

Sihanouk gets power to dissolve NA

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia), Sept 18: Cambodia's king on Saturday was given powers to dissolve the elected national assembly under changes made to the draft constitution, reports AP.

The decision, during the fourth day of debate on the charter, increases the king's already significant official powers despite stating that he "reigns but does not govern."

The position of king is being tailor-made for Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the 70-year-old interim head of state who rules

Three shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI, Sept 18: Three people have been shot dead here in two days in violence linked to Muslim sectarian trouble, police said today, reports AFP.

Unidentified assailants fired at a mosque of the Shiite minority sect earlier in the day killing one worshipper.

Two members of Anjuman Shabab (ASS), an anti-Shiite group from the majority Sunni community, died in sniper fire Friday.

The incidents here followed a grenade attack on an ASS mosque in the industrial town of Faisalabad in Punjab Province Monday, in which one person died and more than two dozen were injured.

BRIEFLY

Kakuei Tanaka hospitalised:

Former Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, 75, has been taken to hospital for treatment for diabetes, Kyodo news agency reported Saturday, Reuter says from Tokyo.

Tanaka has been in a wheelchair since 1985 when he suffered a stroke which left him partly paralysed. Prime Minister between 1972-1974 and long-time powerbroker of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), he retired from politics in 1989.

Tanaka was convicted for the 1976 Lockheed payoff scandal in a 1983 Tokyo High Court ruling. He has appealed and the case is now before the Supreme Court.

John Major in Tokyo: British Prime Minister John Major arrived in Tokyo Saturday for a four-day visit, AP reports from Tokyo.

Major is the first foreign leader to visit since the government of Morihiro Hosokawa took power last month.

The British leader will hold talks with Hosokawa on Monday. He is also scheduled to meet with other Japanese government and business leaders.

Major is accompanied by a delegation of business leaders, who will seek to boost trade during the visit.

Ramos due in Jakarta tomorrow: Philippine President Fidel Ramos is expected in Jakarta Monday for a five-day visit to discuss regional and international issues, a senior official said Friday, AP reports from Jakarta.

Ramos will be accompanied by his wife Amelita, seven cabinet ministers, a number of parliamentarians and noted businessmen, said Minister of State Secretary Moerdiono.

It will be the first visit by Ramos to Indonesia since he took office.

Quake hits Tokyo: A mild earthquake registering 5.1 on the Richter Scale jolted the Tokyo metropolitan region Saturday, but no injuries or damage were reported, AP says from Tokyo.

The quake caused buildings in Tokyo to sway gently, and bullet train service leaving was suspended for about five minutes after the quake hit to check for damage.

The quake was centred 30 kilometers (19 miles) beneath the ocean floor about 50 kilometers (30 miles) east of the Boso Peninsula, the Central Meteorological Agency reported.

The agency said there was no threat of tsunami tidal waves from the quake, which struck at 11:18 am (0218 GMT).

US defence official to visit Japan: A senior Defence Department official will travel to Japan next week to discuss how the US government can help that country develop an anti-missile defence system, the Defence Department said Friday, reports AP from Washington.

The New York Times, in Saturday editions, quoted unnamed Japanese and American officials, as saying Japan is anxious to develop such an anti-missile system to deter an attack by North Korea.

John M. Deutch, undersecretary of defence for acquisition and technology, leaves Sunday for a trip that will also take him to Hawaii and South Korea, the department said in a statement.

Discussions will be held with officials of Japan's Defence Ministry and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

North Korea's recent tests of missiles that could reach Japan has prompted Japan to seek development of the system, the Times reported.

28 killed as storm hits Honduras, Nicaragua

TEGUCIGALPA (Honduras), Sept 18: Tropical Storm Gert tore through Honduras and Nicaragua, leaving at least 28 people dead and more than 15,000 homeless before moving out to sea, news reports said Friday, reports AP.

The storm gathered strength as it moved over the Caribbean toward Belize and Mexico's Yucatan peninsula.

Heavy rains and flooding killed at least eight people in Nicaragua and destroyed homes of some 10,400 before Gert crossed into neighbouring Honduras late Thursday, Nicaraguan officials said.

In Honduras, at least 20 people died and 5,000 were left homeless before the storm's centre left the country, said Honduras civil protection coordinator Wilfredo Salgado.

"The situation is still difficult," Salgado said. "Most rivers have overflowed there banks and many towns have been

flooded."

Gert caused winds of 33 mph (53 kph) and rain over the entire country, Honduran officials said. No deaths were reported.

Mudslides along Honduras'

Atlantic coast blocked parts of the main coastal highway, leaving many areas cut off from the rest of the country. Some airlines cancelled domestic and international flights.

The Honduran Red Cross said it evacuated 1,000 residents from low-lying areas near rivers, and was providing thousands of people with food and shelter.

Rains and mudslides damaged roads and highways in Nicaragua, said Communications and Transport Minister Pablo Vigil.

The highway between Managua, the capital, and the city of Leon was closed when one of the main bridges was

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