

BRIEFLY

Yeltsin's order on N-materials:

Moving to plug holes in Russia's widely questioned nuclear security, President Boris Yeltsin has ordered improvements in the control and safekeeping on nuclear materials. AP reports from Moscow.

The decree, announced late Friday, establishes new rules for the storage, use and transportation of nuclear materials and tightens border controls to try to prevent nuclear smuggling.

2 Kazakh ministers sacked:

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on Friday sacked Economics Minister Mars Ukrumbayev and Interior Minister Vladimir Shumov for what his aide called "violation of moral and ethical principles of a cabinet member". Reuter reports from Moscow.

Interfax news agency quoted State Adviser Kairbek Suceimenov as telling national television that Shumov's son, who worked as an investigator had taken a bribe. The minister tried to harass the man who revealed this, it said.

Kurd army official shot dead:

A Kurd military official was shot to death and another had his arms blown off by a letter bomb in Erbil, the main Kurdistan city in Iraq, several sources said on Friday. AFP reports from Erbil.

Rahman Taha, commander of the Kurd's Peshmerga fighters of Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDK), was killed on Thursday by unknown gunman while he was driving to work. PDK spokesman Sami Abdel Rahman said.

Cinema reopens in Gaza:

The curtain has gone up for the first showing of a film in the Gaza City cinema since it was closed almost seven years ago at the start of the Palestinian uprising. AFP reports from Gaza Strip.

The Al Nasr (for victory) Cinema has been showing since Thursday an old Indian film "A Giant's Anger."

S Koreans celebrate Chusok:

Millions of South Koreans packed highways, airports and train stations yesterday as the nation began celebrating Chusok, the harvest moon festival that draws more than half the nation's people to their hometowns. AP reports from Seoul.

The Transportation Ministry predicted that about 28 million people, or 60 per cent of all South Koreans, would travel home for the four-day holiday that ends Wednesday.

Burundian lawmaker shot:

A parliamentary deputy of the ruling Hutu-dominated Front for Democracy in Burundi (Frodebu) was shot and seriously wounded in the Burundian capital Bujumbura on Friday, sources reached by telephone said. AFP reports from Nairobi.

The lawmaker Norbert Ndihiukubwayo was admitted to hospital in the capital according to the sources who requested anonymity.

Japan sends 23 soldiers:

Japan dispatched 23 soldiers on Saturday to assist Rwandan refugees with medical facilities, water and transportation in Japan's first overseas humanitarian mission since the end of World War II. AFP reports from Tokyo.

About 450 Japanese more troops are scheduled to join next month the first contingent, who flew to Zaire and Kenya. Japan has so far taken part in peacekeeping missions under the United Nations in Cambodia and Mozambique since 1992.

Homage to Yemeni leader:

Several hundred people ignored threats from Islamic fundamentalists on Friday to take part in an annual ceremony in a mausoleum in Aden to commemorate the death of a former Yemeni religious leader. AFP reports from Aden.

The fundamentalists have said the mausoleum are un-Islamic, and dozens of armed men from the Islamic Jihad group attacked and ransacked several of them earlier in the month, including the one where Friday's ceremony took place.

Nigeria seeks explanations:

Nigeria is seeking explanations from German authorities on the deaths over the last three years of 24 Nigerians, most of whom had been in detention while awaiting deportation. The Nigerian embassy has disclosed. AFP reports from Bonn.

The German Foreign Ministry on Friday confirmed it had received a list of 23 names on September 9 and said it was taking the Nigerian request "very seriously". It added that the request had been passed on to the Interior Ministry, which would conduct an investigation.

German actress Haas dies:

Dolly Haas, a German movie star who performed on the American stage and screen and married caricaturist Al Hirschfeld, died on Friday. She was 84. AP reports from New York.

Haas died of cancer, according to Margo Feiden, a family friend and Hirschfeld's agent. Born in Hamburg, Germany, Haas began performing in cabaret and musical comedy in her teens. She became a star in German cinema, first appearing in 1929 in "One Summer of Happiness."

Australian with HIV detained:

Health officials ordered a man with the AIDS-causing virus be detained in a hospital because his behaviour posed a risk to the public. AP reports from Melbourne.

