

Major convenes EC summit in October

LONDON, Sept 21: British Prime Minister John Major on Sunday announced a summit of the leaders of the 12 EC countries for early October to consider the results of France's referendum on European Union and the recent turmoil in the financial markets, reports AP.

For major, who has pronounced himself a commitment pro-European, the summit will provide an opportunity to tackle some of the problems that have unsettled the pro-Europe camp here and led to doubts whether Britain itself will ratify the treaty when or even if parliament votes on it later in the year.

Speaking after French voters narrowly approved the treaty on European monetary and political union, major congratulated French President Francois Mitterrand but said, "we now need to consider the way forward for Europe."

Addressing reporters in central London, Major said the British parliament would not itself vote on the treaty until after the October summit and after the Danish had clarified what they intended to do about their own rejection of the treaty in a referendum on June 2.

The "very particular problems in the foreign exchange markets and the many concerns that have been raised throughout the community in recent weeks had to be dealt with, Major said.

After the summit, the community can decide how to proceed in a way that carries the support of member states right the way across the com-

munity, he added. The embarrassment for major is that the summit, at which he will preside as EC President will have to settle the row begun on Thursday between Britain and Germany over the collapse of the pound that took it out of Europe's Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) last week as well as dealing with other problems.

In Britain, the devaluation of the pound and the chaos it briefly caused to interest rates had been widely interpreted as evidence of the difficulties created by the idea of a single European currency, one cornerstone of the Maastricht Treaty.

The treaty's supporters say the ERM's problems are simply evidence of the need for a single currency and a strong European Central Bank.

Major, sources close to him say, wants strongly to take Britain back into the heart of Europe but knows that substantial numbers would oppose him even in his own party if ERM-entry and the treaty are put to parliament late this year.

Former Premier Margaret Thatcher opposes the treaty and said in Washington on Saturday that events showed it is high time to make a complete reversal of policy on Maastricht as has been done on the ERM.

The summit called for October could well be Major's only big chance to pull a rabbit out of the hat and do something to make Maastricht more acceptable one, BBC commentator said Sunday.

Clinton ahead in 3 more states

UNDATED, Sept 21: Polls in several key Midwestern battleground states showed Democratic challenger Bill Clinton running strongly against President Bush, reports AP.

Bush and Clinton are running dead even in Vice President Dan Quayle's home state of Indiana, a new poll shows. No Democrat has won the state's presidential race in 28 years.

Other statewide polls showed Clinton with leads in Ohio, Illinois and Missouri.

The Fort Wayne, Ind., Journal-Gazette poll published Sunday found Clinton and Bush each supported by 39.7 per cent of Indiana's 13.3 undecided. Nearly 4 per cent said they favour independent Ross Perot while 3.5 per cent said they supported other candidates.

The poll also found that Quayle may be a drag on the Republican ticket in his home state.

Brunei assures \$9 lakh for Pak flood victims

ISLAMABAD, Sept 21: Brunei's Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah announced a donation of 900,000 dollars for the flood victims in Pakistan before he flew back home after an official visit here today, reports AP.

More than three million people have been affected by the floods which left over 1,000 people dead and caused economic losses worth hundreds of millions of dollars, according to a yet incomplete official assessment.

Unofficial estimates have put the death toll at more than 2,000.

The Sultan, who also spent a day in the historic city of Lahore on Pakistan's eastern border with India, was sent off at the airport by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Thai king opens new Parliament

BANGKOK, Sept 21: Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej opened a new parliament today, saying the people had expressed with their votes a desire to live under a democratic system, reports Reuter.

This time, the people were conscious of the importance of exercising their right to vote and turned out to vote in big numbers to have good members of parliament to serve the country to create stability for the country and to govern the country according to the democratic system as everyone wishes," he said.

Chuan Leekpai, leader of the Democrat Party, will be nominated for Prime Minister following general elections earlier this month. Chuan has put together a 207-member coalition in the 360-seat house of representatives.

