

International

Khmers to be advisers in Cambodian govt

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia). Oct 4: After three days of talks with the hardline Khmer Rouge, King Norodom Sihanouk said Monday that the guerrilla group would be brought into Cambodia's new government, reports AP.

"They will be advisers," Sihanouk told journalists minutes before leaving for China to undergo medical treatment.

It was Sihanouk's first public statement on his talks this past Friday with Khmer Rouge President Khieu Samphan.

Khieu Samphan flew in from Bangkok for two days to pay homage to Sihanouk who reascended the throne ten days ago, 23 years after he was ousted in a coup d'etat.

The Khmer Rouge issued a statement after the talks saying it wanted peace but indicating it would never reach a settlement with the current coalition government, elected in a UN-organ-

Rao visits quake-hit villages, consoles survivors

LATUR (India), Oct 4: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao today visited the ruins of quake-devastated villages here, consoling survivors and promising help to rebuild their broken lives, reports AFP.

The 72-year-old premier looked shocked and moved by the magnitude of the devastation as he moved from one razed village to another, addressing groups of dazed survivors living under hastily-erected shelters.

Men and women jostled and pushed one another to get close to Rao and tell him of their woes. Harried security personnel formed a ring around him during the nearly 90 minutes he spent in this region in Maharashtra state.

Rao later told reporters here that Thursday's pre-dawn qua-

ke, which killed about 30,000 people and injured thousands, was the worst "in living memory" and vowed to build new quake-proof homes for the estimated 130,000 homeless.

"We will rebuild entire villages," he said, before leaving for the nearby state of Karnataka which was also hit by the earthquake. "I have been told that bodies are still being extricated."

Rao, who arrived here by a helicopter, drove first to the worst-hit Khillari town, which accounted for almost half the deaths.

"You have gone through an enormous tragedy," a grim-faced Prime Minister told a few hundred survivors huddled inside a tin-roof shelter. "We will spare no efforts to help you. We will resettle all of you."

The entire country is with you," he said, as officials repeatedly called for silence. "We will design quake-proof houses for you... let us take this as an accident and resume life anew."

"Everybody is with you," he added. "We will pass through this crisis," Rao patted some on the back and held other's hands.

He stopped at the entrance to neighbouring Talni village where he stopped to talk to a young man whose mother died when their mud-and-stone house crashed on them.

He consoled another man who lost his wife, child and brother.

At the Talni's relief camp, he met an army soldier who returned from Bombay to find that his entire family had perished.

A visibly moved Rao told the survivors: "Please have courage. I am with you. The entire country is with you."

At all his stops, Rao asked the victims of their needs.

At Khillari, survivors, mostly farming families, demanded that the government provide them with farm seeds. At other places, people demanded new houses.

The Prime Minister, who also went to a hospital here where hundreds of victims are being treated, handed over a cheque for 500 million rupees (16.6 million dollars) to Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar for rehabilitation.

Rao was to have visited the quake-struck villages Saturday, but put off the visit so that his presence did not disturb the mercy mission.

Off the Record

Irma turns six in hospital

LONDON: Irma Hadzimiratovic, the seriously wounded Bosnian girl evacuated to London for lifesaving treatment, marked her 6th birthday Monday with a cake at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children and thousands of cards from well-wishers, reports AP.

The hospital, where Irma is being treated for shrapnel wounds to her spine and abdomen, said her father, Ramiz, and 3-year-old sister, Medina, planned a small birthday party for her.

A hospital spokeswoman said over the weekend that Irma had made a "remarkable" recovery from meningitis, but would remain on a ventilator for the foreseeable future and was unlikely to ever walk again.

Irma was flown to Britain August 9 for treatment for shrapnel wounds inflicted July 30 by the Serb shell that killed her mother.

She was evacuated after her doctor, frustrated by what he called UN delays and red tape, turned to the international media, who flashed pictures of the suffering child around the globe.

