

BRIEFLY

Mitterrand ends ROK tour :

French President Francois Mitterrand left for the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan Thursday after a three-day visit to South Korea, Reuters reports from Seoul.

During his stay, Mitterrand agreed with South Korean President Kim Young-Sam to boost economic cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Mitterrand also intended to support Seoul's efforts to resolve its bitter row with communist North Korea over nuclear inspections.

Blast kills 12 in China :

Twelve workers were killed as they slept, and three were injured when an explosion flattened their dormitory at a quarry in Guangdong Province in southeastern China, the China News Service said.

Initial investigation showed the blast could have been caused by burning mosquito coil.

Of the casualties, three people including a woman were killed instantly, while another nine were crushed under the collapsed dormitory.

PLO allowed to open office in Bern :

The Swiss government has granted permission to the Palestine Liberation Organisation to open an office here in the capital, the Foreign Ministry announced, AFP reports from Bern.

The Ministry said Wednesday the PLO would be allowed to open an office in Bern. The organisation already has a bureau in Geneva, where it is accredited as an observer to the United Nations.

Switzerland intended to support the Israeli-PLO autonomy agreement, signed in Washington Monday, by contributing to the reconstruction of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Ministry spokesman added.

Drugs seized in Philippines :

Police seized illegal drugs worth 40 million pesos (1.43 million) during a raid at a house near a former US air base, police said Thursday, AP reports from Philippines.

Senior Inspector Generoso Galang, police intelligence chief, said the raid took place Wednesday in Angeles city near the former Clark Air Base. The base was abandoned by the Americans at the height of the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in June 1991.

During the raid, police seized more than 1.14 kilograms (3 pounds) of high grade cocaine, 600 grams of marijuana and several plastics of hashish, a stronger derivative of marijuana, Galang said.

3 more black commuters killed :

A gunman with an assault rifle opened fire at a township railway station Thursday, killing at least three black commuters and injuring five, police said, AP reports from Johannesburg.

The attack in Daveyton, east of Johannesburg, was the fourth on black taxi riders in a week. The motive was not known, but the attack was similar to others blamed on political rivalries among black groups.

Political violence has increased since black and white negotiators announced an April 27 election date, and major negotiating groups blame anti-reform forces for the bloodshed.

\$3.3m hashish seized in Pakistan :

The Pakistan Narcotics Control Board said Thursday its officials seized 10 tonnes of hashish, worth 3.3 million dollars locally, in a raid on a container at Karachi Port, reports Reuters from Karachi.

One suspect had been arrested after Wednesday's seizure, board official Arshad Islam said.

The drug was brought from northern Pakistan and packed in small packages for shipment abroad.

In may narcotics agents seized a container carrying 12 tonnes of hashish bound for Montreal, Canada.

Delhi considers federal rule in Manipur

GAUHATI, Sept 16: India on Thursday considered imposing federal rule in a remote north-eastern state where separatist guerrillas raided a village and massacred 90 tribespeople, reports AP.

The attack on Tuesday was the latest clash involving guerrillas fighting for a homeland in Manipur state for Naga tribespeople, who dominate the hilly region bordering Myanmar.

Entering a village at dawn, the insurgents gunned down members of the rival Kuki tribe. The attack raised to 300 the number of tribespeople who have been killed in Manipur in recent months. That includes an attack Monday that left 15 Kuki tribesmen dead.

Kuki militants on Thursday avenged the massacre by setting ablaze an entire village of about 25 homes inhabited by Nagas. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The federal government responded by asking Manipur Governor V.K. Nayyar on Thursday to submit an assessment report so New Delhi can decide whether to take control of the state, a top Manipur government official said on condition of anonymity.

For four decades, the Naga

guerrillas have been fighting rivals and India soldiers for a separate Naga homeland that would stretch from Manipur to the neighbouring state of Nagaland. Nearly 1,500 more federal troops were flown into Imphal, the capital of Manipur, on Thursday to help the 10,000 Indian soldiers already there comb the thick jungles of the two states for the guerrillas who staged the massacre the day before.

Insurgents of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland oppose the Kuki tribespeople's demand for a separate state within India, fearing it will weaken their struggle for independence.

