

Australian general to head UN troops in Cambodia

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 9 : Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar on Friday appointed an Australian general to lead the main contingent of UN troops destined for Cambodia with a French general as his deputy, according to letters sent to the Security Council, reports Reuter.

The appointments, which were held up because of a dispute between the United States and France, are subject to consent of Council members, whose approval is expected to be routine.

Major General John

Sanderson will lead the military troops, about 1,000 of whom are expected to be Australian, in the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). His deputy will be Brigadier General Michel Lordon of France.

Under a landmark agreement signed in Paris on October 23, UNTAC military units will help disarm a quarter of a million combatants, verify a ceasefire and patrol borders for arms shipments. Civilians will help administer the country and organise free elections.

BRIEFLY

Blast on Bombay train : 12 killed: A bomb exploded on a commuter train, killing 12 people and wounding at least 39 others, railway officials said Saturday, reports AP from Bombay.

There was no indication who was responsible for the Friday night blast.

The train, which runs from Victoria Terminus in south Bombay to the northern suburbs, had pulled into the station at Kalyan when the bomb went off at 10:50 p.m. (1720gmt) inside a passenger coach, railway officials said. Kalyan is 54 kilometers (34 miles) northwest of Victoria Terminus.

The blast ripped a hole in the floor of a second-class compartment, they said.

Aga Khan to visit Baghdad Nov 19: The UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid in the Gulf Sadruddin Aga Khan will visit Baghdad November 19 to discuss the presence of UN personnel in Iraq, diplomats said Saturday, reports AFP from New York.

The trip is aimed at renewing the agreement signed in April allowing UN workers on Iraqi soil which expires December 31. Sources said Baghdad is hoping to use the negotiations to lobby for loosening the trade embargo against the country.

Iraqi officials are also hoping to modify the restrictions on selling its oil set by UN resolutions which limit sales to 1.6 billion dollars, require strict UN supervision and reserve two-thirds of the earnings for the country's food needs.

France to give aid to Philippines: France said on Saturday it would provide emergency aid for victims of floods in the central Philippines which killed at least 5,000 people, reports Reuter from Paris.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said France had released 2000,000 francs (34,500 dollars) and would provide more later.

13 Indians feared killed by snow: Thirteen Indians, including three army soldiers, were feared killed by a snow when they were climbing a icy mountain in Kashmir, Defence officials said Saturday, reports AFP from Jammu.

The 13, including five civilian scouts and as many porters, were carrying supplies to an army picket near the Siachen Glacier when they got caught in the storm Tuesday.

Indian army helicopters launched a search operation in the region, but failed to trace the group, the officials said in this winter capital of Kashmir state. No further details were available.

Peruvian District Attorney killed: The District Attorney for Ayacucho province was shot dead Friday as he took his two children to school, a spokesman for his office said, reports AP from Lima.

Shining Path guerrillas are suspected in the assassination of District Attorney Jose Macera, said the spokesman, who refused to be named.

Macera was shot in the head and chest in the attack near the main square of Ayacucho, the city that is the capital of the province, and died instantly, the spokesman said.

Macera, 48, headed the Ayacucho provincial electoral board in the 1990 general elections. The Shining Path opposes elections as their aim is to set up a peasant-worker state along the lines of the late Chinese Leader Mao Zedong.

Bush in Hague for talks with EC leaders: US President George Bush arrived in the Netherlands Saturday for talks with European Community leaders, reports Reuter from Amsterdam.

His air force One Jet touched down at 6:15 p.m. (1715 GMT) at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport after a flight from Rome where he attended a two-day NATO summit.

Bush and his wife Barbara are to have dinner with Queen Beatrix in the Hague and stay at the royal palace overnight.

Two killed in German plane crash: At least two people died in Darmstadt Saturday when a light plane crashed into a city-centre residential building, police said, reports AFP from Germany.

Five inhabitants of the three-storey building were slightly injured, they added.

The dead were two occupants of the twin-engined Cessna-310 plane. It was not immediately known if there had been other people in the aircraft, which could seat up to six.

Ukraine to sign military pact with Kremlin

KIEV, USSR, Nov 9 : The independence-minded Ukraine will sign a military treaty with the Kremlin but may demand more changes to an economic pact that it initiated this week, President Leonid Kravchuk said Friday, reports AP.

His statement signaled that the Ukraine, the second-most populous republic and an industrial powerhouse, was still cautious about cooperating with other republics despite its agreement to join the economic community.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Vitold Fokin signed the pact Wednesday in Moscow after hesitating for weeks out of concern it would give too much power to the central or Russian governments in the wake of the failed August putsch.

"We are awaiting the President's decision on the US candidate," said a State Department official on Friday. He spoke on condition of anonymity.

Kravchuk said the "easy" still could be changed before the Ukrainian parliament ratifies it, which is not expected before presidential elections Dec 1.