All he had to remind him of his sweetheart was dowry

INDIA: Since the earthquake struck, 20-year-old farmhand Govind Sarvodaya has been lighting funeral pyres for his family and the woman he was about to marry, nursing a badly broken arm and carrying drinking water to survivors, reports AP.

The only thing he has left in life are the two oxen he had just received in his dowry.

"I escaped because I was sleeping on the porch... but my parents and two brothers were killed," Sarvodaya said, nursing the arms covered in a plaster cast.

Sarvodaya cremated his family Thursday, hours after the earthquake destroyed his home in the nearby village of Mangru early in the morning and killed as many as 30,000 people.

He then ran to Sastur, where his fiancée, Rekha Neelghai, and her family lived. All he found was a heap of rubble where a three-room house once stood.

"I found the entire village smashed... Rekha's house was gone... No one had seen her family," he said.

Sarvodaya clawed through the debris for two days before he found the body of his 18-year-old sweetheart, a woman he was planning to marry this week.

Neelghai's body was still covered in a bedspread. He kept holding her hands, covered with delicate floral designs painted in henna as a bridal decoration.

Lying in the rubble were her parents, sister and three brothers.

Sarvodaya collected some wooden planks and cremated all of them in the same pyre at the bottom of the rubble heap that once was their house.

"I can't think of my life without her... life has no meaning now," he said. All he had to remind him of his sweetheart was the pair of oxen her parents had given him as a dowry.

When the farmhand found that there was no drinking water around, he hitched the oxen to a cart that was lying around and went in search of water.

He found it in a farm well, 20 kilometers (12 miles) away.

The quake had done strange things to the wells. Some were dry, others were brimming with water.

BRIEFLY

CPI leader Gopal Haldar dead:

The noted freedom fighter, litterateur and CPI leader Gopal Haldar died in Calcutta on Sunday night after a protracted illness, PTI reports.

He was 91 survived by his wife. Haldar, who participated in the India's independence movement, was arrested as political prisoner in 1932. Later he joined the Communist Party in 1940.

A former editor of the "Modern Review", an old journal of the city, Haldar also edited a number of other publications during 1945 to 1970.

Banda undergoes brain surgery:

Malawi President Kamuzu Banda, one of the last of Africa's old style dictators, was in satisfactory condition Monday after brain surgery at a South African hospital, AP reports from Johannesburg.

Banda arrived Saturday at the Garden City Clinic in Johannesburg and was operated on Sunday night, said Dr Andre Nel, general manager of the clinic.

"At the moment his condition is satisfactory, under the conditions," Nel said. "It's the kind of condition that might get better quickly. We just don't know. These things can change very quickly."

Cop shot dead in Egypt:

One policeman was killed and seven were injured in a clash with Muslim fundamentalists outside a mosque in the eastern Egyptian city of Suez, police said Sunday, AFP reports from Cairo.

Security forces, meanwhile, detained almost 200 suspected Islamic militants in a crackdown ahead of Monday's referendum in which President Hosni Mubarak was set to win a third term in office.

Car with explosives hits bus:

A car packed with explosives rammed an Israeli bus in the occupied West Bank on Monday an apparent suicide attack, Israeli army radio reported, AP says from Jerusalem.

The driver was burned and killed and several bus passengers were wounded.

The attack occurred at about 7.30 am (0430 GMT).

Pak relief for quake victims:

Pakistan said Sunday it would send two plane loads of blankets, tents, medicines and other relief goods to India for earthquake victims, Reuters reports from Islamabad.

The government decided to send the two C-30 transports as soon as possible after the Indian government accepted Pakistan's offer for the relief, a government statement said.

Floods hit Iranian villages:

Heavy rainstorms flooded several villages in Iran's northern Ollan province, submerging hundreds of homes and closing most country roads, Tehran television reported Sunday, AP says from Nicosia.

The broadcast, monitored in Nicosia, said the rain had been pouring for the past 48 hours.

The regions of Chaboksar, Kelachai, Rudsav, and the port cities of Anzali and Astara were flooded, and relief aid was being rushed to them, the radio said.

