

## BRIEFLY

## Ex-PM of Albania sentenced:

Former Prime Minister Vilson Ahmeti, who headed a four-month transition government in 1991-92, was convicted on Tuesday of abusing power and sentenced to two years in prison, AP reports from Tirana.

He had been accused of squandering the equivalent of \$1.6 million in a failed effort to reschedule Albania's \$450 million foreign debt.

Two senior banking officials also were convicted of abuse of power for ordering payments to Nicola Arsiadi, a French citizen. Who was hired to try to reschedule the debt.

A former Albanian trade bank director, Agron Salu was sentenced to seven years in prison. His deputy, Agrim Tartari, got six years.

## Shonekan vows to hold polls:

The head of Nigeria's interim government, Ernest Shonekan, vowed in his maiden speech late Tuesday to hold democratic presidential elections, and denied the military were still pulling the strings behind the scenes, reports AFP from Abuja.

Outlining his domestic agenda he appealed for dialogue and national reconciliation between the opposition and his government, which was installed by the outgoing military junta last week.

## Russian troops leave Lithuania:

The last Russian troop unit to leave Lithuania crossed into neighbouring Belarus by rail late on Tuesday night to complete the former Soviet army's withdrawal from the Baltic state, Lithuania's Defence Ministry said, Reuters reports from Vilnius.

A spokesman said by telephone that the train carrying the last men and equipment crossed through the Kena border post at 11.46 p.m. (20:46 GMT), some five hours later than expected because of unspecified technical delays.

## Filipino rebels kill 2 cops:

Suspected Muslim guerrilla posing as bus passengers shot three policemen aboard the same vehicle in a pre-dawn assault Wednesday, killing two and critically wounding the third, police said in this southern city, AFP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

The police officers were on their way back to their respective base units in nearby cities after completing a one-month special course at a police training camp here, superintendent Vicente Dumputit told reporters.

## Palestinian shot dead in Gaza:

Undercover Israeli troops on Tuesday shot dead a Palestinian in the Gaza Strip during a general strike called by Palestinians opposed to the resumption of the peace talks, Palestinians said, AFP from Jerusalem says.

The soldiers, disguised as Palestinians, killed Azzam Abu Ermanah, 20, in the Nuseirat Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip when he tried to prevent Arabs from driving their cars to Israel, they said.

EC welcomes autonomy deal  
Critics trying to belittle achievement: Arafat

CAIRO, Sept 1: PLO leader Yasser Arafat on Tuesday defended an autonomy deal struck with Israel which has provoked the wrath of Palestinian hardliners, reports AFP.

They accused him of selling out the Palestinian cause by agreeing to an initial deal for autonomy in just part of the occupied territories, the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Arafat countered Tuesday that the Palestine Liberation Organisation "made no conces-

sions" and that his critics were "trying to belittle this historic achievement".

He was speaking to reporters after late night talks with foreign Minister Amir Mussa.

He also said that the deal was not opposed by Syria and Jordan, who are also negotiating with Israel at the bilateral talks which resume in Washington on Tuesday.

Arafat has defied the wrath of Palestinian radicals and pressed ahead with the autonomy plan.

Ahmad Jibril of the Popular

Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) which is not part of the PLO, threatened to kill him over it.

And the two main components of the PLO aside from Arafat's Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), have rejected it.

In Jordan, the independent daily Al-Rai made a bitter attack on the draft agreement, describing it as a "political de-

feat" dressed up as a victory.

It criticised the secret nature of the talks between Israel and the PLO which it said it had allowed the "common enemy" to be fully informed while keeping the Arabs in the dark.

Those who said they were afraid of separate deals have chosen to go down this path, making all their statements, warnings and promises just empty words", it charged.

The PLO leader has also been under fire for the financial ruin brought on the organisation by his support for President Saddam Hussein during the Gulf crisis.

Arafat said that the PLO had not received any cash from its former backers for 40 months and its assets were frozen in some Arab countries.

The Gulf monarchies, the PLO's biggest source of funds, halted payments after the Palestinians supported Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Mussa has said that Egypt supported the Gaza-Jericho deal, adding that "any Israeli withdrawal from a part of the Arab territories occupied in June 1967 constitutes a step forward".

Egypt is the only Arab country to have made peace with Israel.