International

Pakistan, Lanka seek to review rules for SAARC meeting

COLOMBO, Nov 9: Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed that the charter of a seven-nation South Asian grouping should be reviewed after an aborted summit here, the Colombo Foreign Ministry announced Saturday, reports AFP.

Pakistan Premier Nawaz Sharif and President Ranasinghe Premadasa during bilateral talks Friday, discussed the "developments" in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Ministry said.

The two leaders agreed that rules relating to SAARC meetings needed to be reviewed, a statement said in an apparent reference to the collapse of the summit Thursday following the last minute withdrawal of Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

The Foreign Ministry said

New Delhi had maintained that the summit could not proceed without the King, a founding member of SAARC.

Sharif, however, arrived her Thursday, turning his summit visit into a good will mission, and is expected to leave here later Saturday.

Bangladesh Premier Khaleda Zia and Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gaoom left Friday after similar visits. Indian Premier Narasimha Rao and his Nepali counterpart Girja Prasada Koirala stayed away.

Gaoom, who is also the current chairman, said he would consider the possibility of holding a "one-day businesslike" meeting of SAARC leaders in the Sri Lanka capital Colombo as soon as possible.

The Foreign Ministry said

Sharif briefed Premadasa on the situation in Kashmir and "movement towards the settlement of the Afghanistan question." Both men also called for closer bilateral trade.

Lanka's opposition on Friday blamed the postponement of this week's South Asian summit on "the inconsistent and weak" foreign policy of President Ranasinghe Premadasa's government, reports Reuter.

Acting opposition leader Anura Bandaranaike said opposition parties would demand a special debate in parliament to discuss the scrapping of the conference, which had been due to begin in Colombo on Thursday.

It is the most serious setback for Sri Lanka in the international sphere,"

Talks in Washington Nov 22

Arabs to reject separate peace accord with Israel

CAIRO, Nov 9 : Arabs in the Middle East peace process have agreed to reject any separate peace accords with Israel even if their one on one talks with Israel move at different paces, an Egyptian delegate to

the Madrid conference said Friday, reports AFP.

Egyptian delegate Lotfi Al-Kholi told AFP that although the Arabs held different views on procedural issues, they agreed on three basic ques-

tions — no Arab party will sign a deal with Israel before the end of negotiations between Israel and the other parties.

Any settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict must include a solution to the east Jerusalem issues a halt to settlements in the Israel occupied territories and Israel's withdrawal from Arab land occupied since 1967.

The multilateral negotiations on regional problems such as arms control and economic development will depend on progress at the bilateral talks between Israel and Lebanon Israel and Syria and Israel and Jordan and Israel and the Palestinians.

AFP from Amman adds : The Middle East peace conference talks will resume in Washington on November 22, a reliable source said here Friday.

These bilateral talks, which began Sunday in Madrid, had been suspended because of differences between Israel and Arab delegations over the venue for the next round of negotiations.

Israel called for the bilateral talks to be held in various Middle East capitals, while Arab negotiators sought a neutral site outside of the region.

The first round of face-to-face talks were then held Sunday, involving separate meetings between Israel and delegations from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian team.



HONG KONG : A Vietnamese woman is taken on to an naval vessel as the first series of mandatory repatriations of Vietnamese boat people since Hanoi and London recently signed a new agreement. The group of 59 is being taken to Hanoi by a chartered aircraft.

— AFP/UNB photo

Yeltsin proclaims emergency in rebel territory, clamps curfew

MOSCOW, Nov 9 : Russian President Boris Yeltsin cleared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew in the small republic of Checheno-Ingushetia on Friday to cut short a rebellion by local Muslims who want independence from Russia, reports Reuter.

His decree followed the failure of efforts to find a compromise with insurgent Chechen groups who seized control of the northern Caucasus region, part of the national congress of the Chechen people.

Yeltsin ordered a state of emergency to start Friday morning and last for a month. He appointed a temporary administrator to run the republic.

Akhmed Arsanov, Yeltsin's representative conducted un-

successful talks to defuse the tense situation in Checheno-Ingushetia.

The area, conquered by Russia in 1959 is among the most neglected in the Soviet Union. The Chechens who are Sunni Muslims, were deported to central Asia by Josef Stalin during World War Two.

Yeltsin's decree said all meetings and demonstrations would be banned, as would strikes weapons would be confiscated and tight controls placed on entry to and exit from the republic.

— AFP/UNB photo

one of five permanent members, the United States, can veto any candidates not to its liking.

The State Department official said that once Bush has made a decision, the United States will consult with the other council and General Assembly members, including

the four other permanent council members-Britain, China, France and the Soviet Union.

"We don't want to attack a deadline to this," he said. In the last straw poll, two candidates from the African continent-former Egyptian Foreign Minister Boutros Ghali and

Finance Minister Bernard Chidzero of Zimbabwe.

