

Bosnia Muslims will boycott Geneva talks

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sept 14: Bosnia's Muslim president says he will boycott peace talks in Geneva this week because of continuing Serb attacks, Sarajevo radio reported, says AP.

Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic also said the Yugoslav army, which has backed Serb rebels in the conflict, had brought additional tanks into Bosnia and its warplanes had attacked Bosnian towns.

The towns of Sarajevo, Jajce, Gorazde, Gradacac, Bosanski Brod, Mostar, Bihac and many others in Bosnia-Herzegovina are under constant attack with enormous damage and casualties among the civilian population, the radio quoted Izetbegovic as saying Sunday.

Under such circumstances negotiations in Geneva or any other location would be of no use, he said.

The UN-sponsored talks were scheduled to begin Friday. All other attempts for a peace pact between the three warring factions have failed.

More than 10,000 people have been killed in warfare since Bosnia's majority Muslims and Croats voted on February 29 for independence from Yugoslavia, touching off a rebellion by the republic's

New section of Great Wall opens to public

TIANJI, Sept 14: Another section of the Great Wall, one of the world wonders, has been restored to its original state and opened to the public here Saturday, reports Xinhua.

Serbs. UN peacekeepers, meanwhile, said Sunday they have begun monitoring Serb heavy weapons around Sarajevo. But a day after the deadline for Serbs to place heavy weapons around four cities — Sarajevo, Gorazde, Bihac and Jajce — under UN surveillance, observers had yet to arrive at all the sites.

Observers were expected to arrive in Bihac and Jajce on Monday, according to UN spokeswoman Shannon Boyd.

Brig Gen Hussein Aly Abdulrazek, UN commander in Sarajevo, said Sunday that the heavy weapons of the Serb side are moved into the 11 concentration areas around Sarajevo.

But he added that UN monitors were not authorized to silence the guns and there was no way to tell if the Serbs had concentrated all their heavy weapons.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, meanwhile, began a food airlift Sunday to the port of Split for overland convoys into Bosnia, UN relief spokesman Michael Keats said.

About 170 tons of supplies were to be transported on 14 flights a day until Thursday, Keats said. Aid flights to Sarajevo were halted September 3 when an Italian relief plane was shot down.

The fighting which prompted the need for aid continued Sunday.

Croatian radio reported 40 people killed and about 200 wounded in a Serb air attack near the town of Breko on the Croatian border. The report could not be independently confirmed.



BANGKOK: A Thai woman casting her vote in Sunday's election. — Star TV photo

Move to iron out obstacles to Klerk-Mandela summit

CAPE TOWN, Sept 14: Chief negotiators of the South African government and the African National Congress meet today in a bid to iron out obstacles to a summit between President FW de Klerk and ANC leader Nelson Mandela, reports Reuter.

ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus said on Sunday the meeting could herald a breakthrough after three months of deadlock in talks about a transition from white rule to democracy.

Constitutional Development Minister Roel Meyer and ANC Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa agreed in a live debate on state television on Sunday to address three ANC preconditions for a summit proposed last week by Dr Klerk.

The meeting between the

State President and Mandela is going to be a breath of fresh air to get the political process under way again," Ramaphosa said.

"The key issue here is whether the government is prepared finally to put South Africa on the democratic road," he said.

Ramaphosa said the ANC wanted the upgrading of migrant-worker hostels seen as launching pads for violence against the ANC; the release of about 400 people viewed by the ANC as political prisoners and a total ban on the carrying of dangerous weapons, including so-called traditional weapons carried by the rival Inkatha Freedom Party.

The addressing of those issues will be the foundation required to ensure that the meeting between President de Klerk and Mandela is the suc-

cess this country awaits," Ramaphosa said.

Niehaus confirmed that the two men agreed to meet today (Monday), but said no time was set.

Dr Klerk called for urgent talks with Mandela in the wake of last Monday's massacre of at least 28 ANC demonstrators marching to the Ciskei homeland capital of Bisho.

He said there could be no further bid to revive the stalled democracy talks until escalating violence had been dealt with.

Tanzanian Ismat Steiner, who will head the team until mission chief Annela King arrives later this month, said the observers would work with South African Judge Richard Goldstone, who heads a commission investigating the violence.

KGB planned killing of Rajiv?

NEW DELHI, Sept 14: A retired IPS officer, M V Thomas today alleged that the KGB, the intelligence network of the erstwhile Soviet Union, had "masterminded" the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi but gave no supporting evidence to substantiate the charge, reports PTI.

Addressing a press conference here, Thomas, who retired in 1989 as director general of Andhra Pradesh police, declined to reveal any sources which had provided the basis for his allegation.

The investigations were undertaken on my own to get at the truth. I was not hired by anyone for this task," said Mr Thomas, who had also worked as an assistant director in the Intelligence Bureau.

