

### Yangon junta to hold convention for election

BANGKOK, Sept 16: Myanmar Prime Minister General Than Shwe announced Tuesday that the ruling military junta had successfully weathered political pressure from dissident groups for four years since seizing power in September 1988, official radio Yangon said, reports AFP.

Than Shwe, also chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the official name of the junta, said the SLORC had weathered criticism and accusations from anti-Yangon groups both within the country and overseas the radio said in a broadcast monitored here.

The SLORC had also withstood both economic sanctions and military pressure brought about by ethnic minority guerrillas and rebel movements, he said.

Than Shwe, speaking at a meeting at the military supreme command in Yangon attended by provincial and township officials, also reiterated that the junta would organize a national convention to pave the way for an election and the final handing over of state power to a democratically elected government.

The junta organized general elections in May 1990, but refused to hand over its power to the National League for Democracy party which won by a landslide.

NLD Secretary General Aung San Suu Kyi and other prominent opposition leaders were jailed.

## Thai army accept Chuan as PM

BANGKOK, Sept 16: Thailand's military chiefs, stepping back from a 60-year tradition of meddling in politics, have given their blessing to the man chosen by pro-democracy parties as prime minister, the Nation newspaper reported today, says Reuters.

Chuan Leekpai, whose Democrats won more seats than other parties in Sunday's general election, said on Tuesday the leaders of four allied parties had agreed he should become prime minister.

The polls were held four months after a bloody army crackdown on protesters who demanded an end to military influence in politics and the removal of unelected General Suchinda Kraprayoon as prime minister.

Suchinda was forced to resign in disgrace in May after his soldiers killed scores of demonstrators.

A source close to the armed forces leadership, reported in the Nation, quoted new army commander General Wimol Wongwanich as saying: "although Chuan is a small guy he is a capable man."

The way he talked showed he is a reasonable man."

Deputy Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Yuthana Khamdee was quoted as saying: "He is a good person and he has been chosen by the people."

The four parties in the Democratic alliance won 185 seats in the 360-seat lower house of parliament.

Parliament is expected to open on Monday with King Bhumibol Adulyadej presiding, the source said.

The first regular session next Wednesday will elect a parliamentary president whose first job will be to nominate a prime minister to the King, he said.

Wimol, appointed army chief in a purge following Suchinda's downfall, has pledged that the armed forces will stay out of politics.

The new government will be the fifty-third for coup-plagued Thailand since it abandoned absolute monarchy in 1932.



SARAJEVO: The mother of Mersad Vejzovic, a 20-year-old Bosnian soldier killed during clashes with Serbian forces on Monday, is comforted by relatives as a friend of the killed soldier stands over the grave during the funeral ceremony at the Lion's cemetery in Sarajevo. — AFP/UNB photo

## No accord yet on Yslav no-fly zone

PARIS, Sept 16: US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said on Tuesday that the United States, Britain and France have reached no agreement on whether to establish and enforce a no-fly zone over civil war torn Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports Reuters.

But he warned at the start of a five-day trip to France and Britain to discuss the breakup of former Yugoslavia that any US jets and helicopters sent to protect humanitarian flights and convoys into Bosnia would shoot back if fired on.

In an interview with Reuters on his air craft en route from Washington, Cheney questioned whether a no-fly zone policed by western jets and helicopters would be sound policy in the military and political quagmire of a vivid war in eastern Europe.

"I think it would be fair to say that there are still different points of view among the allies — and indeed within governments — over what, if any, no-fly zone ought to be imposed," he said.

Cheney said the United States itself had not decided whether to back such a zone to keep Serbian aircraft from interfering with humanitarian aid to breakaway Bosnia or perhaps even from attacking Bosnian ground forces.

"The question is whether or not it (no-fly zone) is sound policy," Cheney said. "What is our purpose? objective? what is the chain of command? what will be the consequences of pursuing that kind of policy?"

"Clearly it's something I will want to discuss with our British and French allies... we've solved these kinds of

problems before. These are not insuperable problems."

Published reports have said that France, which had two of its peacekeeping troops killed in Bosnia last week, supports a no-fly zone while British officials lean toward a more begin monitoring of flights in the area by allied reconnaissance planes.

US officials travelling with Cheney said there was little evidence of widespread effort by Serbian planes to shadow humanitarian aid flights over Bosnia to foil radar and press attacks against Bosnian forces.

