

BRIEFLY

Gypsies slate Asylum rules: A Gypsy rights group on Friday denounced new German asylum rules, saying they were aimed specifically at the mass deportation of Gypsies, reports AP from Berlin.

Germany's dealings with Gypsies are a sensitive subject because of their wholesale slaughter by the Nazis during World War II.

Many Germans today are openly hostile to the group because of the large number of Gypsy beggars who get government-financed food and housing under the nation's asylum law.

Romanian Gypsies have been some of the main targets of the radical rightists who have attacked shelters throughout eastern Germany. Most Romanian refugees in Germany are believed to be Gypsies, although the government says it does not have a breakdown.

Menoka Thakur dead: The grand daughter of Abanindranath Tagore, Menoka Thakur, a noted exponent of Rabindrasangeet died at her North Calcutta residence Saturday after a heart attack. She was 76, reports PTI from Calcutta.

Menoka began learning Rabindrasangeet from a very early age at Santiniketan.

She was a permanent member of the audition committee of the All India Radio and Doordarshan.

The Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Ajit Kumar Panja and the state's Information and Cultural Minister, Buddhadev Bhattacharya have condoled her death.

33 more freed in Myanmar: Myanmar's military government released another 33 political prisoners Friday, the official radio Yangon reported, says AFP from Bangkok.

The radio, in a broadcast monitored here, said the 32 men and one woman were freed from a provincial jail in Ma Ubin, a southern Myanmar town.

None of the freed prisoners were identified and the radio gave no details of their arrests.

About 450 political prisoners have reportedly been released throughout the country by ruling military authorities since April, when the Junta announced it would gradually free detainees who were not considered a threat to national security.

15 die in Haiti explosion: An explosion toppled a three-story building on a downtown corner packed with merchants and shoppers at midday Friday. Officials said at least 15 people were killed and hundreds hurt, reports AP from Haiti.

Clouds of black smoke billowed from the wreckage as rescuers frantically pulled victims from the ruins.

The cause of the blast was not immediately known, but there was no apparent political connection. Tensions are high nearly one year after the military coup that toppled popularly elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and sent him into exile.

Witnesses counted 10 bodies lined up on the sidewalk by police, who quickly cordoned off the area. Mayor Gerard Salomon told The Associated Press that at least 15 people were killed.

20 Tamil rebels killed: Government troops captured a rebel-held town and killed 20 guerrillas in a daylong operation in the northern Jaffna peninsula, officials said Saturday, reports AP from Colombo.

Three soldiers also were killed and 8 wounded in the offensive that began at dawn Friday and ended in the evening, said the officials of the Joint Operations Command in Colombo.

Ground troops backed by heavy air support advanced one mile south from the coastal town of Madagal to overrun the rebel-held town of Pandittiruppu, about 190 miles north of Colombo, the officials said.

Troops had captured Madagal on August 21.

An indefinite curfew imposed at 6:00 am (0030 GMT) Friday in the Jaffna peninsula was lifted at 7:30 am (0200 GMT) the following day.

More than 17,000 people have been killed since 1983 when Tamil rebels began fighting for an independent homeland in northeast Sri Lanka.

IAEA plans to monitor Iraq's inland waters

VIENNA, Sept 19: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plans to monitor Iraq's inland waters to check on whether it is fulfilling commitments to destroy its nuclear weapons facilities, IAEA head Hans Blix said on Friday, reports Reuters.

"Parts of the long-term monitoring plan will be an extensive and periodic radiometric survey of the surface waters of Iraq", Blix told a news conference.

"This will provide the agency with an important tool to detect changes resulting from the possible resurgence of nuclear activities," the agency's director-general added.

"The water analysis would help catch radioactive activities in the given area and be a pointer that illegal work is being carried out there," Blix said.

Blix was talking on the eve of the annual general conference of the Vienna-based

Hostels for asylum seekers attacked again in Germany

SCHWERIN, Germany, Sept 19: Attacks against hostels for asylum-seekers were again reported overnight in several areas of eastern Germany, notably in the region of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, local police said Saturday, reports AFP.

A hostel in Schwerin, capital of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, was attacked by about 50 youths on Friday evening. Four windows were smashed and 11 youths were arrested.

Similar incidents were reported at Bernsdorf, near Ueckermünde, and Joerdendorf, near Guestrów, where a centre for Germans repatriated from former eastern Bloc countries was targeted.

At Arneburg, eight youths attacked a hostel with stones. Four of them were arrested.