Reuter from Brussels reports: The European Community (EC) applauded on Tuesday what it called a historic agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The Israeli-Palestinian agreement in principle constitutes a historic step towards the establishment of peace, it added.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (R) meets PLO chairman Yasser Arafat (L) in Raas el-Tin palace in Alexandria Aug 31. — AFP photo

New strategy may intensify power struggle  
Yeltsin to create new legislative body

MOSCOW, Sept 1: After failing to defeat his opponents head-on President Boris Yeltsin is trying a new tactic aiming to circumvent them with plans for a new legislative body and state treasury, reports AP.

The strategy, however, may only intensify his power struggle with the Russian parliament and heighten the risk of "dual government" paralysis. The parliament is led by Yeltsin's main political rival, speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov.

Yeltsin had promised a decisive battle this fall to end the feud with hard-line lawmakers, who have assailed his political and economic reforms over the past two years claiming they are impoverishing and dividing Russia.

Yeltsin's chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, told the ITAR-Tass news agency that a new 176-seat leg-

islative body, called the Federation Council, would be created next week.

He said the council would become the upper chamber of a new national parliament, apparently as envisioned in Yeltsin's draft constitution. Filatov said that current legislators would form the lower house.

There was no immediate reaction from Khasbulatov or other legislative leaders, who have opposed any change that could dilute their power.

Yeltsin could create a council unilaterally under the executive branch, as he did last June in convening a 700-member Constitutional Convention.

But he does not have the right to give the council real legislative powers or link it with the current parliament without approval by the Supreme Soviet

legislature or its parents Congress of People's Deputies. He also does not have the right unilaterally to call parliamentary elections.

Yeltsin earlier this month threatened to breach the constitution and call new elections anyway to replace the former communists and factory directors elected before the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Filatov asserted that the re-organization could be carried out "smoothly and without any elections or revolutionary upheavals," ITAR-Tass reported. It was not immediately evident how that could occur.

The new council would consist of two representatives from each of Russia's 88 regions and territories, he said. It would be headed by the president, with the prime minister and current

speaker as co-chairmen.

Yeltsin may be gambling that lawmakers will accept the Federation Council as a compromise that will not cost them their jobs or most of their power.

He also could use the council to appease regions that covet political and financial powers now exercised by the central government.

The announcement came a day after the Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, said it was creating a new state Treasury at Yeltsin's orders to take over some functions of the Central Bank.

Yeltsin and the Cabinet have been at odds for months with the Central Bank, which formally is under control of both the parliament and the Cabinet.



Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher (L) chats with Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong Sept 01. Thatcher is in Singapore as part of the Citybank Leadership Series in Asia. — AFP photo

## King Hassan opens \$528m mosque

CASABLANCA, Sept 1: King Hassan of Morocco, with some 80,000 worshippers looking on, has opened a \$528 million mosque that is one of the world's biggest Islamic monuments, reports Reuters.

Lit by dozens of heavy venetian crystal candelabras and perfumed with amber, the main hall of the cavernous perched over the Atlantic Ocean in Casablanca received tens of thousands of worshippers dressed in white robes and red fez at the opening ceremony on Monday night.

King Hassan, 64, who claims to be a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad, turned on a laser beam atop a 200-metres tall minaret.

The beam which pierced the night sky is generated by electronic equipment hidden in a wealth of ornate arabesques and could be seen up to 30 kms (19 miles) away.

From the mezzanine on the right side of the mosque, western diplomats, Christian and Jewish dignitaries followed the three-hour-long ceremony.

"Hassan's mosque as everybody can see is a new wonder of the world... it's also a symbol of Morocco's natural tolerance," told Serge Berdugo, leader of Moroccan Jewish community.

## Iran denounces autonomy deal

NICOSIA, Sept 1: Iranian television on Tuesday denounced an agreement between Israel and the PLO on interim self-rule as the price Israel was paying the PLO to suppress the Palestinian uprising, reports Reuters.

It said in a commentary that the agreement, expected to be signed soon, was "not commensurate with the ideals for which the Muslim Palestinian nation has fought for decades."

## 7 executed for Algiers Airport bombing

ALGIERS (Algeria), Sept 1: Seven Islamic extremists were executed Tuesday for a terrorist bombing a year ago at the Algiers Airport that killed nine people and injured 123, reports AP.

The Justice Ministry announced in a terse communique that the seven were executed at dawn. No details were provided. Executions in this North African country are normally by firing squad.