For decades, the Kukis, a migratory tribespeople, paid an informal tax to the Naga militants to stay in Naga-dominated areas of Manipur and Nagaland. But last year, they stopped paying and formed their own militia to defend themselves against Nagas.

AFP adds: India's Manipur state remained tense today after Naga insurgents massacred nearly 90 members of a rival tribe in the worst carnage linked to their fight for a separate homeland.

Dingerson said there are nearly 3,000 men and women on death row.

"The courts are more and more willing to let states pull the switch," she said.

Dingerson criticized Texas, the country's pacesetter with 14 executions so far this year.

But William Zapalac, an Assistant Attorney General in Austin, said that Texans were staunch supporters of the death penalty and that his state had merely become a master at moving capital cases through the justice system.

"Beginning in 1976, district attorneys in Texas ... made a concerted effort to be very thorough and precise in how these cases were put before the courts," Zapalac said Wednesday.

"The death penalty is the violent response of a violent society to the violence it both fears and is fascinated by," said Herman Schwartz of American University in Washington.

"We're seeing more and more cases tossed out of the courts, especially Federal Courts, that would have been heard five years ago," said Leigh Dingerson of the national coalition to abolish the death penalty.

Opponents of capital punishment blame the quickening pace of executions on the courts, swamped by capital punishment disputes and appeals.

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UN elects 8 judges to try Bosnia war criminals

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 16: The General Assembly on Wednesday elected eight of 11 judges for a UN War Crimes Court that will try those accused of atrocities in the former Yugoslavia, reports Reuters.

After four rounds of balloting, three seats on the court remained to be filled and the Assembly was to resume voting on Thursday.

Also yet to be filled is the key post of war crimes prosecutor, to be appointed by the Security Council on the nomination of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The council has been unable so far to reach consensus on a nominee.

The eight judges elected by the Assembly are from the United States, Canada, Italy, Egypt, China, France, Malaysia and Australia.

The court, established earlier

this year by the Security Council, will be based at The Hague. It is the first tribunal of its kind since the war crimes trials at Nuremberg and Tokyo after World War Two.

The court will try those accused of murder, rape, torture, "ethnic cleansing" and other atrocities committed since 1991, when the Yugoslav Federation began to break apart.

The judges elected so far include one woman, former US Federal Court Judge Gabrielle Kirk McDonald of Texas. She was that state's first black federal judge before returning to private practice in 1988.

She obtained the largest number of votes on the Assembly's first ballot, when seven judges were chosen.

No candidate obtained the required majority of 94 votes on the second or third ballots. But

on the fourth ballot the Assembly elected Sir Ninian Stephen, who retired from the Australian High Court in 1982 to serve until 1989 as Governor-General of Australia.

In addition to McDonald, who obtained 137 votes, and Stephen, who received 37, the following were elected to judge-ships:

— Jules Deschenes of Canada, who in the 1980s headed a commission of inquiry on alleged World War Two war criminals living in his own country (125 votes);

— Italian international law professor Antonio Cassese (123);

— Georges Michel Abt-Saab of Egypt, who is a law professor in Geneva (116);

— Li Haopet, Legal Adviser to the Chinese Foreign Ministry (111);

— Germain Le Foyer de Costil of France, Presiding

Judge of the Court of Major Jurisdiction of Nanterre (107 votes); and

— Lal Chand Vohrah of Malaysia, a senior high court judge (96 votes).

The judges were elected from among 22 candidates, winnowed by the Security Council last month from a list of 41 nominated by various governments.

The Council had originally selected 23 candidates but one, a Swede, later dropped out.

Eligible to vote were all 184 members of the General Assembly and two non-member states with UN observer status — the Holy See and Switzerland.

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United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) military chief Lt General John Sanderson of Australia salutes members of the UN marine regiment Sept 16 in Phnom Penh. Sanderson is expected to leave Cambodia next week as part of the UN troops withdrawal in the wake of the Cambodian constitution by the coalition government. — AFP photo

Violence takes 89 lives in a week S African parliament begins debate on all-race polls

CAPE TOWN, Sept 16: Parliament begins an historic debate today on arrangements for an all-race election next year to end 350 years of white domination in South Africa, reports Reuters.

