

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 ruled

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 Sipah Shaba (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 Painsabad in Punjab Province Monday, in which one person died and more than two dozen were injured.

Cambodia with an iron hand for decades before being ousted in a 1970 coup.

The pertinent article says the king can dissolve the assembly on the advice of the prime minister and the president of the assembly. It also says the power can only be exercised if the assembly already has dissolved the government twice in the same year.

But, like other provisions concerning the king, such as those giving him powers over the executive and the judiciary branches, this one leaves the final decision in the king's hands. And it appears vague enough to be open to various interpretations.

Assembly members and pro-democracy activists have secretly expressed concerns over whether Sihanouk will abuse the powers the constitution will provide him as king as he did during his previous administration.

It is apparent, from both public and private statements Sihanouk has made in the past few weeks from China, where he is seeking medical treatment for a rectal tumour, that he is dictating at least some of the assembly's decisions.

But Sihanouk's son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, co-chairman during the interim period while the constitution is being drafted, brushed off such concerns.

Shevardnadze asks Georgians Take up arms, fight rebels

TBILISI, (Georgia), Sept 18: About 2,000 volunteers flew to the besieged city of Sukhumi on Saturday after Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze appealed to his fellow citizens to take up arms against Abkhazian separatists, reports AP.

Throughout the night, planes and buses ferried armed men and supplies from the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to Sukhumi, a former resort on the Black sea.

The reinforcements greatly increased the chances that government forces would hold the city. But fierce battles continued in the suburbs, and Georgia's Defense Ministry said 32 Georgian soldiers and civilians have been killed and more than 300 wounded in three days of fighting.

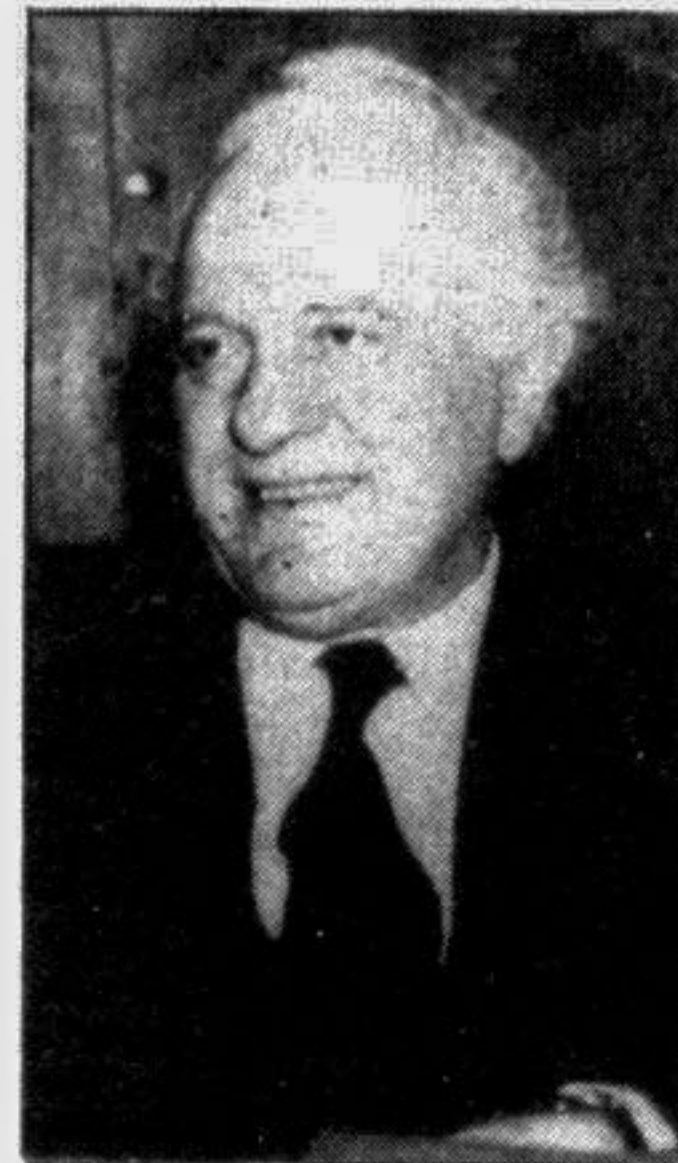
There was no word on Abkhazian casualties.

