffered a recurrence of the

health problems that had

plagued him earlier in the

week and had forced him to

cancel appearances in parlia-

due to visit Nagorno-Karabakh

Sunday and travel on to

Yerevan, the Armenian capital.

News reports said the

"shuttle" mission would then

include talks with leaders of

the two hostile republics on

neutral territory - the resort

of Mineralniyee Vody in south-

been killed in three years of

sporadic clashes in Nagorno-

Karabakh, which is populated

mainly by Armenians but has

been under Azerbaijani control.

More than 800 people have

ern Russia.

Yeltsin and Nazarbayev were

ment and other engagements.

Ministers mct in Moscow earlier this month but ported no progress on efforts to stage the meeting. US Secretary of State James Baker on Saturday ended his seventh trip to the region without getting assurances of Palestinian participa-

Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel - with con-

ditions regarding composition of the Palestinian representation — have already signed on. Primakov said some radical Palestinian factions still op-

posed participating, "but on the whole I believe the Palestinian position is more flexible and more inclined to taking part in the conference."

MOSCOW, Sept 22 : Soviet month they would co-sponsor a conference to resolve Middle

President Mikhail Gorbachev's envoy to the Middle East said on Saturday prospects for a Middle East peace conference in October were uncertain and blamed his doubts on Israel.

ing from a tour of several Middle East countries, told Tass news agency the conference was "for the moment uncertain".

Militants ambushed Indian security forces who were searching houses in villages around Shopian Fourteen civilians were shot as they fled when the paramilitaries re-

US terms for peace talks pose dilemma for Palestinians Palestinians that taking a hard-

DAMASCUS, Sept 22: Only days away from a key meeting of the Palestinian parliamentin-extle, their leaders are in disarray over the US-proposed Middle East peace conference,

reports AP. They are torn between agreeing to US conditions for attending an October meeting - conditions that undercut their quest for self-determination - and passing up an historic opportunity for talks that may never come again. The 451-member Palestine

National Council, which includes representatives ranging from guerilla organisations to Palestinian labour and student groups, is scheduled to convene Monday in Algeria to consider the issue. The debate will be heated,"

predicted Qais Abu Leyla, an

official of the radical cause of Chairman Yasser Democratic Front for the Arafat's support for Iraq during the Gulf war, could be doomed. Liberation of Palestine, one of largest groups with in the Palestine Liberation Orgamay have to decide whether the PLO should remain the main voice of the world's 5

In Jerusalem earlier this week, US Secretary of State James A. Baker handed a Palestinian delegation a letter outlining conditions for their attendance at the proposed conserence. The Palestinian council now

Many Palestinians fear that

if they compromise too much,

the PLO, long riven by rivalries

and seriously undermined be-

will have to hammer out fateful decisions on how Palestinians "Most are leaving the door will be represented, whether open for maneuvering until the last minute," explained Abu they should even take part and what minimum result they Leyla. could accept from any confer-

The Palestinians have in the past insisted that they should go to any peace conference as an independent delegation. But Arab support for that

has waned and Baker is sug-

delegation, a move that would undercut the PLO's longtime claim to be the Palestinians sole representative. Under the Baker proposal, Palestinian representatives

gesting that the Palestinians

and Jordanians form a joint

would be chosen only from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Jordanians and would not include a delegate from east Jerusalem, also captured in 1967. Palestinian officials said the conditions only cut out the

PLO, but ignore demands for an Isracli withdrawal from cast Jerusalem and the right of return for more than 1 million people who fled the 1948-49 war and ensuing conflicts. In other words, the Palestinian hard-liners com-

plain, the conditions fail to ad-

WITH SHOW WITH

nition as a people with the right to determine their own Some PLO officials have already rejected the US condi-

dress their demand for recog-

tions because there are no provisions for a PLO role, an independent Palestinian delegation at the conference or eventual Palestinian statehood. "This letter will provoke a negative Palestinian position," Yasser Abed-Rabbo, a member

tee, said in Tunisia. The Democratic Front, the third largest of the nine PLO factions, suggested Friday it might walk out of the Palestinian council session if it does not clearly reject the

of the PLO's executive commit-

Meanwhile, King Hussein of Jordan has warned the

line position could mean missing out on an opportunity for a settlement of the 43-year-old Arab-Israeli dispute that may never come again. Baker says the conference

will convene with or without the Palestinians, although it's likely that Arab countries will not attend unless Palestinian representatives are included in some form. The conference would convene on the basis on UN

Security Council Resolution 242, which calls for an israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 in exchange for peace. Baker assured the

Palestinians that Washington regards east Jerusalem as part of the occupied territories.

ultimate statement by "taking their views to the grave."

"But people making funeral arrangements very often are

World War II dog tags

of the dog tags of three American servicemen, a newspaper reported Saturday, reports AP. The state-run Working People's Daily said Foreign Minister

The duty officer at the embassy, reached Saturday by

rugged northern part of the country, but gave no other

US forces battled the Japanese occupiers of Burma during