Nepal adopts afforestation policy

KATHMANDU, Sept 21: The Nepalese government has adopted a long-term policy calling for participation by private sector in afforestation and forest protection as a pre-requisite for forest-based industries, reports Xinhua.

The policy is aimed at stopping daily increasing destruction of forests in the country, according to the Ministry of Forest and Environment.

From 1964 to 1979, only 4,000 hectares of forest were destroyed in Tarai and Inner Tarai region in southern Nepal, and the number jumped to 160,000 hectares in the period between 1979 to 1985, the ministry said.

So far, 5.4 million hectares of natural forest had been destroyed in Nepal and the total forest area only stood at 4 million hectares in 1986, the ministry noted.



CHICAGO: Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton (C) raises arms with US Senate Candidate Carol Moseley Braun (L) and US House of Representatives Candidate Bobby Rush on Sunday during a voter registration rally at Chicago's Regal Theater. Clinton is currently on a campaign swing through the Midwest. —AFP/UNB photo.

UN relief convoys fail to reach Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Sept 21: Two United Nations convoys failed to get through at the weekend, casting fresh doubts on hopes of resuming the vital airlift to Sarajevo, sources close to the UN said.

They told Reuters a 10-truck convoy carrying supplies to Srebrenica, a Muslim-held town northeast of Sarajevo, had been turned back at checkpoints two days after setting out from the capital.

A convoy to Sarajevo due to leave the Croatian port of Split today had also been cancelled, and a relief mission to Jajce, northwest of the Bosnian capital Croat-held Herzegovina, was also in doubt, the sources added.

Sarajevo itself was relatively quiet this morning, after heavy

mortaring of the northern localities of Dolac and Pofalici before midnight.

Bosnian radio said the western suburbs of Stup and Nedarići, scenes of heavy fighting last week, were also shelled.

Elsewhere in the republic, the radio reported three Serb air attacks on Novi Travnik, 100 km northwest of Sarajevo and said four people had been killed and 13 injured in shelling at Gradacac in northern Bosnia.

There was no confirmation and no new reports from the Serbian side.

The difficulties encountered by the convoys came despite the weekend agreement by all sides in the conflict not to interfere with them.

This was part of a deal brokered by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata intended to restart the airlift of supplies to Sarajevo as soon as Tuesday and to boost the land routes before the winter makes movement difficult.

A strengthened UN force is due to be deployed next month to protect the airport and the land routes.

Its members will be mandated to use force against any side which tries to prevent the aid getting through.

But western governments are reluctant to become involved in Bosnia unless the assurance of cooperation from the Muslim-Croat government and their Serb foes hold.



MOSCOW: Moscovites buy petrol at a petrol station in Moscow on Sunday. Russian government set up new prices for gasoline and all petrol products Sunday. The new price of the most common gasoline in Russia, A-93, now costs 15 rubles (7 US cents) per litre compared to the old price of 3.5 US cents per litre. —AFP/UNB photo

Khmers accuse UNTAC chief of breaking peace treaty

BANGKOK, Sept 21: The Khmer Rouge launched a scathing attack today on the head of UN operations in Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, accusing him of deliberately and systematically breaking the country's peace treaty, reports AFP.

The attack, in a radio commentary of the radical guerrilla faction monitored here, appeared to cast a shadow over hopes that the Khmer Rouge was close to rejoining Cambodia's UN peace process, which it has brought to a halt by refusing to disarm.

"The head of UNTAC, the Vietnamese aggressors and Phnom Penh's puppet regime only intend to oppose the Paris peace accord of October 23, 1991," Khmer Rouge radio said.

UNTAC is the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia.

Vietnam invaded Cambodia in late 1978 to topple a Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot and install an allied government in Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge, the strongest group by far to fight Phnom Penh's Vietnam-installed government in the war which was formally ended by last year's UN-brokered Paris accord, has boycotted since June the UN programme to disarm the country's rival forces and demobilise most of their troops.

But recently there have been signs that the radical guerrilla group might soften its line, most notably the ending last week of its three-month boycott of a UN-chaired committee of generals which discusses violations of Cambodia's ceasefire.

