

BRIEFLY

Bomb blast in Bombay: A crude bomb exploded yesterday in the Bombay Stock Exchange building, but no-one was hurt in the blast, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported. AFP says from Bombay.

Firefighters told PTI that the bomb exploded on the third floor of the stock exchange building around 1:00 pm (0730 GMT).

Court fines Gorbachev: A court ordered former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to pay a second successive fine of 30 roubles (three US cents) yesterday for failing to turn up to answer libel charges, Itar-Tass news agency said.

Tass said it was the fourth time Gorbachev had failed to show up in court to answer the defamation charges levelled against him by Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

Gorbachev received an initial 30 rouble fine on August 12, but this remains unpaid, Tass said.

US pilot killed in Somalia: A US pilot ferrying aid to Somalia died from gunshot wounds on Thursday after bandits attacked a relief camp in Kenya 100 km from the Somali border, relatives in South Africa said yesterday, Reuter reports from Cape Town.

Pilot Jeff Butler's brother-in-law Don Shay told Reuters that Butler, 28, was one of several people wounded in Thursday's attack on Wajir Camp. He died in a Nairobi hospital.

4 missing as Russian ship sinks: Four Russian sailors were missing after a marine research ship sank off the far eastern peninsula of Kamchatka early yesterday, Itar-Tass news agency said, Reuter reports from Moscow.

The MKR-450 ran around and sank in Vilyuchinskaya Bay just south of Kamchatka's main town, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.

Rescuers took off 38 of the 42 crew but the other four were unaccounted for, Tass said.

Boiler blast kills two in Japan: Three people were killed and one injured when a high-pressure boiler exploded in a glass factory west of Tokyo, a police spokesman said on Thursday, Reuter reports from Tokyo.

He said the explosion caused the boiler's lid to fly 50 metres (54 yards) to crack the wall of a building in the factory's neighbourhood in Yokohama.

It was not yet clear what caused the accident, he said.

Several hurt in Irish bomb blast: Several people were injured early on Friday when a bomb exploded near the courthouse in Armagh, northern Ireland, in a further escalation of violence in the troubled British province, police said, Reuter reports from Belfast.

Both police officers and civilians were hurt in the blast just after midnight but none of the injuries was thought to be serious. The courthouse was badly damaged. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

18 Kurdish rebels killed: Turkish troops have killed 18 separatist Kurdish guerrillas in clashes in the southeast, security officials said yesterday, Reuter reports from Ankara.

A statement from the emergency rule governor's office in Diyarbakir said 15 Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) fighters have been killed in the mountainous Goertepe region in Bingol province on Thursday.

Three other guerrillas were killed in two separate clashes in Bingol and Sirnak provinces, the statement said.

More than 7,000 people have been killed in Turkey since the PKK launched its secessionist war in 1984.

One shot dead in Belfast: Gunmen based in Northern Ireland's Protestant community claim their fourth victim Friday, a Roman Catholic shopkeeper who was fatally shot while he slept next to his wife, AP reports from Belfast.

The Ulster Freedom Fighters, in an anonymous statement to the media, said its gunmen killed the man and claimed he was a member of the Irish Republican Army, which has fought to end British rule in the province.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary did not release the dead man's name, but identified him as a 39-year-old Roman Catholic father of six who ran his own shop.

Taipei Defence Ministry accuses China building army strength near border

TAIPEI, Sept 3: The Defence Ministry on Friday accused China of building up its military strength near Taiwan, in contradiction of its claim to be acting to relax tensions, reports AP.

It said that following the collapse of the Soviet Union, China had shifted much of its northern military force to the southeastern provinces, about 200 kilometers (120 miles) across the sea from Taiwan.

"We see no signs that China has revised or adjusted its longstanding position that it will not renounce the possible use of force" against Taiwan, it said in a statement.