3 die in Italy floods:

Families fled to higher ground, tourists slogged through water-logged cities and swollen rivers washed over areas struggling Sunday to recover from more than a week of flooding, AP reports from Rome.

At least three people died in Italy in the weekend cloud bursts, which soaked the peninsula from the Alps to the southern coast. Another flood victim was found Sunday in southern France.

In Venice, visitors to the Piazza San Marcos waded through ankle-deep water. In the foot hills of the Alps, dozens of families were evacuated and rivers threatened to tear away even more bridges and roads. South of Rome, mudslides caused blackouts, and runoff fouled drinking water supplies.

Campbell blames Liberals:

A combative Prime Minister Kim Campbell came out swinging in a televised election debate Sunday night, trading jibes with the Quebec separatist candidate and accusing the Liberal Party of making empty promises, AP reports from Toronto.

Sunday's debate was in French. A second debate, in English, was scheduled for Monday. Ms. Campbell, whose Progressive Conservatives are trailing the Liberals in the polls, obviously felt she had to get more aggressive if she is to have a chance in the October 25 election.

Six Japanese mountaineers die in India

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Six Japanese mountaineers were killed in an avalanche while trying to scale the 22,935 feet Neelkanth Shikhar peak in the Himalayas, diplomat said today, reports AFP.

The climbers were swept away and killed when the avalanche struck the Garhwal mountain range in the eastern state of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, he said.

The lone survivor of the seven-member team, Akira Matsuyama, alerted district officials in the town of Badrinath when he lost radio contact with the team leader from the base camp after hearing the avalanche rumbling Saturday.

Matsuyama had stayed back at the base camp because he was unwell.



WEST BANK: Scene where a Palestinian suicide bomber from the Muslim Hamas movement smashed into the side of an Israeli bus outside an Israeli military base in Bet El on the West Bank yesterday. In front of the white car lies the engine and what is left from the car that was packed with explosives. Twenty-three Israelis, many of them soldiers, were wounded in the attack. — AFP photo

Hezbollah hits SLA post

MARJAYOUN (Lebanon), Oct 4: Guerrillas attacked an Israeli-backed militia post in South Lebanon with mortar bombs and anti-tank rockets today, security sources said, reports Reuter.

The guerrillas fired at the South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia post at Brachit on the edge of Israel's unilateral security zone but there were no casualties, the sources said.

The SLA retaliated by firing heavy shells into guerrillas-held areas to the north, they said. No one was hurt.

The pro-Iranian militant group Hezbollah said its fighters caused casualties when they set off a bomb close to an SLA patrol near Brachit and fired machine-guns at it.

Security sources say Hezbollah is expected to step up attacks against Israeli forces in South Lebanon as part of a campaign by hardliners to sabotage the PLO-Israeli peace accord.

More than 20 attacks have been launched against the SLA.

Kuwaitis frustrated with parliament

KUWAIT, Oct 4: May Kuwaitis feel their new Parliament, widely seen as a beacon of democracy in the Persian Gulf region, has failed to deliver in the first year of its four-year term, reports AP.

The 50-member Majlis al-Umma, or Parliament, was elected October 4, 1992, in the aftermath of the Gulf War. Opposition reformers took 35 seats.

The reformers had promised to fight corruption, usher in democracy and make the al-Sabah family, which has ruled the emirate for more than 200 years, more accountable. Instead, it is seen to have com-

promised on key issues.

It has abandoned its push for a high-level probe into how the emirate was caught unprepared when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Such a probe would inevitably reach into the royal family.

Instead, it will form a "fact-finding committee" with limited powers.

"This Parliament only looks like an opposition Parliament. In reality, it's pro-government," huffed Mohammed al-Jassem, a leading lawyer and political commentator.

"Kuwaitis are frustrated. Most of us know that it's not proper to judge Parliament after

only one year, but there are many negative indications," said Mubarak al-Adwani, a liberal columnist and unsuccessful candidate last year.