The radio also renewed

Khmer Rouge charges that Akashi opposed controlling a continued presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge claims that there are still Vietnamese forces in Cambodia.

UNTAC says it has not found any evidence of this.

Khmer Rouge radio also repeated an accusation that Akashi had failed to give Cambodia's Supreme National Council, a reconciliation body made up of representatives of all factions, full powers during an interim period leading up to elections scheduled for mid-1993.

At the beginning of this month the Khmer Rouge radio effectively called for Akashi's resignation, but in following days it toned down its attacks against him.

Then, in the evening, Bush attends a dinner with wealthy Republicans in search of campaign contributions.

He flies back to Washington on Monday night, leaving behind Acting Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger, who will hold meetings through the week with dozens of the world leaders who are attending the General Assembly session.

On Monday, Eagleburger has meetings scheduled with British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe, South Korean President Roh Tae-woo and Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro. He also is scheduled to dine with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev.

Shevardnadze threatens to quit if polls blocked

MOSCOW, Sept 21: Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Soviet foreign minister who returned to his native Georgia this year as leader, said Monday he would quit the job if violence blocks national elections set for October, reports AP.

The southern republic has been wracked by ethnic and political warfare for more than a year. Shevardnadze's ruling State Council is battling armed supporters of ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, as well as separatists in at least two regions.

In a radio address to the nation Monday, Shevardnadze also threatened to attack militants again in the Georgian coastal territory of Abkhazia if the secessionist Mountain People's movement doesn't lay down its guns by Friday.

He said violence in the republic was threatening

Georgia's chances of holding fair, democratic elections on Oct. 11. They would be the first elections since Gamsakhurdia was chosen in the republic's first popular vote early last year.

"If elections are thwarted, there will be nothing for me to do in Georgia," Shevardnadze said in the radio address, strongly hinting that he would leave his job as State Council chairman.

"What will happen in Georgia will contradict my convictions. That will be either anarchy and chaos, or a military dictatorship," Shevardnadze said.

Shevardnadze had resigned as Soviet foreign minister in December 1990 after warning of an impending "dictatorship" in the Kremlin. He returned to the job briefly after the August coup last year.

Fighting continues in Nagorno-Karabakh

MOSCOW, Sept 21: Intense fighting continued for a third day in Nagorno-Karabakh Sunday as advancing Azerbaidzhan forces pressed an offensive aimed at taking the town of Shusha, 10 kilometres (six miles) from the main town, Stepanakert, reports AP.

An Azerbaijani Defence Ministry spokesman in Baku, speaking by telephone, told AFP the troops had given the Armenian forces in Shusha a two-day deadline to evacuate the town.

However he refused to confirm reports that Azeri troops had already entered the town, considered the historic capital of the enclave.

A spokesman at the Armenian Defence Ministry in Yerevan categorically denied that an ultimatum to pull out of Shusha had been issued.

Armenian forces defending the disputed enclave, which is in Muslim Azerbaijan but inhabited mostly by Christian Armenians, said more than 440 Azerbaidzhan troops had been killed in operations launched by Baku since Friday.

Off the Record

Controversial 'husbands & wives'

LOS ANGELES: "Husbands and Wives" had the biggest ever debut for a Woody Allen film as moviegoers looked for tantalizing parallels between the director's life and art, reports AP.

The dark comedy about a failing marriage earned an estimated 3.5 billion dollar for fourth place at the weekend box office, the movie's distributor, TriStar Pictures, and industry sources said Sunday.

It opened amid publicity over Allen's romance with the 21-year-old Korean-born adopted daughter of Mia Farrow, Allen's longtime lover. Farrow plays Allen's wife in the film, Allen plays a professor who has a flitiation with a student.

"We're thrilled with the numbers. This is Woody's biggest opening ever," said Ed Russell, TriStar vice president for publicity and promotion.

"Husbands and Wives" also was distributed more widely than any of the director's other movies, playing on 865 screens nationwide.