Both Russia and the United Nations have demanded that the Abkhazians stop the attack, which violates a Russian-brokered cease-fire agreement signed July 27. Shevardnadze appealed Thursday to Russian President Boris Yeltsin to force the Abkhazians to abide by the cease-fire agreement.

In Moscow, Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Saturday that he had offered to send Russian troops to take the

region's two main airports, then fan out to disarm both sides, but that Shevardnadze rejected the proposal.

The offer was made in close-door talks with Shevardnadze and other Georgian officials in



Eduard Shevardnadze

the Russian port of Sochi on Friday. From Sochi, Shevardnadze returned to Sukhumi along with most top officials of his government.

"Unfortunately, colleagues of

Eduard Ambrosievich (Shevardnadze), including Defense Minister (Georgy) Karkarashvili, took my proposal very badly, calling it an attempt at a Russian invasion of Georgian territory," Grachev said.

Since his proposal was rejected, Grachev said, Russian troops will remain neutral.

He also said Shevardnadze had refused to meet with the Abkhazian leader, Vladislav Ardzinba. "Neither side, in my opinion, wants peace," Grachev said.

Meanwhile, Russia began putting non-military pressure on the Abkhazians to stop the attack.

Electricity was cut off to the region on Saturday, one day after Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vitaly Churkin had warned that Abkhazia was dependent on Russia for energy.

Churkin also said Moscow would withhold a 25 billion ruble (25 million dollars) loan to Abkhazia until it withdrew its forces.

Under the peace plan, Georgia began withdrawing its troops from Abkhazia on August 15. It claims to have pulled out 80 per cent of its soldiers from the region and accuses the Abkhazians of secretly stockpiling weapons.

Grachev said that while the Abkhazians had attacked first, Georgia also had violated the cease-fire by failing to withdraw all its troops from the region as required by the agreement.

The cease-fire and troop pullout had brought relative calm to Abkhazia, Georgia's northwestern province, after a year of fighting that claimed more than 2,000 lives.

The Abkhazian offensive presented Shevardnadze with yet another crisis during a tumultuous week in which he forced parliament to grant him emergency powers by threatening to resign.

Shevardnadze said he needed the emergency powers to put down an unrelated rebellion by supporters of former Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in the western province of Mingrelia.

The leader of the pro-Gamsakhurdia rebels, Lotti Kholia, announced Saturday that he would temporarily join forces with Shevardnadze and send some men to Sukhumi to fight the separatists.

Gamsakhurdia's supporters are ardent Georgian nationalists who oppose the effort by the tiny Abkhazian ethnic minority to break away from the rest of Georgia.

Drug smuggling Britain drops charge against Kuwaiti princess

LONDON, Sept 18: British authorities have decided not to proceed with a drugs smuggling charge against the daughter of the prime minister of Kuwait, officials said Friday, reports AP.

The Customs and Excise Department said in a statement that the case against Princess Maryam, 22, was dropped "for legal reasons." Her father is Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Abdullah al-Sabah.

A British law-enforcement official, speaking on condition of anonymity, later told The Associated Press there had been a high probability that the princess would have claimed diplomatic immunity.

"Evidence came forward after she was charged that she might have diplomatic immunity, because of her position," said the official. "Had she claimed immunity, that would have been sufficient to muddy the waters and make a successful prosecution difficult, perhaps less than 50-50."

Ms. Maryam was charged after British Airways staff members found 15 grams of marijuana and 1 gram each of heroin and cocaine in her bag-

gage July 25 as she was about to leave for Kuwait from London's Heathrow airport, the Customs and Excise statement said.

She was released on bail on the same date and allowed to return to Kuwait, but was told she would have to return to Britain to answer the charge in court August 20, the statement said.

Had the princess been convicted of smuggling illegal narcotics, as a first-time offender she most likely would have been fined several hundred pounds (dls) but not faced a jail term.

The Foreign Office declined to comment on a report Friday in the Daily Mail, a national newspaper, that authorities quietly dropped the case because Britain feared provoking a diplomatic incident with its wealthy Gulf ally.