Cheney will meet on Wednesday with French Defence Minister Pierre Joxe, Prime Minister Pierre Serogovoy and Admiral Jacques Lanxade, Chief of the French Military Defence Staff.

On Thursday, he goes to

Britain for meetings with Prime Minister John Major and acting Defence Minister Archie Hamilton.

While conceding that the United Nations would make any final decision on a no-fly zone, Cheney added that "I would be reluctant to accept rules of management that might meet some international standard but were not adequate, for example, from the stand point of US forces."

On Friday in London, Cheney will speak to a luncheon meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce. In Oxford that night, he will address the closing session of the annual international outlook conference sponsored by the International Herald Tribune and Oxford Analytica Ltd.

He will fly home to Washington on Saturday.

### Bush questions ability of Clinton to lead army

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, Sept 16: President George Bush questioned the ability of his Democratic rival to lead American forces because of allegations that Bill Clinton dodged the draft during the Vietnam war, reports AFP.

In a speech before the National Guard Association, Bush said "I hope that when evaluating the two men who want this job, Americans will not ignore the President's role as Commander-in-Chief."

Clinton, addressing the same group, made no mention of his draft controversy but insisted that he would never shrink from using force of elected President and would always "fight to win."

Bush also strongly defended Vice President Dan Quayle who had also come under fire in 1988 over accusations that he joined the national guard reserves in order to avoid serving in Vietnam.

Bush praised the national guards' performance in the Gulf War and his voice broke, forcing him to pause briefly as he was apparently overcome by emotion as he read a letter written by the mother of a marine killed in the war.

Clinton who spoke after Bush, said Americans "want someone they can trust to act in moments of crisis" and that he was ready to meet that test and commit US troops if necessary.

The event in Salt Lake City had been billed as a showdown between the two candidates on Clinton's draft record, but both sides also used trust as a touchstone for their political pitches.

## Ganev man-in-the-news

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 16: Bulgaria's 37-year-old Foreign Minister, Stoyan Ganev, elected by acclamation on Tuesday as president of the 47th annual general assembly, is the youngest person to hold the prestige-filled post, reports Reuters.

For the next three months he will help steer the 179-nation body through an agenda of more than 140 items and will preside over any resumed sessions. His term officially ends next September.

Ganev is a newcomer both to diplomacy and the United Nations, having been sworn in only last November as foreign minister in his country's first non-communist cabinet since the end of World War two.

Bulgaria's hard-line communist leader Todor Zhivkov, one of Moscow's closest allies, was toppled by members of his own party in November 1989.

The anti-communist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) took power last November after winning a small majority over ex-communists who renamed their party the Socialist Party. The UDF has a parliamentary majority in a coalition with the movement for rights and freedoms, the party of Bulgaria's ethnic Turks.

Since January 1990 Ganev has been chairman of the United Democratic Centre, a Christian Democratic group that forms part of the UDF. Until July he served as a deputy prime minister as well as foreign minister.

Earlier this year he announced a sweep of up to 200 Bulgarian diplomats alleged to have spied for the former regime.

"Our diplomacy doesn't need communist secret agents disguised as diplomats loitering around this ministry," he

told a news conference in Sofia.

Since taking office he has travelled widely, establishing or repairing diplomatic ties. As foreign minister of a Balkan country the turmoil in neighbouring Yugoslavia has been one of his chief preoccupations.

It is also an issue that will loom large during the current assembly, although UN involvement in the former Yugoslavia is mainly through the Security Council, which has already dispatched more than 14,000 peace-keeping troops and only on Tuesday voted to send up to 6,000 more.

Ganev took part in the international conference on Yugoslavia in London last month.



CALIFORNIA: Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton (C) walks through a crowd on Tuesday at Sa Jose University during a campaign stop. — AFP/UNB photo

### US starts food airlift to remote Somalia

NAIROBI, Sept 16: The United Nations has begun mercy food air-drops to remote villages in Somalia to try to stop the flow of war and famine-afflicted civilians into urban centres, a senior official said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Brenda Barton of the UN World Food Programme said in a statement WFP-chartered Hercules aircraft dropped 14 tonnes of food for villagers near Tigilelo, 300 km (200 miles) from the war-shattered capital Mogadishu on Monday.

"Air-dropping is being undertaken to isolated towns because no other means of delivery presently exists," Barton said.