On Tuesday, China issued a policy paper reasserting its claim to Taiwan and its opposition to the island's bid to rejoin the United Nations. Although it spelled out terms for peaceful reunification, it reiterated its right as a sovereign state to resort to force if necessary.

Taiwan's nationalist government, which fled to this island in 1949 after losing a civil war, still claims to be the sole legitimate ruler of all of China. Beijing considers Taiwan a breakaway province to be re-

Democratic govt takes office in Haiti

PONT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI, Sept 3: A democratic government cautiously assumed office Thursday, but the weapons often used to determine power in Haiti remained with a repressive and repressive military, reports AP.

Hundreds of joyful Haitians surrounded the National Palace, chanting the names of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who will return to power by October 30 under a UN plan, and new Prime Minister Robert Malval.

They also cost aid organizations tens of thousands of dollars to buy and ship.

"We have the feeling some companies are just

International

Benazir blasts Sharif for ruining Pak economy

ATTOCK, Pakistan, Sept 3: Former Premier Benazir Bhutto has drawn thousands at the start of her party's election campaign which she has kicked off with bitter attacks on her arch foe Nawaz Sharif, reports AFP.

Addressing a rally here late Thursday, Bhutto accused Sharif, who resigned in July midway through his five-year term as prime minister, of ruining Pakistan's economy during

his rule.

Sharif, an industrialist turned politician, quit along with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan under an army-mediated end to their power struggle, paving the way for fresh polls under a neutral caretaker government.

"He plundered national wealth and left the economy in shambles, said Bhutto, scion of a wealthy land-owning family and the country's first woman

prime minister from 1988 to 1990.

Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) are seen as main contenders in the elections for a 217-member National Assembly scheduled for October 6.

The polls for four provincial legislatures are to be held three days later.

The PPP leader started off her campaign from populous Punjab, Sharif's home province

and the politically most strategic region with 115 seats in the Federal Assembly.

The launching coincided with a strike in some major cities at the call of fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami which is spearheading a protest against recent hikes in fuel, gas and electricity rates by the interim government.

As Bhutto blasted Sharif, caretaker premier Moeen Qureshi said in a statement in Islamabad that when he assumed office the country was in the grip of the most serious economic crisis in over 40 years.

Qureshi, who also devalued the Pakistani rupee to shore up failing exports and initiated steps to cut administrative expenditure said the reforms were needed to save the country from insolvency.

The PPP leader said the pronouncements of the caretakers were a testimony to the "gross mishandling" of the economy by the Sharif administration.

"Our economic agenda is designed to serve the socio-economic needs of the poor and down-trodden," Bhutto said.

The party released Wednesday a manifesto which promises "revolutionary" changes in the administrative and economic spheres including a system of business enterprises based on public private partnership.

PPP officials said Bhutto would travel to Saudi Arabia to perform a pilgrimage at Islam's holiest shrine in Mecca before resuming the campaign from her home province of Sindh on Saturday.

— AFP photo



PAKISTAN: Benazir Bhutto, co-chairperson of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and arch rival of former premier Nawaz Sharif, speaks to an election rally in Taxila 35 km from Islamabad on September 2.

Fatah sharply criticises Arafat's quiet diplomacy

TUNIS, Sept 3: Leaders of Yasser Arafat's mainstream PLO faction sharply criticised him for not consulting them about the months of secret talks that led to the landmark agreement with Israel, PLO officials said Friday, reports AP.

But despite the attacks at a late-night meeting of the faction's central committee, there was no indication that Arafat would be unable to muster support for the deal. The talks ended early Friday, but were to resume later in the day.

Arafat needs the endorsement of Fatah, the PLO's biggest and wealthiest faction, before he takes the accord to the powerful PLO Executive Committee and the Palestine National Council, the

Palestinian parliament in-exile.

Israeli officials have said the deal both the autonomy plan and the agreement for mutual recognition could be signed with in days. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Palestinians self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho could start immediately.