SARAJEVO: Sudanese student Taha Osman Elkhaila, 26, shows a victory sign September 18 as he sits with his Kalashnikov automatic rifle in a bar in downtown Sarajevo. Taha, a former student of the Economics Department of the University of Sarajevo, joined the local police when the war started and is determined to fight for the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina. —AFP/UNB photo

UN Council ready to punish Y'slavia for war in Bosnia

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 19: The Security Council prepared today to punish Yugoslavia for the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina by recommending the Belgrade government be barred from the General Assembly and insisting it apply a new for membership in the United Nations, reports Reuters.

A resolution, expected to be adopted after closed-door consultations, which begin at about noon (1700 GMT), stops short of expelling Yugoslavia from all United Nations forums.

But by forcing Yugoslavia to submit a fresh application, the proposed resolution, in effect, invalidates Yugoslavia's UN membership.

Any new application would

need to be endorsed by the Security Council where western members could block admission indefinitely.

Aware of the contradiction, diplomats had difficulty replying to queries as to whether Yugoslavia technically would still be a member of the United Nations.

One key ambassador said: "There was a compromise (with the Russians) and in a compromise things don't come out totally logical".

The resolution is in the form of a recommendation to the 179-member General Assembly which must adopt a similar one before Yugoslavia's UN delegation vacates its seat.

Russia, for whom the resolution is a bitter pill to swallow,

may abstain along with China and possibly India and Zimbabwe while 11 states are expected to support the document.

Before the resolution was slightly watered down on Thursday, several diplomats feared that Moscow would use or at least threaten to use its veto power to block it.

Specifically the draft resolution — sponsored by Belgium, Britain, France, the United States and Morocco — declares that the Yugoslav state "does not continue automatically the membership" of the old Yugoslav federation.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia have declared their independence, leaving Serbia and Montenegro

Syria proposes peace deal with Israel

JERUSALEM, Sept 19: Syria has proposed a peace deal with Israel before the US presidential election under which American troops would be deployed on the Golan Heights, an Israeli newspaper reported Friday, says AFP.

Al-Hamishmar, close to the leftist Meretz which belongs to the ruling coalition, said Syria wanted an accord before the November election on a total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, which Israeli seized from Syria in 1967.

The proposal was discussed at the Middle East peace talks in Washington, the paper said.

Under the deal, Israel would recognize Syrian sovereignty over the strategic Heights and US troops would be deployed to assure the Jewish state's security, it said.

However, the resolution says the Security Council would "consider the matter again" before the current General Assembly session adjourns around mid-December.

The resolution is aimed at isolating the Belgrade government, already subject to UN sanction as a major instigator of violence in Bosnia where Serb militias are challenging the republic's session from the old Yugoslav federation.

Resources vital needs of South Asian children

COLOMBO, Sept 19: SAARC member-countries yesterday identified seven major and a cluster of supportive goals to be achieved for children in South Asia and said the first claim on resources should be the essential needs of the children, reports PTI.

The three-day SAARC ministerial conference on children concluded here yesterday with the adoption of a resolution reaffirming the SAARC nations commitment to the objectives envisaged in national plans.

The draft declaration would be submitted to the SAARC heads of state/government during the next summit at Dhaka later this year.

The conference identified the goals in the areas of primary education, reduction of adult and adolescent illiteracy, diarrhoea control, iodine deficiency disorder, reduction in gender disparity, family size, child labour, drinking water, guinea worm disease eradication by 1995, immunization, maternal mortality and nutrition.

12 executed in China

BEIJING, Sept 19: A Shanghai court sentenced 12 men to death at a public rally and executed them immediately, a newspaper said today, reports Reuters.

The 12 were convicted on Friday of rape, robbery and murder, the Liberation Daily said. Death sentences in China are usually administered with a bullet to the back of the head.

Heroin smuggling

70 foreign students held in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 19: Pakistan has arrested 70 foreign students and seven Pakistanis involved in heroin smuggling from Pakistan to European countries, reports Xinhua.

The Peshawar based students were arrested in several raids by the Federal Investigation Agency of Pakistan (FIAP). Forty one students were nabbed in Khyber agency, a tribal area under the direct administration of the federal government, Friday.

The students smuggled drugs by swallowing heroin concealed in capsule made of foreign plastic. About 18 kilogram of heroin was recovered

from the stomachs and intestines of the students.

The detainees reportedly disclosed that footwear of ladies were used to transport heroin powder to different destinations abroad.

Rehman Malik, director of the FIAP, said at a press briefing in Peshawar Thursday that the international drug traffickers gang had been busy smuggling heroin to European countries for the last six months.