He alleged that certain top congress and Atadmk leaders were "aware of this plot." For this charge also he gave no proof.

Rao asks state govts to monitor human rights violations

NEW DELHI, Sept 14: The Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, today asked the state governments to review their existing arrangements for monitoring cases of alleged human rights violations and take effective measures to sensitize the administration in dealing with such cases, reports PTI.

Inaugurating a conference of the state chief ministers, convened to discuss the setting up of a national human rights commission, the Prime Minister said, "It is important that all such cases are looked into expeditiously and guilty persons are brought to book."

It was only through prompt and exemplary action that public confidence could be created and the earnestness of the government in safeguarding human rights recognised,

Israel-Syria talks resume

WASHINGTON, Sept 14: Israel is determined that peace talks with its Arab neighbours will move forward when negotiations resume this week, Yossi Gal, the spokesman for the Israeli delegation told AFP Sunday.

The sixth round of bilateral talks restart today after a 10-day break requested by Israel. Itamar Rabinovich, the head of the Israeli team negotiating with Syria, said Israel was preparing a written response to a Syrian position paper issued two weeks ago reiterating its demand for the Golan Heights

Fierce fighting in Turkey: 41 killed

ISTANBUL, Sept 14: Kurdish separatists and Turkish troops fought fierce battles in southeast Turkey on Sunday with the loss of 41 men on both sides, reports Reuter.

State television said fighting flared when a group of heavily-armed members of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) attacked a rural police station in Hakkari province.

The latest clash raised to 99 the number of people killed this week in Kurdish rebel violence in Turkey's southeast.

A group of terrorists armed with mortars, rocket launchers, and rifles attacked the Aktutun Gendarme border company in Semdinli district around 5 am (0200 GMT), the television said, quoting the state of emergency governors

office. "Thirty terrorists were killed in the ensuing clash." It said an officer, eight soldiers and two village guards were killed on the government side.

"The security forces are still searching the region." On Saturday, PKK guerrillas killed a Turkish officer and three soldiers in Dogubayazit town after they ambushed security forces on their way back from an operation, the semi-official Antolian news agency said.

On Friday, a Turkish non-commissioned officer, a village guard and eight PKK members were killed in separate clashes with security forces in Mardin and Sirtnak provinces.

Off the Record

Quayle was kind of cute



RADNOR, Pa.: Candice Bergen says she used to think Vice President Dan Quayle was kind of cute, but she found his disparaging remarks about her television persona "Murphy Brown" and single-motherhood "really offensive," reports AP.

"In the beginning, I was amused by all this. I always thought the vice president was kind of cute, you know, in a defenceless way," Bergen said in an interview for the latest issue of TV Guide.

"But now that he's come back with this new persona that they've invented for him. (The Bush) administration has taken on such an arrogant, aggressive tone,

and I find that really offensive." Bergen said the Quayle controversy increased the pressure for those involved in the show's hour-long season premiere September 21. It won't be titled "Murphy's Revenge," as reported elsewhere, TV Guide said, although Quayle will come up.

The producers denied rumours that the vice president was invited to appear.

Saint or sinner

CARMEL, Calif.: Father Junipero Serra: saint or sinner? When the Franciscan friar was buried here two centuries ago, 600 Indians mourned the "Apostle of California" who founded four of the state's nine adobe missions, reports AP.

When Pope John Paul II celebrated Serra's beatification four years ago, bringing the friar close to sainthood, African Indians defaced his statue at the first mission he established in San Diego. They sprayed "genocidal maniac" and "enslaved Indians" on his likeness.

Did missionaries force religion and European ways on a people? Worse, did they literally beat the devil out of Indians to free savage souls? Or were the fringe-haired friars kind and caring? And what role did Serra play as "President Father" of the missions?

Those questions have been debated for decades. The answers have taken on new urgency this year, the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World and the beginning of the end of the Indian way of life.

There seems to be no available direct evidence that Serra abused Indians personally, according to James Santos, a University of Redlands professor who is an expert on the missionary.

Fans hardly danced at Jackson's gig

PARIS: The American pop singer Michael Jackson, who has disappointed fans across Europe by failing to show up at several concerts this year, played before a capacity crowd here on Sunday, reports AFP.



Some 80,000 people flocked to the singer's outdoor concert at a racetrack on the Paris outskirts.

Some of the fans had followed Jackson from Basel in Switzerland, where the singer cancelled a concert at the last minute on Friday, pleading illness.

Jackson also cancelled a show at Gelsenkirchen, in Germany, last Sunday, and another at Wembley, near London, on August 1.

The singer's lead guitarist, Jennifer Batten, has explained the frequent last-minute cancellations by the fact that Jackson changes costumes up to 40 times during a single performance, causing him to catch colds when he performs outdoors.