The Daily Mail reported: "A significant factor (in the decision to drop the charge) is believed to have been that the arrest came during negotiations with Kuwait on the last stage of an arms contract reported to be worth more than 500 million pounds (765 million dollar)."

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, Reuters 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.

One the eve of Major's arrival, a group of British World War II prisoners of war demanded an apology and compensation for their brutal treatment during captivity. Major was expected to raise the subject in his talks with Hosokawa.

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 Mordiono.

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 jostled 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.

UN troops search houses in Mogadishu: 4 Somalis held

MOGADISHU, Sept 18: UN forces supported by helicopters searched houses in downtown Mogadishu today after Somali militiamen mortared the UN compound, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

The soldiers searched the garage of Osman Atto, the main financier of warlord Mohamed Farah Aided, and arrested four Somalis, local people said.

The helicopters destroyed a small market. A British photographer on the scene accused peacekeepers of throwing percussion grenades at him.

The operation was the latest in a series mounted by the peacekeeping force. Several have ended in embarrassing failures as others in bloodshed.

The multinational force was originally charged with guarding relief supplies and restoring order in the devastated country but it has now targeted Aided, blaming his forces for a string of attacks on the UN.

Militiamen railed the heavily fortified UNOSOM (UN Operation in Somalia) compound this morning.

Three mortar bombs hit, witnesses said. One damaged the roof of the office of the Provost Marshall, the chief of the military police. There were no casualties.

A dozen helicopters later flew low over the city while ground forces combed houses in the Benadir, Medina, Dikfar and kilometre 4 areas.

Reporters said a small market was destroyed when Black Hawk helicopters swooped over it as low as 20 to 30 metres (yards).

Peter Northall, a 35-year-old British photographer working for the US Associated Press Agency, said American airborne soldiers threw six percussion grenades at him and forced him out of the market area.

He received a few bruises and his car was damaged he said. He had clearly identified himself as a foreign photographer, he said adding "this action towards a journalist put the American forces on the same level with the Somalis who also assault reporters."

Five journalists, three of

them working for Reuters, have been killed in Mogadishu by Somalis.

UNOSOM Deputy Spokesman Tim McDavid of New Zealand declined comment on the operation or the incident involving Northall.

Pakistani forces on patrol found an array of weapons when they stopped a car carrying militiamen on Friday night, UN official said.

They confiscated one grenade-launcher with seven rounds, 16 40-mm rockets, 50 rifle grenades, a machinegun with many magazines and other ammunition.

Aided has been in hiding since the June 5 killing of 24 Pakistani peacekeepers by his supporters. A total of 49 US troops and scores of Somalis have been killed in ambushes and other incidents since then.

In Washington on Friday, President Bill Clinton expressed concern that US forces were increasingly embroiled in violence in Somalia and said he wanted to find a political solution which would allow them to pull out.

Myanmar students in Thailand burn country's flag

BANGKOK, Sept 18: Myanmar students opposing Yangon's ruling Junta burnt their country's flag and demanded the release of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi as they demonstrated in front of Myanmar embassy here to mark the Junta's fifth anniversary on Saturday, reports AFP.

The group of some 30 demonstrators, watched by a few policemen, dispersed peacefully after the rally. No arrests were made, according to reporters at the scene.

The students carried banners calling for the freedom of Nobel Peace Prize winner Suu Kyi, who has been held under house arrest at her Yangon home since July 1989.

They also distributed leaflets demanding economic sanctions against the junta and an embargo on arms supplies to Myanmar.

The leaflets slammed the "constructive engagement" policy of good relations with the junta followed by Thailand and other southeast Asian countries.

Journalist Vittachi passes away

MANILA, Sept 18: Tarzie Vittachi, a Sri Lankan journalist known as the "newspaper doctor" for helping upgrade the quality of newspapers in Asia, died in Oxford on Friday, the Press Foundation of Asia said. He was 72, reports AP.

The Manila based Press Foundation, which Vittachi helped establish in 1968, said he died in his daughter's home in Oxford of a lingering liver disease. No other details were available.

Vittachi won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism in 1959 for his incisive reporting of the political turmoil in Sri Lanka.

He fled his country and lived in self-exile in various countries following threats to his family from the Bandaranaike government.

In 1968, Vittachi, together with journalist Amitabh Choudhury of India, established the foundation and served as its first training director.