African countries have lobbied strongly for one of their own representatives to be chosen secretary-general because no African has previously been named UN chief. The seven non-aligned nations on the 15-member council have backed African candidates.

The third straw poll held on October was only preliminary, and Ghali and Chidzero might not necessarily be front-runners in later balloting.

On Monday and Tuesday, the council is expected to continue informal balloting in an effort to eliminate candidates and reach a consensus. The council is seeking to avoid a divisive selection process as has occurred in the past.

So far none of the candidates has been eliminated. Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, whose candidacy had been proposed to the council, has withdrawn his name from consideration.

The process so far has been characterized by secrecy, with few nations openly expressing their views. China has

strongly supports an African candidate. The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union have not disclosed their favorites.

In Tuesday's straw poll, the five permanent council members will for the first time use differently colored ballots from the other members, which would provide an indication of which candidates face a likely veto.

The council still has not decided what procedure to use to eliminate candidates.

The official list of 14 candidates includes eight Africans Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, who holds Swiss, French and Iranian passports; Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland; Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg; Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van Driessche; Poland Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski, and Philippine Foreign Minister.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas has been mentioned as a possible candidate, but his name has not yet officially been put forward by his government.

Off the Record

Just for a day

BANGKOK : The Thai government is to ask brothels and other establishments operating as fronts for prostitution to close for a day on December 1 to mark World AIDS Day, government officials said Friday, reports AFP.

The idea, proposed by a cabinet minister who is also the country's leading anti-AIDS activist, Meechai Veeravidiya, is part of the week-long campaign against the deadly disease, which is spreading rapidly in the country.

The closure, however, will be on a voluntary basis, the officials said.

"We will ask for their cooperation, without any threat, and I think they will cooperate with us because they should be aware of how serious the problem is," one officials said.

According to independent research, there could be as many as 50,000 brothels nationwide, including coffee shops and restaurants which operate as fronts for prostitution.

While prostitution is officially illegal in Thailand there are an estimated 800,000 prostitutes in the country, according to a government health agency.

About 300,000 Thais are infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which in most cases lead to AIDS, according to officials estimates.

Thailand was recently chosen along with three other developing nations by the World Health Organisation to be a testing ground for potential vaccines against the killer disease.

Cinderella Imelda puts shoes to good use



MANILA : Imelda Marcos gave away a pair of her fabled shoes Saturday to contestants who correctly guessed the date of the former Philippine first lady's homecoming, reports AP.

"The shoes of Imelda are being put to good use, like Cinderella," Mrs. Marcos told listeners of local radio station DZRH, which sponsored the contest. "Cinderella has returned and I believe this will bring us good luck. The shoes are symbol of Cinderella."

Mrs. Marcos returned home last Monday after nearly six years of exile in the United States, where she and her husband, ex-President Ferdinand Marcos, fled after they were ousted in the 1986 uprising that catapulted Corazon Aquino to power.

Marcos died in exile in 1989.

"Mrs. Aquino has used them anyway and earned money from them. I just hope the poor and the victims of calamities here also benefit from them," Mrs. Marcos said. "Even the poor and downtrodden people should be benefiting from Imelda's shoes."

"The shoes are for good luck," Mrs. Marcos added. "Thank God that when they opened all the rooms and the closets in our houses and in Malacañang, they did not find skeletons or the dirty remains of dead persons, just shoes."

Skin patch for smokers

WASHINGTON : The Food and Drug Administration has approved for marketing the first nicotine skin patch system designed to help smokers quit their habit, the product's manufacturer said Friday, report AFP.

The patch delivers a steady dose of nicotine through the skin of the person wearing it, reducing their craving for the addictive ingredient of tobacco.

The patch system is designed to wean a smoker from nicotine over 10 weeks. The system consists of three patches, each of which contains a different dose of nicotine, said David Thompson, a spokesman for Marion Merrell Dow Inc. of Kansas City, which is marketing the patch.

The first patch, about two inches square (13 centimeters square), is to be worn for six weeks. It delivers 21 milligrams of nicotine per day, about half that taken in by a pack-and-a-half day smoker, he said.

The second patch is smaller, delivers 14 milligrams of nicotine and is to be worn for two weeks. The third, even smaller and delivering 7 milligrams of nicotine per day, is to be worn for the last two weeks, he said.

AI asks Ishaq to stop execution of 20

LONDON, Nov 9 : Amnesty International on Friday called on Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to halt imminent executions of at least 20 people convicted by special "speedy trial" courts, introduced in August, reports AFP.

These cases raise a fearful specter for Pakistan as the authorities turn back the clock on human rights," Amnesty said.

None of those sentenced to death had received fair trials and the human rights watchdog said it feared their deaths would herald a wave of executions nationwide.

Amnesty said it feared some or all of these prisoners would have commutations reversed and said at least 100 prisoners had already