## 'Mujahideen' — people don't like to hear that name anymore

KABUL, Sept 16: The Mujahideen Commander look down at a row of yellow Kabul taxis queuing for fuel below the Ministry of Communications and draws his revolver, reports Reuters.

"I could shoot a few of the drivers if you like," he says, pointing the weapon out of the window of the tall government building. It is a joke for a journalist.

Five months after Mujahideen rebels entered Kabul there is more anarchy than Islamic government in Afghanistan's capital.

People are frightened and increasingly angry at the bearded men with guns who came from the hills to take power and ended up fighting among themselves.

"Mujahideen, Mujahideen — people don't like to hear that name anymore," says a Kabul who has now joined the hundreds of thousands who have fled the city.

The government says it is trying to restore order to Kabul by chasing down its numerous armed groups and moving them out of the city. Late last month it agreed a ceasefire with a renegade fundamentalist faction to halt three weeks of heavy rocket attacks that destroyed whole districts.

Yet gunfire continues to echo around the

city night and day. Rockets and mortar bombs fell on one district for several nights last week, driving civilians into underground bunkers.

August's battles were the worst Kabul has seen in all of Afghanistan's 14-year civil war. In one four-hour period more than 650 rockets hit the city.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said up to 2,000 people were killed and 9,000 wounded in August. The toll for that one month in Kabul is similar to that in Sarajevo since April, but there has been a fraction of the international attention.

"We have had a third of the city destroyed, nearly half of the population displaced, massive casualties and a huge death toll," said a western medic. "Does anyone really care? Did you see one picture in the paper?"

Clashes can erupt on any of the city's street corners, which are guarded by tanks and soldiers with rifles, machineguns and rocket grenades.

United Nations staff and most diplomats have left. The handful of foreigners who remain are frequently threatened by armed men. Failure to stop quickly enough at a checkpoint can provoke a hail of bullets.

As part of its effort to clean up Kabul, the government has begun publicly hanging alleged criminals under Sharia or Islamic law after trials to which there is no public access. The Commander with the revolver supervised the first three executions in a central park on September 7.

Moments earlier he orchestrated the beating of three men caught smoking hashish in the crowd of spectators.

"You can't say there is a government, it's just anarchy, there is no police, on nothing, just guns — they are the law," said the citizen who left. He asked not to be identified.

Little of the administrative machinery functions; most ministries are deserted and some senior officials qualify their remarks by saying: "... If this government survives."

Interior Minister Ahmad Shah is attempting to form a police force of 12,000 men for Kabul, but it is a measure of the government's political weakness that it must allow each of the rival armed factions to provide men for it.

Getting the police into uniform is a problem.

"Sometimes they'll wear it, sometimes they won't," Ahmad Shah says with a shrug. "The

Mujahideen are a very free people.

The freedom to slug out a minor quarrel with machineguns and rockets is something many in Kabul still find difficult to understand.

The triviality of some battles was illustrated last week when groups of the same faction exchanged fire over two sacks of sugar.

"They should stop this playing, they are just playing with our lives," says former teacher Atmar Matisa shedding angry tears near the ruins of his home in Khoti Sange, a once thriving commercial district almost totally destroyed in last month's fighting.

"For the love of God, stop it," she says, gesturing to faction fighters stationed over the road. "There's nothing left."

"For years and years we have used the same mosques and the same cemeteries," says an elderly man picking through rubble that was once his home. "Why do these so-called Muslim leaders have to try and create differences among us?"

"We have no food, no power, no water. Why? What for?"

"They need their guns," says a middle-aged man, "because if they didn't have them the Kabul people would kill them all with knives."

## Off the Record

### Miss Indiana, Iowa best in swimsuits

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.: Miss Indiana and Miss Iowa shared top prize in a preliminary swimsuit competition and Miss New Jersey won a talent preliminary in the Miss America Pageant on Tuesday, reports AP.

Pageant officials divide the 50 contestants into three groups for the three nights of preliminary competition in evening gown, swimsuit and talent. Each group competes in only one category per night.

Winners in swimsuit and talent are chosen each night, but no winner is picked in the evening gown category.

Tuesday's swimsuit preliminary winners were Miss Indiana, Shelli Renee Yoder, 24, of Shipshewana, Ind and Miss Iowa Catherine Ann Lemkau, also 24, of Muscatine, Iowa.

Officials said the only other tie in the 72-year history of the Miss America Pageant was in 1966, also in the swimsuit competition.