The seven, all men, were among 12 defendants sentenced to death May 26 by a special anti-terrorist court. The Supreme Court upheld the sentences for 10 of them in a ruling last week.

Three had their sentences

reduced to life imprisonment by Ali Kafi, head of the ruling, military-backed High State Committee.

The fate of the other two, who never appealed their sentences, was unknown. Twenty-six others sentenced to death in absentia for the bombing remain at large.

The explosion that tore through Houari Boumediene Airport on August 26, 1992 was the single bloodiest act of violence in the 20-month insurgency by Islamic extremists against the regime.

More than 1,200 people been killed since the military cancelled multi-party legislative elections.

## Kabul, Dushanbe to sign friendship treaty

LONDON, Sept 1: Tajikistan and Afghanistan are to sign a friendship treaty at the end of September, Tajik President Ali Rahmanov said Monday, in a report monitored here by the BBC, says AFP.

The development comes in the wake of clashes between border guards and guerrillas opposed to the pro-communist Tajik government over the past few months, with Moscow accusing the Afghans of providing sanctuary to the rebels.

Rahmanov announced the treaty after returning from the Afghan capital Kabul, where he held talks with Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Interfax said. The two met to discuss border security problems.

Rahmanov said Rabbani would travel to Dushanbe to sign the friendship treaty, adding that in his talks, the Afghan side had not raised the issue of the presence of Russian

troops and border guards nor the Tajik opposition.

"Afghan Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood assured our delegation that he would not allow any third country to supply weapons to the Tajik opposition, and that in the regions under his control he would make every effort to prevent Tajik rebel sorties against Russian border guards," Rahmanov said.

## Li Peng chairs cabinet meet

BEIJING, Sept 1: Ailing Premier Li Peng chaired his first meeting of the Chinese cabinet in more than four months, in which he also announced an important package of market reforms, state television reported on Tuesday, says AFP.

Li, 65, presided over an executive meeting Monday of the state council, or cabinet.

## UN troops will stay in Cambodia until Nov 15

PHNOM PENH, Sept 1: The UN peacekeeping operations were said Tuesday that it will end its functions in mid-September, but that troops will stay on until November 15 to complete the slow process of withdrawal, reports AFP.

Already UN troops strength is down to 12,000 soldiers from a high of 16,000 during the UN-organized elections in May, UN spokesman Eric Falt said.

In addition to the peacekeepers, up to 2,000 civilians remain in the country. Some 970 of them are civilian police — down from a force of 3,000 — who will leave at the end of September, he said.

The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) finishes its mandate when the elected Cambodian Assembly ratifies a constitution and transforms itself into a new government.

The ratification is tentatively scheduled for September 15, coinciding with the return of Head of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk from his residence in Beijing.

Prince Sihanouk is currently a guest of the communist leadership of North Korea and is discussing a draft of the constitution with the Cambodian Co-Prime Ministers who flew there Monday.

He is scheduled to go on to Beijing in the coming days.

The military and civilian chiefs of UNTAC are due to leave as soon as the new government is formed, but troops, without a mandate, will not complete their withdrawal until mid-November, Falt said.

Whether any units will stay in Cambodia under a different mandate "remains to be determined," he said.

## ANC apologises for human rights abuse

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 1: Nelson Mandela's African National Congress has apologised for its abuse of human rights and challenged President F W De Klerk to join it in a truth commission to expose all the excesses of apartheid, reports Reuters.

Responding on Monday to the report of an independent commission he appointed in January, Mandela told a news conference, "the ANC... acknowledges that these abuses were committed."

He said the ANC apologised unreservedly to the victims of murder, executions, torture and illegal detention in camps run by the ANC in Zambia, Angola and Tanzania during the 1980s.

But Mandela challenged De Klerk to cooperate with him to set up a "commission of truth" to probe all the excesses of apartheid during the 28 years that the ANC was banned.

"He has something to hide.

We don't have anything to hide... we accept responsibility for our actions and apologise for them," he said.

Max Coleman, Chairman of the Independent Human Rights Commission, welcomed the ANC proposal, saying full disclosure was essential to post-apartheid reconciliation.

"We need to know what happened. Before we can wipe the slate clean, we need to know what's on it," he said.

Coleman said allegations against the government between 1960 and 1990 included:

— 73 political prisoners killed in police detention.

— About 220 political leaders assassinated by state death squads, 120 of them since 1990.

— 75,000 people detained without charge under political security laws with many of them subjected to torture.

