

BRIEFLY

ROK may buy Russian subs: The South Korean Defence Ministry may buy convention submarines from Russia, reports said Sunday, AP says from Seoul.

The ministry is studying a plan to buy 2,000-ton "Kilo" Russian submarines starting in the year 2000 because they are cheaper than comparable European models, the national daily Chosun Ilbo said, quoting an unnamed Defence Ministry official.

The report did not say whether the purchase would be made against 1.46 billion dollars in loans and interest Russia owes South Korea.

Tariq Aziz leaves France: Iraqi Vice Premier Tariq Aziz left France after receiving unspecified medical treatment, the French Foreign Ministry said Saturday, AP reports from Paris.

Ministry spokesman Richard Dugué would only say that the 57-year-old Aziz, Iraq's second-in-command after Saddam Hussein, had left the country after arriving the previous week.

Officials would not specify exactly when Aziz arrived or left but had said he was to spend eight days in France. Visiting PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who left Saturday, said Friday that he was unable to meet with Aziz because the Iraqi official had already left the country.

Yemen frees 23 tourists: Twenty-three Western tourists held for two days by a tribe in the remote desert regions of Marib were released Saturday, the Interior Ministry said, AP reports from Yemen.

The tourists — 18 Germans, four Austrians and an Italian — were not harmed, and were released with the four vehicles in which they had been traveling when seized Thursday, the statement said.

According to the statement, the tribal kidnappers released their hostages when security forces surrounded them.

Fellini undergoes tracheotomy: Film director Federico Fellini, in a coma for nearly a week after suffering a heart attack, underwent a tracheotomy Saturday to ease his breathing, AP reports from Rome.

Dr Massimo Antonelli of Rome's Polyclinic Hospital said there were no apparent complications.

In the procedure, a tube is inserted in the air passage and connected to a respirator, Antonelli said it is a typical measure for patients who are on breathing devices for a long time.

12 killed in Indian road mishap: Twelve people including a number of foreign tourists, were killed and 20 injured when a bus plunged into a gorge today in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, the Press Trust of India said, AFP reports from New Delhi.

The accident occurred on a mountain highway today near Palachar village while the tourist bus was heading for New Delhi from Manali, a hill resort, the news agency said.

Four people were killed at the same spot about five hours earlier when their van left the highway and plunged some 250 feet (75 meters) into the gorge, it said.

France suspends aid to Burundi: France on Saturday announced immediate suspension of all military and economic aid to Burundi except for humanitarian support, condemning a military coup in the Central African country, AP reports from Paris.

In its communique, the French Foreign Ministry cited alarming information, from Burundi and demanded precise information immediately on President Melchior Ndadaye and several of his ministers and supporters.

A member of Burundi's parliament, Jackson Ngezako was quoted Saturday by state-run Radio Rwanda as saying Ndadaye and several Cabinet ministers were captured and killed in Thursday's coup.

3 French consulate staff kidnapped in Algeria

ALGIERS, Oct 24: Three French diplomatic employees were abducted Sunday morning, officials said, and suspicion fell on Muslim fundamentalist militants who have begun targeting foreigners, reports AP.

Seven foreigners, including two Frenchmen, have been killed in the past four weeks by armed gangs believed to be fundamentalists in a 21-month-old insurgency against the government.

"France condemns this admissible act and demands their release," the French Foreign Ministry in Paris said in a communique announcing the new abductions of the three French Consulate employees.

The statement said France "expects that Algerian authorities will put all their efforts in obtaining their release."

The ministry did not give any further information on the abduction, and ministry officials were not immediately available for comment. The consulate, separate from the embassy, handles visas and other administrative matters.

The Algerian government has been unable to stamp out the fundamentalist insurgency despite curfews and sweeps. More than 2,000 people have died since the government canceled elections in January 1992 that the fundamentalists were expected to win on voter discontent with corruption and mismanagement.

The newest phase of the insurgency, attacks on foreigners, could be a devastating blow to a government that has been seeking political and economic support from abroad.

The foreign community includes numerous technical experts working with Algeria's oil and gas industry, the main source of foreign exchange for a nation in economic disarray.

On Thursday, three foreign technicians were found dead after they were abducted.

Govt-UNITA talks in Lusaka today

LISBON, Oct 24: Representatives of Angola's government and UNITA rebels will meet next week in Zambia to renew talks to end Angola's 18-year civil war the United Nations announced Saturday, reports AP.