Palestinian women from the Islamic movement Hamas, hide their faces from photographers with anti-PLO leaflets, during a rally held at Bethlehem University in West Bank Sept 17 against the Israel-PLO agreement. The rally was called by the main opposition movements, Hamas and the PFLP.

ME peace too late for '93 Nobel Prize

OSLO, Sept 18: The Mideast peace agreement brokered secretly by Norway may be worthy of a Nobel Peace Prize for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat or Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst. But they were too late for this year's award, reports AP.

"No one has gotten it for something that happened just before the prize announcement," said Francis Sejersted, chairman of the five-member Norwegian Nobel Committee, which announces the 1993 Peace Prize on October 15.

Norwegians are already calling for their foreign minister to get next year's peace prize for organising months of secret talks that led to a settlement last month between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel that envisions autonomy for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Norwegian newspapers have speculated that Holst could share the 1994 prize with Arafat and Rabin, who signed the accord in Washington last Monday.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who helped negotiate the deal and has been nominated in past years, also has been mentioned as a possible winner.

UNESCO awarded its own annual peace prize, the Felix Houphouet-Boigny Prize, to Arafat, Rabin and Peres on Friday. But the awarders of the Nobel, the world's richest prize at 837,500 dollars, prefer to take a slower approach.

"The rules are very clear: Nominations must be made by the end of January, and that is a rule that we abide by," said Sejersted.

The Nobel Committee works secretly, never revealing the names of candidates even after the prize is awarded. No do the committee members discuss the

chances of any person.

But Sejersted said he assumed the Middle East peace-makers would be among the hundreds of nominations for next year's prize. About 125 names make it onto the candidates list each year.

The strict rules go back to Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite who endowed the prize in his 1895 will. He wanted it awarded for efforts the preceding year.

Names mentioned by the Norwegian media as possible 1993 Nobel peace laureates are the peace brokers for the former Yugoslavia: Britain's Lord David Owen of the European Community, and UN envoys Cyrus Vance of the United States and his successor, Thorvald Stoltenberg of Norway.

Others mentioned are South African President FW de Klerk and African National Congress President Nelson Mandela, who are negotiating and end to

apartheid.

"When you look back at the awards, there is seldom, probably never, one that was awarded on impulse. That is one of the reasons the prize has become so respected," said Arne Storheim of the Nobel Institute, which assists the committee.

If anything, the committee has become more cautious in recent years, waiting to see if the peace they might honour will last.

Awards committee member Kare kristiansen said that some of the prizes - including the 1978 award shared by Egypt's late president, Anwar Sadat, and former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin - might never have been awarded if the committee had waited.

Four year later, Begin ordered an Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon to crush the PLO. Some 16,000 people were killed in the invasion and subsequent Israeli occupation.

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 declared unsafe.

Tribal war in Manipur on: 43 homes torched

NEW DELHI, Sept 18: A powerful bomb exploded near a powerhouse in Manipur and attackers set fire to two villages today elsewhere in the tiny state in an ongoing bloody tribal war in India's far east, reports AFP.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the blast occurred in the Manipur state capital of Imphal but caused no damage to the government-owned powerhouse which supplies electricity to the city.

It was not immediately known who set off the bomb, PTI quoted the police as saying in Imphal.

Unknown attackers early today torched 43 homes in the villages of Thangal Sasung and Shoungtum in Manipur's Sanapati village, PTI said.

Sasung is inhabited by well-armed Naga tribes people while Shoungtum is a centre of the rival Kuki tribe, it said.

The blast and the two sepa-

rate incidents of arson followed the overnight murder by the Nagas of six Kukis in the tribal war which flared earlier this week in the remote state bordering Myanmar.

At least 85 Kuki tribes people were massacred in Manipur earlier this week by Naga insurgents, who have been waging a bush war for 40 years to force the secession of Nagaland, a Christian-majority state had joining Manipur.

The outlawed Naga guerrillas also claim tracts of Naga-dominated areas in Manipur, governed by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's Congress (I) Party.

The Naga-Kuki conflict has its roots in rivalries over the control of a strategic highway leading to Myanmar. Naga militants has imposed a "blockade" of the road to prevent Kuki rebels from raising funds by taxing passing trucks.