He said the opposition has not been effective because the coordination of the various factions, which range from Islamic fundamentalists to liberals, displayed during the election campaign has evaporated.

Legislators cite as one major victory a new law to protect public money, adopted after the emirate was rocked by a string of financial scandals.

But Parliament's credibility has been undermined by its apparent cave-in over a potentially

explosive issue — its demand for a high-level investigation into how the emirate was caught totally unprepared when Saddam's army invaded in August 1990.

The government is reluctant to allow any probe that would inevitably reach into the royal family and Parliament has agreed only to form a "fact-finding committee" with limited powers.

But reformers know that if they push the al-Sababs too hard, the Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, could suspend Parliament — as he did in 1986 when he felt it was too critical of the government.

Gayoom plans reforms in politics

MALE, Oct 4: Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has just won another five years in office, has vowed a "complete transformation" of the system that put him in power in this Indian Ocean atoll nation.

Sweeping political reforms will be introduced during the new term starting November 11 and young people will have a greater say in running the administration, the 55-year-old President said in a weekend interview with AFP.

"I find that right now it is the best time to implement further reforms," the Islamic Scholar President said at his sea front office here in the capital island Male.

The Maldives has been used to saying "yes" or "no" to a single candidate chosen by a 48-member majlis, or parliament, for the presidency. Gayoom was first nominated as president, in 1978 and has been in power since then.

Gayoom narrowly won a

majlis vote in August to be the sole candidate at the October 1 referendum. Early results showed that he received an approval rate of over 90 per cent. The minimum required was 51 per cent.

"I am very happy that I have been given another term. I think that gives me time to continue

to remote atolls by the time the next presidential poll is due in 1998.

The Maldives, which has a population of 225,000 inhabiting 200 Coral Islands out of some 1,190 scattered across the equator, was not been politically or socially mature enough for sweeping democratisation in the past 15 years, Gayoom said.

Asked if the time was now right for a political revolution in this socially liberal but politically rigid country, Gayoom said: "Yes, I think a lot of people would like to see that happen."

"We have a lot of young and educated people who have been abroad and who have seen other political systems at work and they will very much like to see a more open sort of system in which there could be a number of candidates and then the people can choose whom they want," Gayoom said.

"I think that is going to be a very good change I want to put into practice," he said.

The run-up to the latest ref-

erendum on October 1 saw unprecedented political consciousness among Maldivians.

Gayoom says the revelry and the celebratory mood in Male is partly due to his supporters wanting to publicly express their solidarity with him following a bid by his estrange brother-in-law, Ilyas Ibrahim, to become president.

A Maldivian court last month tried Ibrahim in absentia and banished him for 15 years for attempting to influence the majlis vote on the president. Ibrahim has fled the country.

Diplomats here say that the "Ilyas episode" showed that Gayoom should allow greater democratic freedoms to consolidate his position.

"The dilemma here is that Maldivians no alternative to Gayoom," an Asian diplomat here said.

Gayoom says he has not decided if he should stand for president once again to lead the country to the 21st century.



with my political and economic policies," he said.



ZAGREB: Fani Capalija (C), the 18-year-old Croatian girl on the podium after being elected Miss Croatia to participate in the Miss World contest October 3. Second placed is Ljuba Juricic (L), from Frankfurt, and Sandra Skoric (R) from Pakrac in Croatia placed third. — AFP photo

Dr Soomro starts jihad to defeat Benazir for sake of Islam

NAUDERO (Pakistan), Oct 4: Dr Khalid Mahmood Soomro is fighting a Jihad, a holy war — his mission to defeat Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto in the very heartland of her power, reports Reuter.

"Inshallah (god willing) I must defeat Benazir Bhutto Sahiba," said Soomro, a fundamentalist theologian who has challenged Bhutto in her own constituency of her ancestral home of Naudero in the backward southern province of Sind.