A statement released by the UN mission in the Angolan capital, Luanda, said "exploratory talks" between the two sides would start Monday in Lusaka, the Zambian capital.

The last round of peace talks, held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, broke down last May. Since then, several attempts to restart negotiations have failed.

Pakistan urges world community Take immediate steps to stop persecution of Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD, Oct 24: Pakistan, calling the situation in Indian-held Kashmir "serious" today urged the international community to take immediate steps to stop the persecution of Muslims in the disputed Himalayan region, reports AFP.

"Time has come now for the international community to take stock of the seriousness of the situation," acting President Wasim Sajjad said after a clash with Indian troops by protesters against the siege of Kashmir's holiest shrine of Hazratbal Friday left more than 50 people dead.

"The world community should ensure that the human rights violations in Kashmir are brought to an immediate end," Sajjad told reporters, after opening a conference of Commonwealth Tax Administrations (CATA) here.

He described the Indian troops' firing on unarmed civilians protesting the week-old

siege and "continued sacrilege" of the shrine as a "tragic and sad incident, exposing the holiness of the claims of the Indian government that they are a tolerant society."

Sajjad said the attack also showed "the minorities in India are being harassed, persecuted and suppressed." The human rights situation in India, particularly Kashmir "has reached a proportion where the international community must adopt immediate measures to stop it."

The Indians during their operation created an "iron curtain" to conceal their crimes and deny access to the world press to have first hand information about the miserable plight of the Kashmiri people," he added.

The President said the Kashmir situation now required the "most urgent attention" of the United Nations to resolve the issue on the basis of its resolutions.

Kashmir has been a bone of

contention between India and Pakistan who have fought two of their three wars for the control of entire state, the northern third of which is administered by Islamabad.

After the first Indo-Pakistan war in 1949, the United Nations proposed a plebiscite in India's only majority state to determine which way the population wanted to go.

The stepped up struggle by militant Muslim organisations in the valley and Indian counter-action over the past three years has so far claimed more than 7,000 lives, India accuses Pakistan of fuelling the rebellion — charges Islamabad denies while lending moral support to what it calls a freedom struggle.

The Hazratbal siege and the latest killings have been widely condemned in Pakistan where Muslim groups were daily staging protest demonstrations.

Meanwhile, Indian troops today allowed food in for the first time to Kashmiri separatist guerrillas and Muslim pilgrims who have been holed up in a mosque here for the past nine days, officials said.

A local doctor was also allowed in side the Hazratbal mosque to examine the estimated 50 armed militants and 70 pilgrims who have been barricaded inside the shrine, which has been under siege by the army since October 15.

Thirty-five kilograms (77 pounds) of meat, a large tub of rice and loaves of traditional Kashmiri bread were taken into the lakeside mosque complex by the head priest of the shrine, Bashuddin Farooqi, and four volunteers, Kashmir government officials said.

Dr Fayaz Khalid Farooqi told reporters following his examinations that many of the people inside the shrine were suffering from fatigue and some were ill.



US Rep Joseph P Kennedy II (L) poses with Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide (2nd-R), Kennedy's mother Ethel Kennedy (2nd-R), and his new wife Beth Kelly Kennedy (R) after wedding ceremony at Kennedy's home in Brighton Saturday. Aristide was an invited guest. — AFP photo

Israel frees 700 Palestinian prisoners today

JERUSALEM, Oct 24: The release of several hundred Palestinian prisoners will start next week, probably on Monday, as part of the ongoing confidence-building measures designed to help implement the Israel-PLO peace accord, reports Xinhua.

Criteria for the first round of release of Palestinian prisoners were worked out last week by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in the Egyptian border resort of Taba.

They include those who are sick, women, children under 18 and men over 50.

Falling into these categories are about 700 Palestinian prisoners, both Israeli and Palestinian sources say.

The Israeli army source said the military prosecutor and staff in the central and southern commands had over the week-end begun locating all the prisoners and detainees who fall into those categories.

The PLO reportedly said in Cairo the release would be the first of what the Palestinians claim to be more than 11,000 detainees in Israeli jails.

However, Israel has made it clear that further releases of Palestinian prisoners will be staged at intervals pending progress in the Taba talks on the implementation of the Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area in the West Bank.

Israeli and Palestinian delegates will resume their talks in Taba, which borders with southern Israel, on Monday.