According to initial investigation, the ring leader is residing in Turkey, possesses three passports of different nationalities and has wide linking in the drug world.

Off the Record

Australia's funniest home videos

BRISBANE, Australia: Danny the goat has drunk his final beer, reports AP.

For the last 10 years, Danny entertained tourists on Moreton Island, six miles (10 kilometers) east of the Queensland state capital, Brisbane, with his ability to pick up a mug and swig beer.

The talent earned him coverage in local newspapers and a spot on the television programme "Australia's Funniest Home Videos."

But this week Danny was found shot to death, owner Lella Oakley said Thursday.

"People are upset", she said. "He had personality and was a real tourist attraction."

Her fight against wild horses, mad monkeys

JERUSALEM: Wild horses could not drag a woman from her home — and neither could the goats, sheep, monkeys or violent parrot her husband allegedly used to try to drive her out, Israel's Itim news agency reported Friday, reports AP.

She has gone to court seeking an order to have the animals removed, the report said.

The woman, who was not identified, told Tel Aviv District Court that her husband brought 10 wild horses and 25 other animals to the family's agricultural settlement several months ago to punish her for complaining about his lover. Itim said.

Things got worse, Itim quoted the woman as saying, when he brought a disturbed monkey and screaming, biting, parrot into the house, endangering their infant daughters.

A wallet for mischief

WASHINGTON: Ross Perot's on-again off-again presidential candidacy may seem comic to some but this presence on 50 state ballots is no laughing matter, reports Reuters.

"Perot still has enormous potential — not to mention a wallet — for mischief," said Democratic political consultant Mike McCurry.

"I think sooner or later he's going to get back in the race, and he's going to spend a lot of money."

Perot, the Texas billionaire who launched a populist third-party presidential campaign last spring and abruptly abandoned it in July, sparked fresh speculation about his ambitions on Friday by saying he may have to declare candidacy after all in order to buy network television time to discuss the economy.

"They (the networks) say I have to declare in order to buy time," Perot said on NBC's today show. "So I may say I declare so I can buy time."

Because he stayed in touch with her

NEW YORK: Marlene Dietrich's daughter will get her jewelry, and her grandson will get the proceeds from any dramatization of her life story — because he stayed in touch with her, reports AP.

The actress's will was filed for probate Wednesday in state court.

Dietrich, who died May 6 in Paris at age 90, left \$350,000 worth of jewelry — nearly all her possessions — to her daughter, Maria Riva.

Dietrich cooperated with her daughter on a biography, due out in January, and she provided that proceeds from any dramatization go to her grandson, John Paul Riva, "in recognition of his continuing to correspond with me."

3 LAKHS CHILDREN ARE BONDED IN CARPET INDUSTRY

NEW DELHI: Children freed from years of slavery at carpet looms in northern India demonstrate September 18 demanding "childhood and not wages." Nearly 150 children, aged six to 15, protested in honour of "Carpet Children Day", organised by the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), which set these children free recently from their masters. —AFP/UNB photo

12 executed in China

BEIJING, Sept 19: A Shanghai court sentenced 12 men to death at a public rally and executed them immediately, a newspaper said today, reports Reuters.

The 12 were convicted on Friday of rape, robbery and murder, the Liberation Daily said. Death sentences in China are usually administered with a bullet to the back of the head.

Heroin smuggling

70 foreign students held in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 19: Pakistan has arrested 70 foreign students and seven Pakistanis involved in heroin smuggling from Pakistan to European countries, reports Xinhua.

The Peshawar based students were arrested in several raids by the Federal Investigation Agency of Pakistan (FIAP). Forty one students were nabbed in Khyber agency, a tribal area under the direct administration of the federal government, Friday.

The students smuggled drugs by swallowing heroin concealed in capsule made of foreign plastic. About 18 kilogram of heroin was recovered from the stomachs and intestines of the students.

The detainees reportedly disclosed that footwear of ladies were used to transport heroin powder to different destinations abroad.

Rehman Malik, director of the FIAP, said at a press briefing in Peshawar Thursday that the international drug traffickers gang had been busy smuggling heroin to European countries for the last six months.

According to initial investigation, the ring leader is residing in Turkey, possesses three passports of different nationalities and has wide linking in the drug world.

Hostels for asylum seekers attacked again in Germany

SCHWERIN, Germany, Sept 19: Attacks against hostels for asylum-seekers were again reported overnight in several areas of eastern Germany, notably in the region of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, local police said Saturday, reports AFP.

A hostel in Schwerin, capital of Mecklenburg-Pomerania, was attacked by about 50 youths on Friday evening. Four windows were smashed and 11 youths were arrested.