Allen's films typically open in only a few theaters in big cities, and distribution is gradually expanded.

Battle with Hollywood isn't over

WASHINGTON: Vice President Dan Quayle says his battle with Hollywood isn't over, but he's trying to patch things up with Murphy Brown's baby, reports AP.

Quayle, girding for the pasting he gets in tonight's season premiere of the popular situation comedy, said Sunday, "In the spirit of lightheartedness and joining in the fun, I have sent Murphy Brown's baby a gift and a note."

He wouldn't reveal the contents, but promised to stay glued to the tube during tonight's hour-long special on CBS-TV.

The vice president will watch the show with several single mothers at the apartment of a Washington woman who raised her sister's children by herself, said Quayle's spokesman, David C. Beckwith.

Quayle touched off an uproar May 19 when he accused the television industry of "mocking the importance of fathers" with Murphy Brown's out-of-wedlock child. The fictional child was born during an episode last season.

Quayle leveled the charge in a speech in which he blamed the Los Angeles riots in part on "the poverty of values" in inner cities and the breakup of traditional families.

Despite the gift, Quayle said on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" programme Sunday that "I'm not going to back down from criticizing Hollywood because I don't think Hollywood reflects our values."

Little India turns prostitutes' zone

SINGAPORE: Singapore's Little India district, an international showcase of the subcontinent's culture and lifestyles and a major tourist attraction, has become a place of ill repute in recent months, reports AP.

According to press reports Sunday, the bustling commercial district, one of Singapore's oldest, has become the target of raids by anti-vice authorities with several prostitutes from India being arrested and deported.

Prostitutes from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu as well as northern India were rounded up during the raids, the reports said.

Most of the prostitutes, aged between 20 and 30, had entered Singapore on social visit passes and illegally extended their stays.

Little India, about two miles (3.2 kilometres) from the city centre, earned its name from the heavy concentration of ethnic Indians in the area.

A majority of Singapore's Indian-owned businesses are located there and tourists flock to the district to purchase traditional Indian items such as sarees, hand-woven fabrics, handicrafts and spices.

'Family values' out of place in politics

ATLANTIC CITY: The new Miss America says abortion and talk of 'family values' have no place in the political debate, reports AP.

"I think the Republican Party needs to choose something else something that can include everyone," Leanza Cornett said Sunday, the morning after becoming the 66th Miss America and the first Miss Florida to win the title.

The 21-year-old from Jacksonville, Fla., a registered Republican, said the party's emphasis on "family values" could divide the country. And she said abortion is "not something that should be political. It's a moral issue."

"I'm a Christian who is pro-choice. Those two don't go hand-in-hand all the time," she said.

She said she isn't sure how she will vote in November.

Cornett, a singer and actress who sang during the talent portion of the pageant, is a sophomore at Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., studying communications. She succeeds Carolyn Sapp of Hawaii as Miss America.

BRIEFLY

Vatican, Mexico to restore ties:

The Vatican and Mexico have decided to re-establish diplomatic relations broken by the Mexican government more than 130 years ago, a senior Vatican official said Monday, reports AP.

The official, who declined to be identified, said an announcement would be made later in the day.

President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has moved to improve relations with the church in the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nation since he took office in 1988. In an historic audience with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican last year, he said he hoped to restore formal ties.

The Mexican government broke all relations with the Vatican in 1858, after President Benito Juarez nationalized the church's huge property holdings.

5 French peacekeepers hurt in blast:

Five French members of the UN peacekeeping force in ex-Yugoslavia were injured Sunday during a de-mining operation near the Croatian port of Zadar, UNPROFOR headquarters announced, reports AFP from Zagreb.

The five peacekeepers, who were only slightly injured, were all taken to a surgical wing in Gracac, some 70 kilometres (40 miles) east of Zadar, where the French infantry in Croatia is based.

None of the blue berets needed to be transported to France, the protection forces sources said. The most seriously injured of the soldiers had his heel cut by sharpnel.

A mine exploded when one of the men trod on a wire connected to a mine near the village of Murvica.