On Friday Israeli police minister Moshe Shahal said the release of Palestinian prisoners is not an amnesty, but a decision in keeping with the authority of the military commander.

On the one hand, the PLO said in Cairo over the weekend that those prisoners to be released will belong to all Palestinian factions, including the

Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas, which rejects peace talks with Israel.

On the other, Israel said members of Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process are expected to remain behind bars.

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However, Israeli security officials say some Hamas members with health problems are likely to be set free too.

Senior Israeli government official have said time and again the implementation of its peace agreement with the PLO, signed in Washington last month, is the country's top priority.

According to the agreement, the Taba talks should conclude in mid-December and an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho will take place within the next four months.

10 fundamentalists killed in Algeria

ALGIERS, Oct 24: Security forces killed 10 Muslim fundamentalists Saturday in separate incidents, police said, reports AFP.

Seven fundamentalists were killed in Taourirt, near Chlef, 300 kilometers (200 miles) west of the capital, after they opened fire on police patrol which gave chase. One of the attackers managed to escape, police said.

Meanwhile three armed fundamentalists were killed and one injured at their base in Bordu Bou Arreridj, 300 kilometers (200 miles) east of Algiers.

Separately, one Thursday a 43-year-old army officer, named as Moussa Hamou, was assassinated in the southeastern Algiers suburb of Kojba while waiting for his wife in front of the school where she taught.

A policeman, Ahmed Daya, 37, was also killed Thursday in front of his home in Medea, 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Algiers by three men with hunting rifles.

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KABUL, Oct 24: Renewed fighting between rebel factions has left at least 21 people dead and 50 wounded in this devastated capital city, witnesses said Saturday, reports AP.

Two bitter rivals exchanged artillery fire and fought an infantry battle for more than four hours Friday night on the western outskirts of Kabul, observers said.

Ittehad-e-Islami, a Sunni Muslim group allied with President Burhanuddin Rabbani, clashed with Hezb-e-Wahdat, a pro-Iranian Shiite group, the witnesses added.

After relative calm in September, heavy fighting broke out again this month in Kabul and nearby towns. Scores were reported killed in battles more than a week ago in Sarobi and Jalalabad, two towns to the east of Kabul.

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Germany wants to be dominant in Europe: Thatcher

BONN, Oct 24: Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher hinted in comments published on Saturday that she believed Germany wanted to be dominant in Europe, reports Reuter.

In an interview with Der Spiegel Magazine, Thatcher also said she believed India should be the next nation to have a permanent seat on the UN

Security Council, dismissing Germany's aspiration.

The next nation to be accepted should without doubt be India, a democracy of over 800 million people. India has a far better claim than anyone else, she said.

Thatcher, who has said she opposed rapid German unification for fear Germany would become "an overnight subject", asked why the country was so keen to bind itself into a European union.

It's quite clear, You Germans don't want to anchor Germany in Europe, you want to anchor Europe in Germany, she said in comments quoted in Germany.

Thatcher left office in 1990, in her just-published memoirs, "The Downing Street Years," she describes Germany as hovering between aggression and self-doubt.

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Margaret Thatcher

Off the Record

Mother jailed for forcing daughter to have sex

CHICAGO: A woman was sentenced to 55 years in prison for forcing her 11-year-old daughter to have sex with a man in exchange for 50 dollars drugs and a pair of shoes, reports AP.

Patricia Brown, 33, was convicted last month on three counts of aggravated criminal assault and six counts of criminal abuse. During a sentencing hearing Friday, Judge Christy Berkos said Brown committed the "most despicable crime that can be committed."

During the trial, prosecutors said Brown agreed to let Bennett Mitchell, 33, have sex with her daughter at her home in June 1991. In exchange, she received or was promised drugs, 50 dollars and a pair of tennis shoes.

"Patricia watched as this man defiled her daughter," said Allison Perona, assistant state's attorney, during the trial. Mitchell's trial was scheduled for October.

Brown has eight children and all are in state custody.

Shared Nobel Prize an 'insult': Winnie

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa: Winnie Mandela said Saturday it was an insult for her estranged husband, ANC president Nelson Mandela, to share the Nobel Peace Prize with President F W de Klerk, reports AP.

She called de Klerk an "angel of death" whose hands dripped with the blood of innocent men, women and children.

The outspoken Mrs Mandela, herself a popular figure to radical black youths, addressed a rally in the Spweto black township by a police and prison workers union opposed by the government.