Similar incidents were reported at Bernsdorf, near Ueckermünde, and Joerdendorf, near Guestrów, where a centre for Germans repatriated from former eastern Bloc countries was targeted.

At Arneburg, eight youths attacked a hostel with stones. Four of them were arrested.

French don't understand the meaning of Maastricht treaty?

PARIS, Sept 19: No one can say French voters don't have enough information about Sunday's vote on the treaty on European unity, reports AP.

In the last two months the national printing office has produced 45.5 million copies of the treaty, 47 million explanatory pamphlets and 198 million ballots.

All that for only 38.3 million registered voters.

The government has sent packages containing a complete text of the treaty, the explanations and ballots to every voter — prompting postal workers in some rural areas to state brief streaks to protest their weighty delivery loads.

Copies of each document will be available at the polling centers across the country and in overseas territories.

Voters have complained that the government hasn't made enough efforts to explain the Maastricht treaty, which proposes to bind the 12 European Community nations

in common economic and foreign policies and currency by 1991.

What they really mean is they can't understand the volume of titles, articles, clauses, abbreviations and sheer verbiage of the treaty, more than 250 pages in its original form.

At least 15 books — at last count — have come out about Maastricht, seven arguing for the treaty and eight against.

Meanwhile, a frenzied campaign drew to a close Friday as French voters get one day of political tranquility before voting Sunday in a pivotal referendum on European union.

Everyone from the prime minister to Mikhail Gorbachev to a Bosnian soccer player had their say on the landmark treaty that was crafted to join the European Community in common economic and diplomatic policies.

Opponents of the Maastricht treaty claim the government is coercing voters

by threatening devaluation of the French franc if the outcome is "no".

"The government of Premier Pierre Bérégovoy has lied to the people of France and taken the franc hostage," said Philippe de Villiers, a renegade conservative lawmaker who broke with party ranks to become a leading anti-treaty voice.

"With a single currency, the problems, the turmoils we are seeing today will get worse."

Monetary markets finished the week in turmoil after Britain and Italy withdrew their currencies from an exchange rate system designed to facilitate trade among European nations by limiting fluctuations in currency values.

The franc has stayed relatively stable, thanks to intervention by the Bank of France to prop up the French currency.

But Charles Pasqua, another conservative lawmaker at the

forefront of the "no" vote, said the turbulence resulted from the government's claims that rejection of the treaty would mean financial disaster for Europe.

He said Premier Pierre Bérégovoy and Finance Minister Michael Sapin "have created great tension in the European Monetary System and bear the blame for the current crisis."

Bérégovoy has requested an EC summit meeting to seek ways of restoring currency stability.

Education and Culture Minister Jack Lang said Friday that defeat of the treaty, "would be a catastrophe... Europe would start going downhill."

He appealed to voters to cast "yes" ballots, asking, "Do we want to build the No 1 cultural and economic power in the world?"

Conservative leader Jacques Chirac, who along with the ruling socialists supports

Maastricht, warned that rejection of treaty "would weaken and isolate France."

"This breath of fresh air that was European construction risks collapsing," he told supporters in Grenoble.

Backers and foes alike agree that Maastricht will be doomed by a rejection from French voters. Integrated policies including a common currency and European central bank, called for by 1999, would be postponed indefinitely.

Unofficial referendum results based on exit surveys are expected to be announced on French television as soon as polls close at 8 pm (1800 GMT) Sunday.

Friday's frenetic pace before the day off Saturday, when campaigning is banned, was full of emotional appeals on both sides.

The living forces of our country, the forces of the left, it will be your victory because in resisting Maastricht, you will have fended off a great

Clinton vows to aid defence companies

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. Sept 19: Bill Clinton is invading President Bush's turf with a key endorsement from an admiral and a promise to help military-dependent industries adapt to a shrinking defence budget, reports AP.

Retired Adm. William Crowe, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was giving his backing to Clinton on Saturday at a news conference at the Arkansas governor's mansion.

And as Clinton and Bush campaigned against each other Friday, supporters of Texas billionaire Ross Perot filed petitions in Arizona, completing an effort to get him on the ballot in all 50 states.

Just by appearing on the ballot, he could play a role in key battleground states, where, draining a percentage point or two from Bush or Clinton could swing electoral votes from one side to the other.

Clinton's endorsement from an admiral and a promise to help military-dependent industries adapt to a shrinking defence budget, reports AP.

Retired Adm. William Crowe, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was giving his backing to Clinton on Saturday at a news conference at the Arkansas governor's mansion.