Miss New Jersey, Heather Hertling, 24, of Randolph, claimed the top talent honour, singing Verdi's classical vocal, "Ernani Involant." She is a 1990 graduate of Indiana University with a music degree and is an aspiring opera singer.

The first preliminary competition opened with an appearance by the reigning queen, Carolyn Sapp, who lip-synched a song, "The Year of the Family," which she dedicated to families nationwide.

Fifty contestants are in the pageant, which will be held Saturday night.

### It's time to welcome married priesthood

CINCINNATI, Ohio: The Archbishop of Canterbury has challenged the Roman Catholic Church to allow priests to marry and to offer women a significant role in the church issues that divide Catholics and Anglicans, reports Reuters.

In his first visit to the United States as the leader of the Worldwide Anglican Communion, which includes the US Episcopal Church, the 56-year-old archbishop told reporters on Monday he dreamed of forming closer ties with the Catholic Church but said there were major obstacles.

"I would want to challenge the Roman Catholic Church that perhaps it is time that they welcomed a married priesthood," Carey said, responding to a question about the shortage of priests.

"I gain a great deal of strength from the support of my wife. In no way does it diminish my commitment to Christ and to the sacraments that we celebrate," he said.

### The vivid memory of comfort girls

SEOUL: North Korea said Wednesday it wanted to join forces with the South to demand that Tokyo compensate Korean women forced to serve as Japanese sex slaves during World War two, reports Reuters.

North Korean Prime Minister Yon Hyong-Muk said in a speech that Seoul and Pyongyang should adopt a five-point agreement which would include other issues, such as Japan's plans to send troops overseas for the first time since World War two.

But the current northern proposal has little chance of a sympathetic hearing in Seoul because of the strong anti-Japanese rhetoric and its inclusion of clauses unrelated to the sex slave issue.

Memories are vivid in both Koreas of atrocities committed during Japan's 1910-45 colonisation of the peninsula. Historians say as many as 200,000 women, mostly Koreans, were forced to serve the Imperial army as it swept through east and south-east Asia in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Japanese government has acknowledged the recruitment of comfort women but has refused compensation, saying there was no proof the women were coerced.

### Better late than never

SINGAPORE: Better late than never? Perhaps, but chronically tardy Singaporeans who believe it fashionable to be late are again being prodded to be punctual, reports AP.

A campaign by the National Community Organizations Council, an umbrella group of civic bodies, is the latest effort to get guests at wedding dinners and other social occasions to appear on time.

In most respects this city-state maintains a brisk efficiency, school classes and sports events keep to the clock and subways run on time.

But several publicity drives have made little headway in changing the deeply ingrained habit of being tardy at banquets.

## North and South Korea close to detente

SEOUL, Sept 16: North and South Korea moved closer to easing cold war tensions today in talks which southern officials said were close to clinching landmark agreements on detente, reports Reuters.

Delegates from the Stalinist North and Capitalist South met in the North Korean capital Pyongyang to work out details of three agreements which would increase economic co-operation and reduce political and military confrontation.

It these accords are adopted, three separate commissions would start putting into motion programmes for reconciliation and cooperation — additional steps on the rocky road to eventual reunification of the peninsula divided since 1945. "Chances of reaching a

breakthrough are bright," said Lee Dong-Bok, spokesman for South Korean Prime Minister Chung Won-Shik, after committee talks which started on Tuesday evening an extended into the early hours today.

The southern optimism contrasted with gloomy predictions of failure which Chung's officials made before arriving on Tuesday in Pyongyang.

Chung is holding an eighth round of meetings with his northern counterpart, Yon Hyong-Muk.

The spokesman said the two sides would continue working-level contacts until Thursday to settle remaining differences.

The two Koreas, still technically at war since the 1950-53 conflict, signed a non-aggression pact last December.

### IAEA ends 3rd inspection in North Korea

TOKYO, Sept 16: An International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team has ended a third inspection of North Korean nuclear facilities, the official Korean central news agency said, reports Reuters.

The agency, monitored in Tokyo, said what it called the IAEA's "third irregular inspection team," led by safeguards department official Wily Thels, left Pyongyang on Tuesday.

Communist North Korea finally bowed to international pressure this year and agreed to open its secret nuclear sites to IAEA inspectors checking for weapons development.

Pyongyang denies it is working to produce nuclear weapons, but South Korea, the United States and Japan fear it may be only months away from making an atomic bomb.