Dozens of uniformed black policemen took part in the union march led by former police officer Gregory Rockman, who started the labour rights group after losing his job four years ago when he criticised police colleagues for beating demonstrators.

Nelson Mandela and de Klerk were named co-winners of the 1993 Peace Prize on October 15 for their efforts to negotiate the end of white rule in South Africa.

Woman offers her kidney for job

TOULOUSE, France: An unemployed woman, saying she was ashamed of living off welfare checks, tried to take out a newspaper ad offering her kidney for a job, the paper reported Saturday, says AFP.

The Depeche du Midi, or Southern Dispatch, said it turned down the ad because French law prohibits the sale of human body parts, but the paper interviewed the woman instead.

"Woman, 42 years old, very nice appearance, excellent health but in need, offers a kidney to someone able to provide a lasting and legal job," read the ad she sent to the regional paper.



Winnie Mandela

Trial of Sheikh Abdel-Rahman, 46 other militants resumes

FAYOUM, Egypt, Oct 24: Along with words of revolt came a warning to the United States as trial resumed briefly Saturday for 47 Muslim militants, including a blind Egyptian cleric charged in the World Trade Center bombing, reports AP.

The trial began in April but was discontinued in July as Egypt sought — unsuccessfully — to extradite Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, who is jailed in the United States.

Abdel-Rahman and the others, most his followers, face charges ranging from illegally demonstrating to trying to kill police during a 1989 anti-government protest here. Defence lawyers say the maximum penalty is life in prison.

The 55-year-old Sheikh is the spiritual leader of the outlawed al-Gama al-Islamiya, or Islamic Group, one of several Muslim movements accused of trying to topple Egypt's secular government and establish Islamic rule.

Attacks on Coptic Christians, government officials, tourists and security forces have claimed more than 200 lives in two years.

The Sheikh also is implicated in the February 26 bombing of the World Trade Center and an alleged plot, uncovered in June to blow up the United Nations

and other sites in New York City.

Apart from the Sheikh, eight other fugitives are being tried in absentia.

Police vans surrounded the court-house and barricades kept by standers and relatives away as the trial resumed in state security court, only to be adjourned when defence lawyers asked for more time to study the case. Judge Ahmed Erredine el-Ashmawi scheduled the next session for November 20.

Nervous about a possible reaction by Abdel-Rahman's followers across the country, authorities banned pictures and only reluctantly allowed in reporters.

"Rise, rise. Revolt, revolt. For the sake of Islam," many of the 37 defenders chanted in their court-room cages.

Hassan Mekawi, a defendant given the role of spokesman, demanded the Sheikh's release.

The United States is provoking the anger of all the Islamic movements, not only of us, by jailing him," he said.

Six people were killed and more than 1,000 injured in the blast at the World Trade Center. At least a dozen of the Sheikh's

followers have been implicated and four are on trial in New York.

None of those are among the followers in the Egyptian case, the second trial for the 47 militants, who were acquitted in 1990.

A retrial was ordered this year because President Hosni Mubarak never approved the verdict as required under Egyptian law.

Abdel-Rahman has been acquitted three times in Egyptian trials. In addition to the Fayoum case, he was found innocent of involvement in the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat and a subsequent uprising in the southern town of Assiut.

Blinded since childhood by diabetes, he has been living in the United States in self-exile since 1990.

He has demanded political asylum in the United States, which, according to Egyptian and American lawyers, has complicated Egypt's ability to extradite him.

Even if he is acquitted in New York, the United States could be prohibited from deporting him to a place where he would face political or religious persecution.



A police officer checks the identification of one of the relatives of Egyptian Islamic Fundamentalist Leader Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman in front of the Fayoum Court in Egypt on Saturday. — AFP photo

Georgian troops capture two villages

TBILISHI, Oct 24: Government troops captured two villages from rebels in western Georgia early today and crossed a bridge on the road to the key Black Sea port of Poti, the defence ministry said, reports Reuter.

A ministry spokesman told Reuters troops were also battling forces loyal to ex-president Zviad Gamsakhurdia on a second front near the rebel-held town of Senaki.

The villages taken were Supsa and Grigoleti, the ministry said, adding that the government forces, who back Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze, were approaching Poti from the south.

S Africa world's most violent country: Mandela

DURBAN, Oct 24: South Africa is the world's most violent country, African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

"Statistics have indicated that South Africa has become the most violent country in the world," Mandela said at a fundraising dinner in the Indian Ocean port city of Durban.