

BRIEFS

More poverty in US expected

NEW YORK, Sept 28: Americans expect more poverty, more environmental disasters and cures for AIDS and cancer during the 21st century, according to a new poll conducted in July for Time magazine and Cable News Network. Among the negative trends predicted for the next century, 61 per cent of the 800 people surveyed expected to see a rise in poverty, while 59 per cent expected more environmental disasters. On the more positive side, 75 per cent expected a cure for AIDS and 80 per cent a cure for cancer. Only 39 per cent believed a cure for the common cold would be found, reports AFP.

UN for payment of membership fees

NEW YORK, Sept 28: The United States and countries of the former Soviet Union should pay up the more than one billion dollar they owe in member fees to the United Nations, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said Sunday. Speaking to a non-denominational congregation in a Manhattan Church, Boutros-Ghali said the two "superpowers" are responsible for the largest portion of the more than 1.8 billion dollar that member countries owe the United Nations, reports Reuter.

'3rd World sailors in a slavery'

SYDNEY, Sept 28: The International Transport Workers' Federation in London says many Third World sailors are cruelly manipulated by ship owners. "It's a form of slavery," said Les Symes, Australian representative of the union, which represents about one-tenth of the world's one million seafarers. In some countries, entire villages pool resources to pay air fares and sign-up fees for a young man, who then sends money back to the village. "You can't imagine what he'll put up with to honour that debt," Symes said, reports AP.

World cotton output to total 92.1m bales

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: World cotton production is expected to total 92.1 million bales this marketing year, according to the latest estimate by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. That's one million bales less than had been estimated last month, the report said, citing lower projections for the United States, Mexico and Pakistan. However, it's still the second highest production total recorded. The estimate is 3.2 per cent less than last year's record crop of 95.2 million bales. World cotton consumption is projected to reach a record 88 million bales, which is 95,000 bales below August's estimate, reports AP.

Indian Chamber for wastes loss cut

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) has demanded a national policy on the management of hazardous and other wastes to reduce huge losses on this. The Chamber has also suggested setting up of an autonomous industrial waste management institute as proposed by the National Waste Management Council. The institute could advise the government on policy issues and evolve strategies for reducing waste and in managing it. It could also support industry particularly in the small sector through consultancy, training and technical assistance, reports PTI.

UAE, Iran talk on oil shipping lines

ABU DHABI, Sept 28: United Arab Emirates and Iranian officials ended a first round of negotiations Sunday and agreed to hold more in a bid to defuse a dispute over shipping lines in the world's main oil shipping lanes. The UAE's official news agency Wam said the two sides would hold another round of talks on Monday after an initial session in which they outlined their positions. In Tehran, the pro-radical newspaper, Abrar called for a "peaceful" solution to the dispute over Abu Musa island to ensure there would be no "foreign intervention," reports AFP.

Currency crisis dominates G7 talks

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: Upheaval on world currency markets exposed the limits of coordinating economic policy in industrial countries and distracted attention from the Third World at annual meetings here of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, reports AFP.

Crisis in the international monetary system was the focus of a week of debate among the Group of Seven (G7) industrialised countries and subsequently of the IMF, which resulted only in calls for greater cooperation.

With Europe struggling to contain the worst wave of foreign exchange speculation since floating rates were introduced in the 1970s, the G7 was in disarray over how to consolidate and strengthen a desperately slow revival in the industrial world.

Most participants here agreed on what caused the recent monetary crisis — divergent economic policies among major players and enormous foreign exchange transactions

exceeding the capacity of central banks to intervene. They also agreed that governments were for the most part ill-equipped to redress existing errors of economic policy.

Financial experts said many of those errors could have been avoided if European politicians had been more willing to listen to the advice of the much-maligned technocrats of the European Commission.

But solutions remain elusive largely because they depend on the United States and Germany, both looking inward in the midst of electing a new president and reuniting East and West, respectively.

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus urged governments of industrialised countries Thursday to resist the temptation to resort to a quick fix to solve their economic problems.

Speaking after the close of the IMF and World Bank meetings, he reiterated warnings

that governments were putting too heavy a burden on monetary policy and not doing enough to pare their budget deficits.

In unusually strong terms, the IMF chief — who has often reprimanded developing nations over laxity or inadequate policies — urged prompt action by both the US and Germany to cut their budget deficits.

Camdessus and World Bank President Lewis Preston urged international cooperation and warned that poorer countries must not be let down.

Incompatible economic policies among industrialised governments are placing an undue burden on developing countries by slowing the world economy, Camdessus said.

Those policies are making a successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round of world trade talks, viewed as essential for a full economic recovery, more elusive, and they risk slowing the transition to market economies in eastern Europe. With its administrative

council expanded to 24 members, including Switzerland and Russia, the IMF now truly represents a universal institution. Brunei, Cuba, Liechtenstein and North Korea remain notably absent.