## China starts trial runs of N-plant

BEIJING, Sept 1: China has started trial runs of the first of two 900-megawatt turbines at its large Daya Bay nuclear power plant, the official China Daily said today, reports Reuters.

The first test of the plant, which lies in southern Guangdong province about 50 kms (30 miles) from the British colony of Hong Kong, took place on Tuesday evening, the newspaper said.

Daya Bay represents the most ambitious of China's plans to develop nuclear power. Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Co., a wholly owned subsidiary of Hong Kong's China Light and Power Co., owns 25 per cent of the plant with the rest held by China.

## Germany sees emergence of neo-Nazi 'action alliances'

BERLIN, Sept 1: The chief of Germany's internal security agency says neo-Nazi groups have taken the first steps to forming a national network and that his agents are busy infiltrating them in a "massive" undercover operation, reports AP.

But the acts of hatred go on unabated: gasoline bombs are hurled at yet another Turkish club and an Afghan immigrant's small grocery is firebombed, swastikas and "Foreigners Out" painted in black enamel on the wall.

Authorities say the anti-fascist violence is largely unorganized — most of it, at least.

But Eckart Werthebach, director of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, has noted for the first time the

emergence of "action alliances" among previously splintered neo-Nazi groups and said his agency was responding with large-scale infiltration.

"These are the first steps toward a network," he told the ZDF television network Sunday.

"The aim is, in fact, to form a united front."

Werthebach worries about another Solingen or Moelln, two western German towns now synonymous with ethnic hatred, where firebombings killed ethnic Turks.

The mayor of Dolgenbrodt, the sylvan home of 300 people and lakeside holiday camps, denies the conspiracy charge, first reported in a Berlin newspaper report last week. But the pressure is on.

On Monday, the villagers' council explained in a statement why they remain opposed — nine months after the firebombing — to a shelter for foreigners in their midst.

They said theirs is "a remote place with absolutely no public transportation links, with nearly no social help agencies, with more than 600 vacation bungalows and without a police station far and wide."

Germans are having a rough time adjusting to the burdens of unification, which has meant

lost jobs and cut deeply into family budgets. Some have turned against outsiders.

On TV screens Monday night, the scene was all too familiar. The gutted store of a foreigner, this time the Afghan grocer, was shown, the labels burned off canned goods, the spray-painted hate graffiti.

The man was in his apartment above the store in Idar-Oberstein, an hour's drive from Luxembourg, when the firebomb came flying at about 1:40 am. Police said he was taken to the hospital in shock.

No arrest was reported in that attack, nor had police in Munich found whoever hurled two firebombs about the same time at the Chestnut Den, a Turkish locale where 10 men

were gathered. Police said the owner's watchdog alerted him in time to prevent serious damage.

In the western city of Detmold early Tuesday, fire damaged a shelter for asylum-seekers and homeless people, and three Germans and a Yugoslav suffered smoke inhalation, said police inspector Wolfgang Hubner. Initial radio reports said the fire appeared the work of rightist extremists, but Hubner said the evidence suggested a resident might have been responsible.

Hans-Gert Lange, spokesman for Werthebach's agency, said by telephone from Bonn of Monday that Germany's estimated 47,500 neo-Nazis are not uniting in

any mass actions, although some are in frequent telephone contact.

The best evidence of this was the illegal gathering Aug. 14 of about 500 neo-Nazis beneath an 18th century cathedral in downtown Fulda in western Germany.

Police had turned out by the thousands in Bavaria and several states of former East Germany that day to prevent neo-Nazis from marking the 1987 prison suicide of Hitler henchman Rudolf Hess.

So neo-Nazis from across the country and even abroad gathered at a highway rest stop north of Fulda and drove right into the Hesse state town, their 50-old cars and buses escorted by police.

## LTTE proposes peace plan

COLOMBO, Sept 1: Tamil guerrillas fighting for independence in Sri Lanka have proposed a peace plan to end the war after talks with a senior Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister, the state-run Daily News reported on Tuesday, says Reuters.

It quoted Tourism and Rural Industrial Development Minister Saumyamoorthy Thondaman, a Tamil, as saying he had held lengthy talks with leaders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during a recent visit to Europe.

Following the talks in Paris, Thondaman said he was prepared to visit the northern rebel stronghold of Jaffna for more discussions with the rebel leaders to find a "just and lasting solution" the newspaper said.