Jackson is scheduled to continue his "Dangerous World Tour", named after his latest hit album, with appearances in the south western French city of Toulouse on Wednesday, in Barcelona on Friday, in Oviedo, Spain, on September 20, in Madrid on September 22, in Seville on September 24, Lisbon on September 26 and Bucharest on September 30.

BRIEFLY

3 hurt in Belfast gun attack: Three people were wounded in a gun attack Sunday at a club in downtown Belfast, police said, reports AP from Belfast.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. It was not yet clear how many gunmen were involved in the attack at the Dockers' Club in Pilot Street, police said, but shots were fired through a closed door as a man inside the club held it shut.

A witness said two doormen tried to push the door closed when gunmen approached, and both fell wounded. A third man was wounded while making a telephone call, a witness said. Police said the three victims were in serious condition in a hospital.

US envoy in Nicosia: A senior US official arrived in Nicosia Sunday for talks with Cypriot leaders and with what he said were "new ideas" for a solution to the divided island, where he hoped a settlement would be reached by the end of the year, reports AFP from Nicosia.

Nelson Ledsky, the State Department envoy who has been coordinating negotiations between the Turkish and Greek communities, in Cyprus was to have talks with Cypriot President George Vassiliou and Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş.

Quake shakes Japan: A moderate earthquake measuring 4.3 on the Richter scale shook eastern Japan Monday, the meteorological agency said, reports AFP from Tokyo.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or major property damage. The epicentre of the quake at 11.47 am (0247 GMT) was some 60 kilometres (37 miles) under the seabed in the Pacific off central Japan.

Mauroy to succeed Willy Brandt: Former French premier Pierre Mauroy will be installed Thursday as head of the Socialist International, succeeding the ailing Willy Brandt, reports AFP from Paris.

The 78-year-old former Chancellor of the Federal German Republic, who has had two stomach operations in the last year, said in March he did not want to be re-elected as president of the SI, which groups together social democratic parties from around the world.

Yeltsin visits S Korea Nov 12: Russian President Boris Yeltsin will pay a two-day visit to South Korea from November 12, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported Monday quoting State Secretary Gennady Burbulis, AFP says from Moscow.

The rescheduling of the visit followed the announcement last week that Yeltsin had cancelled his trip to Japan and South Korea initially planned for this month.

The Russian leader was originally to have visited South Korea from September 16 to 18 after touring Japan from September 1 to 16.

China rules out independence of Tibet

KATHMANDU, Sept 14: Tibet's Chinese-appointed governor, Gyatsen Norbu, on Monday firmly ruled out independence in any shape or form for the region, reports Reuter.

The proposition for independence, whether it comes in the form of full independence or semi-independence or independence in any other shape, is unacceptable to us," he told a news conference in Kathmandu, capital of neighbouring Nepal.

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism and leader of Tibetans in exile, has proposed internal autonomy for the Himalayan region, with China responsible for Foreign Affairs and Defence.

The Dalai Lama field Tibet in 1959 after an abortive uprising against Chinese troops and has campaigned around the world against Beijing's rule ever since.

Gyatsen Norbu is appointed by Beijing as chairman of Tibet's nominally autonomous regional government.

In answer to a question, he denied there were any abuses of human rights in Tibet as charged by Tibetan exiles and Western human rights groups.

The human rights of the Tibetan people enjoy are comprehensive. When law enforcement authorities take action against criminals, the anti-China elements abroad

create noise about violation of human rights," he said.

There have been periodic outbreaks of anti-Chinese demonstrations over the past few years, which witnesses say have been put down brutally.

China has also been accused by the London-based Amnesty International human rights group of frequently using torture against detainees.

In May, Beijing said about 70 people serving sentences in one prison and two reform-through-labour camps had been convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes—a broad-ranging category of political offences which usually carry heavy prison terms.

Reagan comes to rescue Bush

CALIFORNIA, Sept 14: Ronald Reagan on Sunday came to the aid of his former understudy at the White House, George Bush, urging voters to reject the 'doomsday democrats' and trust Bush to restore economic prosperity to America, reports Reuter.

"I am asking you to spread the word in your communities: 'America's greatest hope is with George Bush,' the 81-year-old former president told thousands of Republican faithful as the introducer Bush at a campaign rally in the conservative heartland of Orange county in Southern California.

Current economic problems, said Reagan, are "not unique to our country." The fact is that we are in a time of global economic transition, and America's economy, even with its problems, is still the strongest and most competitive in the world," he said to cheers.

Bush, Reagan said, is the "vehicle of change" America wants this year and can lead the country to a period of "greater economic prosperity".