Former Prime Minister Bhutto won the seat in the first elections after military rule in 1988 and again with a crushing majority of 93,744 votes in the last elections in 1990. Her opponent polled 718 ballots.

The black-bearded youthful Soomro — he is just 34 — is unconvincing by his opponent's awesome majority.

"Our fight against Benazir Bhutto Sahiba is a jihad," he told Reuters in an interview at the Islamic school he runs in Larkana, the main town a few miles from the village of Naudero where the Bhutto family have been feudal landowners for centuries.

Asked what had motivated him to take up the unequal battle, Soomro replied: "In Islam there is no permission for women to rule. Ruling by a

woman is not possible in Islam."

He did not fear defeat, he said, and was determined to contest the seat until he had ousted the 40-year-old Bhutto — who became the Muslim world's first woman prime minister when she won the 1988 elections.

"Inshallah I must try again and again," he said.

"We are trying to rule for Islam," said Soomro, a medical doctor who studied Islamic theology at Cairo's Al-Azhar University and is a member of the left-wing Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) Party.

The battle between Soomro's left-wing populist Islamic-based ideals and Bhutto's liberal populist policies is developing into a virtual family feud.

Soomro's father lost to Bhutto in 1988 By 1,979 votes to her 82,229. Bhutto's father, the late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto swept the seat in Pakistan's only two elections in the 1970s before he was overthrown by the army in 1977.

Bhutto has no doubt that she will not only regain her seat but is convinced — along with Pakistan's underdog punters — that she is a shoo-in for the prime minister.

"The bookmakers in Lahore and the newspa-

pers in Pakistan are... predicting a clear win for the Pakistan People's Party."

Bhutto said in an interview, predicting a minimum of 110 seats for her party in the 217-member National Assembly in Wednesday's elections.

Bhutto, campaigning across the country, has had little time for Naudero but party workers were mailing signed letters from the ex-prime minister to local residents asking for their vote.

Most locals had little doubt for which candidate they would be casting their vote.

"I live in Benazir's village so of course I will vote for her," said a tea seller in Naudero. "I am not interested in what she does for us, all I know is that I will vote for her because she is the head of the village."

Other voters had given the matter a little more thought.

"Benazir started to put up a rice mill when she was prime minister and began a public housing scheme," said the owner of a vicee shop. "I want her to be prime minister and to finish this work."

"I pray that Benazir Bhutto will come back," shouted a street stall holder.

"I will vote for Benazir because of her father,"

said a pilgrim visiting the family grave where Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was buried after he was hanged in 1979 by military dictator General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq after a disputed murder conviction.

Not all Naudero residents were in favour of the daughter.

"We are allergic to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) because they do nothing for the people, we are allergic to the Islamic parties because they are not politicians," said government servant Amir Bukhsh.

"We want freedom for Sind," he said and demanded that Bhutto's younger brother, Murtaza, return from self-exile in Syria and take over the PPP as his father's heir.

Murtaza, wanted in Pakistan on terrorism charges, has lived abroad for 16 years but has registered as a candidate on two national and four provincial assembly seats in a move that could erode some of his sister's Sind power base.

A rift has appeared in the family since the rival siblings' mother, Nusrat Bhutto, launched Murtaza's campaign and began canvassing on his behalf. Benazir declines to comment.

"We are confident of getting an outright majority," she said.

Menem to reform constitution

BUENOS AIRES, Oct 4: President Carlos Menem came closer to his goal of reforming the constitution to allow him a second term in office following his party's victory in key congressional elections, reports AP.

Argentina's most old, constitution limits the president to one six-year mandate. Menem's campaign focused on reforming it to allow him to run for a second term in 1995. The charter can be amended by a two-thirds vote in both houses of congress.

Official returns, based on 68.4 per cent of votes cast, gave the governing Peronist Party 41.4 per cent of the vote, compared to 31.1 per cent for the opposition Civic Radical Union.

MODIN, an ultra-nationalist party led by cashiered army Lt. Col. Aldo Rico, who headed two military rebellions against the government of former President Raul Alfonsín.