Home Affairs Minister Danie Schutte said the house, comprising white, coloured (mixed-race) and Indian legislators, would debate proposals reached at multi-party democracy talks for an independent commission to manage the first election involving blacks.

"It will be an historic occasion because it will be the first time that parliament debates bill negotiated by all the major parties on the South African scene," he said.

The Independent Electoral Commission Bill is the first of four transition laws prepared by 23 parties, including Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) to manage South African in the run up to next year's election.

It provides for a seven-member panel backed by up to five foreign observers to set the rules for the election and to

certify it is free and fair.

The key bill, likely to go before parliament on Monday or Tuesday, will provide for a multi-party Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to oversee the government ahead of the vote.

The TEC would give the back five-to-one majority its first taste of power without surrendering final white control of key government portfolios.

Schutte said the bills should win easy approval from the government-dominated parliament but amendments would be possible in consultation with democracy negotiators in Johannesburg.

"Parliaments is not a rubber stamp," he said.

He said the Electoral Commission Bill had been approved by Zulu Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party, which out the negotiating forum in protest against a majority decision in July to hold the first all-race poll on April 27.

Buthelezi has said he will boycott the proposed election of a parliament mandated to write

a non-racial constitution and he has warned civil war could erupt if he is ignored.

AFP reports from Johannesburg: At least 89 people died in violence in South Africa's black townships during the past week, with 54 of the victims losing their lives in the Johannesburg area, the watchdog Human Rights Commission (HRC) said Thursday.

The volatile townships east of here remained the most violent, and in some of the worst incidents this week 24 people were killed when gunmen randomly targeted black taxi commuters in separate attacks last Wednesday.

The HRC described the bloodshed as a "well orchestrated massacre targeting taxi commuters".

The massacres came less than 24 hours after democracy negotiators last Tuesday adopted a draft bill to establish a multi-party Transitional Executive Council (TEC) which will end the white-minority governments' exclusive hold on power.

But India says it will always keep Kashmir and accuses Islamabad of occupying about one-third of the territory now known as Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, a province governed from Islamabad.

"If the PLO can settle for autonomy and abandon its demand for independence, why can't the Kashmiris discuss with New Delhi how the state can enjoy real autonomy?" Sengupta said.

The stalemate between the

two countries has created the need for an outside mediator to solve the dispute, argues Sengupta.

"If we can achieve peace through US-aided negotiations in the Middle East, we should be able to do so in a problem much less complicated," said Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan-held Kashmir.

Hashim Koreshti, a leader of the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, a Pakistan-based independence group, says he teleaxed Arafat a letter asking for his advice on Kashmir self-determination.

Even the government of Pakistan has indicated it is studying the agreement seriously. "We have not recognized Israel. We have only recognized the agreement between the PLO and Israel," the country's acting Prime Minister, Moeen Qureshi, said.

Officials at the medical centre called his sister shortly after 9 am Tuesday and left a message at her home answering machine. The hospital called police and asked officers to go to Miller's house.

Miller's sister, who works a split shift, arrived home about 9:30 am, raced to her brother's house and found a police officer knocking on the door.

Miller quit the job and the bills filed up even higher. One of the unpaid bills — for telephone service — totals 608-dollar.

He ran up the phone bill when he learned he needed the transplant. Miller, who's divorced, called his four children, and they called him — usually collect.

He said they have no money to help him. Neither does his sister. The telephone company has told him that it will restore service if he pays half of his bill.

Ogata calls for aid to rebuild Afghanistan

MASHHAD, Iran, Sept 16: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata (Japan) called Wednesday for a major international effort to rebuild Afghanistan so three million refugees still in Iran and Pakistan can return home, reports AFP.

After a visit to the Iranian frontier town of Doharun about 200 kilometres (160 miles) from here, Ogata said she would strive to mobilise international help for Afghanistan.

"If we want the movement of refugees home to continue, the international community must step up its aid for reconstruction in Afghanistan," she told journalists.

Ogata admitted that drumming up financial aid for the Afghans might be "difficult" at a time when international attention is riveted on the Middle East, Yugoslavia and Cambodia.

But she said she hoped her visit would help refocus attention on the plight of the Afghan refugees.

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