ANAHEIM: US President George Bush (L) and former President Ronald Reagan (R) walk through crowd shaking hands at Yorba regional park on September 13 during a campaign. — AFP/UNB photo

Syria supports Lebanon in restoring govt

DAMASCUS, Sept 14: Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad on Sunday reaffirmed his country's determination to support Lebanon in restoring full government authority across its territory, his spokesman reported, says AFP.

Othman Kuriye was speaking at the end of two days of talks between Assad and Lebanese counterpart Elias Hrawi in the Mediterranean coastal city of Latakia.

Under the 1989 Taif accord for peace in Lebanon, Syrian troops are to be redeployed from Beirut to the east of the country.

Assad reaffirmed Syria's support to Lebanese efforts aimed at "solving existing problems within the spirit of the (Taif) accord," Kuriye said. He did not elaborate.

Pregnancies are risky but wonderful in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Sept 14: Aida, a 39-year-old mother-to-be, is the only occupant of the Kosovo hospital maternity ward who always smiles, reports AFP.

Her beaming, radiant face illuminates the grim, dimly lit corridors and few severe rooms on the end of the second floor that have served since the new maternity wing was destroyed by Serbian artillery last June.

Aida, like most women here, wishes not to give her family name because her husband is a volunteer in the Bosnian territorial defence force.

She tried for years to conceive, succeeded twice but miscarried. The problem, a series of uterine cysts, was surgically removed two years ago by doctor Srecko Simic, chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Today, Aida is carrying a normal, full-term baby, and in a matter of days Dr. Simic is due to deliver it.

The doctor knows if the baby is a boy or a girl, but Aida wants to be surprised and he is not telling.

"She's our hero," Simic said, proudly wrapping his arm around his patient's shoulder. "I feel wonderful," she said with a broad

grin. "I thought I would never have a baby. When I think about my baby, I forget about the war."

"All this suffering, it gave me strength and energy. When the bombs fall, I say to myself, 'I will go on. This was my own war.'"

In fact, fewer and fewer women are electing to enlist in that war.

They are choosing not to have babies, or else they are leaving the city to have them far from the devastation and hunger and despair that have ravaged this once lovely city.

Simic, 64 and due for retirement next year, said Sarajevo's birth rate had plummeted from an average of 30 a day to eight since the siege of the Bosnian capital began last April.

Many of the pregnancies are high-risk, and this worries him because the state-of-the-art equipment that was destroyed last June has never been replaced and he and his staff are making do with outdated gear that has been recovered from storage.

"Our biggest problem is that we are not equipped to deal with complications," he said.

Because of shortages in surgical staff, equipment, blood and oxygen, he said, the hospital only performs caesarean deliveries in

cases where a normal birth would endanger the mother's life, to merely to facilitate a difficult delivery.

Premature births are also a problem. Simic said that before the war, about five per cent of all deliveries were premature. The proportion has now tripled.

The reasons, said Simic: poor nutrition, poor sanitation and the stress and anxiety of spending much of a pregnancy huddling in an underground shelter as shells explode overhead.

Fatima, 29, had her third child — a boy — Sunday. They were to go home Monday.

"We used to keep them several days or a week," said Simic.

"But with the shortages of water and electricity and the sanitation conditions here, they will be better off at home."

"If I knew it would be like this, I would not have become pregnant," said Fatima. "This is not a good place to raise children any more."

Milka, 28, will also be taking her new baby — a girl — home tomorrow.

"Now we have two children," she said. "But I don't know what kind of life we can give them. If the fighting goes on and on, they won't have

enough to eat. They won't be able to go to school."

She shakes her head, tired of enumerating the problems.

The maternity ward's nursery is a small room lit by a single bare light bulb dangling from a wire hooked up to an extension cord that trails out the door and down the hall.

On a guernsey against one wall are nine small bundles wrapped in white linen, separated by clipboards bearing charts. Sticking out from the top of each is a tiny, pink screaming head. These are the babies just born.

Against the opposite wall are the hospital's three remaining incubators, containing a total of five babies, each of whom is hardly bigger than a man's hand, virtually covered by adhesive tape holding electrode monitors in place.

Two days ago these five babies were threatened with almost certain death because the single remaining oxygen bottle feeding the incubators was about to run out. An emergency supply arrived by land convoy from the coastal town of Split at the last minute. But the future supply is not assured.

"Are these any kind of conditions to bring children into the world," asked Simic.

WHO regional confce opens in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Sept 14: Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala inaugurated today a three-day regional meeting of the World Health Organisation (WHO), a conference source said, reports AFP.

Koirala, in a colourful ceremony at the Royal Nepal Academy Hall, said he hoped the 10th meeting of health ministers from WHO's southeast Asian member nations would help to strengthen regional cooperation in health care.

"As the year 2000 draws near, there is an urgency to accelerate our health programmes and enlarge our co-operation," he said, adding exchanges of research into public health and population growth were "essential."