But the IMF still lacks the means either to meet the needs of its newest member countries or to exert pressure on the richest.

Major facing rifts over Maastricht

Reuter from London adds: British Prime Minister John Major faced growing rifts within his ruling conservative party over the Maastricht Treaty despite attempts by ministers to rally support.

Major gave his full backing to the Maastricht plan for European Community economic, monetary and political union at an emergency session of parliament this week following the humiliating withdrawal of sterling from the EC's currency grid.

But some conservative par-

liamentarians have criticised the treaty publicly and a cabinet minister hinted strongly he believed sterling should remain outside the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).

Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont said Britain would rejoin the ERM when the British and German economies were more in step but, in a sign of growing dissent, 70 Conservative MPs have signed a motion calling for Britain to stay out of the ERM.

Major's government has adopted a "wait-and-see" approach to Maastricht pending a decision by Denmark on how to overcome its voters' rejection of the treaty in a referendum.

But a poll in the Sunday Telegraph newspaper showed opposition to Maastricht among conservative MPs at a record high. Of 89 Conservatives polled, 40 per cent said they would vote against the treaty.

Rao hopes to attract investment during his visit to France

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: India's Prime Minister headed to France on Monday where he hopes to attract foreign investment and discuss purchasing nuclear fuel and military equipment, reports AP.

"I am going there on a normal visit. Let me see what we agree upon," P V Narasimha Rao told journalists before boarding a chartered jetliner in New Delhi.

During his three-day visit, Rao will try to attract more Western investment now that his year-old government has scrapped many rules that had long prevented it.

In his talks with French politicians and industrialists, Rao is expected to seek investment by French companies in chemicals, computer software, aeronautics and telecommunications.

Rao will probably discuss with President Francois Mitterrand the purchase of nuclear fuel for an Indian power plant.

The United States declined to supply the fuel because it fears India could use it to make a nuclear weapon.

No risk to smoke too risky to sell

GREENSBORO, NC, Sept 28: A tobacco company developed a cigarette more than 20 years ago that posed far less risk of causing cancerous tumours in test animals, then refused to market it, a newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

Researchers for Liggett Group Inc. then called Liggett and Myers Tobacco Co. isolated the major, cancer-causing ingredient in tobacco smoke and rendered it harmless, said chemist James Mold, the company's former director of research.

Liggett's XA Project began in 1954 with the hope of reviving business. By the late 1970s, the Durham company had developed a safe cigarette, but it was never introduced, the News and Record of Greensboro reported.

"I think they were concerned that they'd have everybody suing them because they'd be admitting they had been making a hazardous cigarette," Mold told the newspaper.



FRANCE: A woman looking at September 27 the damages caused to a drug-store situated on the banks of river La Sals during September 26 flash floods. — AFP/UNB photo

China to fire huge workers to revamp coal industry

BEIJING, Sept 28: China, the world's largest coal producer will revamp its coal industry by firing hundreds of thousands of workers and slowly freeing prices from state control, an official newspaper said Sunday, reports AFP.

The radical measures were intended to turn the industry, which has been losing money for decades, into a profit maker within three to five years, China Daily said.

The state-run China National Coal Corp will fire 80,000 workers this year and was to meet later this year to decide on what to do with hundreds of thousands of other workers who were also to be laid off, the newspaper said.

The industry currently employs some seven million people and produces about one billion tonnes of coal annually. The huge work force and artificially low coal prices set by the government have made it

impossible to cut costs. Coal prices will be brought into line with the market after 1995, the report said. The government raised coal prices in July, but the cost is still less than half of its market value.

China national coal has opened services and processing businesses to absorb surplus labour and the central government has approved two billion yuan (\$360 million dollar) in loans

Amato threatens to resign if austerity plan distorted

ROME, Sept 28: Prime Minister Giuliano Amato said Italy's economic crisis was the worst since the end of World War II and vowed "I will pack my bags" if parliament weakens his controversial austerity package, reports Reuter.

With the austerity package, Italy's Gross Domestic Product should grow by about 1.5 per cent in 1993, Amato said. Without it, growth would be limited to 0.4 per cent and unemployment would rise, he said in an interview with Rome's La Repubblica newspaper.

"I have already said what I will do (if the package) is distorted — I will pack my bags," he said.

The interview was published a day after more than

Rome to protest against the stiff austerity plan which Amato says is vital to salvage Italy's economy and international prestige.

Amato said Italy's current economic crisis was its worst since 1946-1947, when the country was trying to rebuild from the destruction of the war and galloping inflation made the lira virtually worthless.

"Since then, this is the worst moment Italy has lived through. Like then, we will be able to pull out of it," he said.

Italy's labour unions have said the Austerity Plan must be modified to make it less burdensome on the weakest and poorest social classes.

Amato said the government and the labour unions were "in a no-man's land," their relationship "hanging by a thread."

Giuliano Amato

200,000 people, mostly pensioners, marched through