In a sign that the PLO was preparing to assume power, Arafat ordered his commanders in Yemen to start training their guerrillas as police for duty in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

You will see the PLO back in its homeland," Arafat told a gathering at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank in a letter faxed Thursday from his headquarters in Tunis. "We will go together to our Jerusalem."

He said Arafat ignored key issues such as the status of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements.



Indian actress turned politician Jayalalitha Jayaram makes a victory sign after casting her ballot in Madras in this June 15 file photo. Two years after taking power on the crest of a sympathy wave, Jayalalitha rules the Indian state of Tamil Nadu with a mixture of glamour and haughtiness.

— AFP photo

cleaning out their warehouses and dumping the useless medicines on us, said Pasan Sehovic, a pharmacist whose job is to take inventory of medical aid for Sarajevo's Kosevo Hospital.

In one case, the hospital received 12,000 boxes of the antibiotic Ampicillin that expired 14 years ago, said Sehovic, standing in a basement surrounded by 6-foot-high (1.8-meter) stacks of outdated drugs.

Sehovic said the hospital has at least 22 tons of useless medicine, as well as tons of other discarded supplies for use only in emergencies after being tested.

Sarajevo ran out of medical supplies a year ago and has relied since then on donations from around the world, said Dr Bakir Nakis, who heads the Ministry of Health's Committee on distribution of medical supplies.

They also cost aid organizations tens of thousands of dollars to buy and ship.

"We have the feeling some companies are just

But tension persisted in both south Lebanon and the occupied territories.

Shi'ite Muslim guerrillas who oppose the talks were locked in machine-gun and mortar exchanges with Israel's surrogate militiamen in south Lebanon Friday. It was the second day of battles, but no casualties were reported.

Arafat convened the meeting of Fatah late Thursday. Palestine Liberation Organization officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the heaviest criticism of Arafat came from committee member Abbas Zaki.

They will then visit Milan before going on to Brussels on Thursday as guests of Belgium's King Albert.

Tigers raid ICRC office in Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 3: Tamil

Tiger guerrillas raided an office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in northern Sri Lanka, seriously

blocking the main life line to the region, official sources said today, reports AFP.

Fighters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) removed communication equipment from the ICRC at Point Pedro forcing it to suspend the unloading of food and medicines at a strategic pier there, officials said.

The ICRC stopped operations because it was directly affected. Another reason was the LTTE attack (Sunday) on navy gunboat just off Point Pedro. The two attacks coincided, an official close to the ICRC said.

It was the first known case of a direct LTTE action against the ICRC which has been providing humanitarian assistance in Sri Lanka's embattled northern and eastern regions in the past three years.

The ICRC itself has made no comment on the attacks but official sources said the Red Cross has been negotiating with the LTTE to ensure there will be no more attacks in Point Pedro if unloading of food was

continued.

"So far the LTTE was only given a lot of excuses. These are not acceptable to the ICRC. They want a hundred per cent guarantee that there will be no attacks either against them or their staff."

They should also not be used for launching attacks against the military," the official said adding that talks between the LTTE and the ICRC so far have made no progress.

The military confirmed that the ICRC brought down its flag and suspended its humanitarian operations in Point Pedro after the LTTE sank an Israeli-built fast attack craft just off the coast of Point Pedro, killing 12 sailors aboard.

"We have told the ICRC that if there are attacks in the area we might have to respond. If the ICRC is not in Point Pedro, government food ships might not want to go there," military spokesman Brigadier Nalin Angammanna said.

Food cargoes sent to the Jaffna peninsula are unloaded in mid-sea to small barges which take the supplies to a small pier at Point Pedro. Hundreds of Tamil dockers work there under ICRC protection.

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Angammanna said.

"I'm glad it was still there," Jamie said Friday after digging it back up.

The flightless elephant bird lived in Madagascar until about 400 years ago. Scientists theorize the egg was washed out to sea and floated across the Indian Ocean to Australia.

Angammanna said.

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