Rebels kill 23 more in Lanka:

Tamil Tiger rebels ambushed government troops Monday, killing 23 soldiers in eastern Sri Lanka, military officials said, reports AP from Colombo.

The platoon of 25 soldiers were returning to their camp after a night operation when they were attacked at Kayankerni village in eastern Batticaloa district, officials said.

Two soldiers escaped with injuries in the attack, about 215 kilometres (134 miles) east of Colombo, officials said.

New DPIK Secy General:

The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK) has named Mostafa Hejri as its Secretary-General to replace Sadegh Sharafkhandi who was assassinated with three other party members in Berlin last Thursday, a DPIK statement said, reports AFP from Paris.

Hejri as a member of the political Bureau and assistant of Sharafkhandi will take charge of the Secretariat General until the next central committee plenum, the statement issued Sunday night said the DPIK leadership said the Berlin assassination was the work of agents in the pay of the Islamic regime in Iran although it said the German police had not yet divulged any evidence to identify the killers.

Turkey to buy 75 US Black Hawks:

Turkey will buy 75 Black Hawk helicopters from the US firm Sikorsky worth a total 855 million dollars, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel announced here today, reports AFP from Ankara.

"This number of helicopters is enough for our current needs," Demirel told a press conference. He had been expected to announce a decision regarding 200 multipurpose helicopters for which Turkey put out tenders.

Twenty-five of the Black Hawks will be acquired from the United States at 8.5 million dollars a piece, while the remaining 50 will be built in Turkey under licence, Demirel said.

3 dissidents surrender in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Sept 21: At least three alleged members of the pro-independence movement fighting for a separate state in Irian Jaya have surrendered to Indonesian authorities, the Kompas daily said today, reports AP.

Kompas, quoting unidentified sources which it described as reliable, said Adrianus Too, A May and Yan Stwa, all three members of the free Papua Movement (OPM), surrendered September 13.

They gave up in Waris, Jayapura regency Kompas said.

Quoting the same sources, Kompas said another 41 alleged members of the OPM had surrendered to Indonesian authorities

and other trouble spots.

"The UN is already taking on large responsibilities," one of the aides said Friday. "With the new world order comes new headache and challenges. The UN is quickly learning how to be productive and efficient."

The General Assembly is preparing for a debate on the United Nations peacekeepers role and Bush is expected to give expansion general support.

But according to the aides, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, the President will not specifically endorse a proposal by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, for a 50 million dollars revolving fund to enable the United Nations

With the new world order comes new headache : Bush

NEW YORK, Sept 21: President Bush has found time during his run for re-election to lend his support to a campaign to improve the United Nations' peacekeeping efforts in the post-Cold War era, says AP.

The president's speech to the special session of the UN General Assembly on Monday will get close attention for clues to foreign policies he would pursue in a second term.

The world leaders assembled here may have to be content with nuances. Aides to Bush said last week they expected no new initiatives in the presidential address although he would relate the need for a more efficient peacekeeping operation to the

to mount new peacekeeping operations more swiftly.

The Secretary-General's proposal is in a report titled "agenda for Peace" that also calls for the creation of heavily armed peace enforcement units. The European allies are said to favor the proposals generally.

"We see this UN session as a chance to push for a more effective UN," the Bush aide said. He cited Iraq, Yugoslavia and Somalia as examples of problem areas that need more attention.

The United Nations has taken the lead in locating and destroying weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and engaged in efforts to curb ethnic conflicts in shattered Yugoslavia. Recently, it has been

gun to play a modest role in trying to end the fighting that has contributed to the deaths of more than 100,000 people in Somalia.

Some 40,000 blue-helmeted troops are serving in peacekeeping operations in Central America, Africa, the Balkans and Cambodia. This is straining the UN budget.

Outstanding dues now total about 1.8 billion dollars and the United States is 1.1 billion dollars 600 million dollar in arrears, depending on the accounting system used.

Bush will meet with Boutros-Ghali and, separately, with Stoyan Ganev, the Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, who is President of the General Assembly.