The 25-year-old man is being held in custody at Melbourne's Fairfield Hospital for Infectious Diseases, officials said on Saturday. The custody order followed two restraining orders, which were served last week, ordering the man confined to his home.

Tremor jolts S Turkey:

An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.3 shook southeastern Turkey Saturday, officials said. AP reports from Ankara.

There were no reports of damage or casualties. The center of the quake, which hit the provinces of Diyarbakir, Batman and Sirt at 5:24 am (0224 GMT) was around 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) southeast of Ankara, seismic officials in Istanbul said.

Artist Susana Black dies:

Artist Susana Soler Black, whose paintings were featured on UNICEF posters and in galleries worldwide, has died after a lengthy battle with breast cancer. She was 60. AP reports from San Antonio.

Black, who died on Wednesday, was known for her expressionist paintings that featured brilliant colours. Her daughter, Susana Hayward, is correspondent for the Associated Press in Monterrey, Mexico.

Heavy fighting in Chechnya:

Heavy fighting erupted yesterday in the breakaway republic of Chechnya between opposition elements and troops loyal to President Dzhokar Dudayev, opposition leader Umar Avturkhanov told the Interfax news agency. AFP reports from Moscow.

The fighting was taking place along a front between the villages of Keri-Yurt and Tolstoy-Yurt, north of Grozny, the capital, he said. Interfax quoted unidentified Chechnya government sources as saying the government troops had already taken control of Tolstoy-Yurt and that the fighting was over.

Major responds to IRA truce:

Surprise concessions and promises from British Prime Minister John Major have pleased his most extreme Protestant critics and IRA supporters alike. AP reports from Belfast.

On an unexpected trip Friday to Belfast, Major announced a carefully balanced series of gestures aimed at moving the divided province closer to all-party talks. While still a far-off prospect, at least all parties are considering them. His statement, Britain's most comprehensive response to the 17-day old Irish Republican Army cease-fire, sought to bring the IRA's political allies Sinn Fein in from the cold while renewing pressure on the party to declare a permanent end to IRA violence.

Indo-Pak tussle revives fears of N-conflicts in South Asia

WASHINGTON, Sept 17: The recent sabre-rattling between India and Pakistan over each other's nuclear weapons and Kashmir have revived fears that South Asia is one area of the world besides the Korean peninsula where a nuclear conflict is most likely, reports IPS.

While former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's admission that Pakistan has a nuclear bomb and could use it has brought the South Asian nuclear clock closer to midnight, Washington policy makers seem preoccupied with how best to attack South Asia's vast market.

"After Indian Premier P.V. Narasimha Rao's and Pakistani General Karak's visit to Washington earlier this year, the nuclear issue seems to have gone in the background. The economic interest has become the priority in the US foreign policy on South Asia," says Michael Krepon, of the Washington based think tank Henry L. Stimson Centre. Adds City University of New

York Political Science Professor Sumit Ganguly: "People in the US Congress believe there is an emerging potential market in the region, which they do not want to be grabbed by Germany and Japan."

Sharif's statement was the first ever categorical assertion by a senior Pakistani official that Pakistan has a bomb, and followed any angry exchange of words over Kashmir by Rao and Pakistani premier Benazir Bhutto in their independence Day speeches.

Rao described as an "unfinished task" the liberation of the portion of Kashmir forcibly occupied by Pakistan soon after the subcontinent's independence and partition by colonial British rulers in 1947.

The Indian leaders' uncharacteristically aggressive tone was provoked by Bhutto's speech a day earlier where she said Pakistan's security concerns were linked to the "unfinished agenda of the partition."

Bhutto offered to help pro-

vide the US goal of making South Asia nuclear weapons free, if Washington could "understand and accommodate" Islamabad's position on Kashmir.

Less than a week later, her predecessor Sharif admitted at a local rally that Pakistan has a nuclear bomb and went on to add that if India ever attacked Pakistan, it would trigger a nuclear war.

But many analysts here say the administration of US President Bill Clinton has yet to formulate a clear South Asian policy despite its recognition that the subcontinent is an "important region."

It has kept pressure on New Delhi and Islamabad to roll back their nuclear programmes, but experts say Washington is more keen on attending to the vast South Asian business, especially the 300 million middle class consumers in a free market-friendly India.

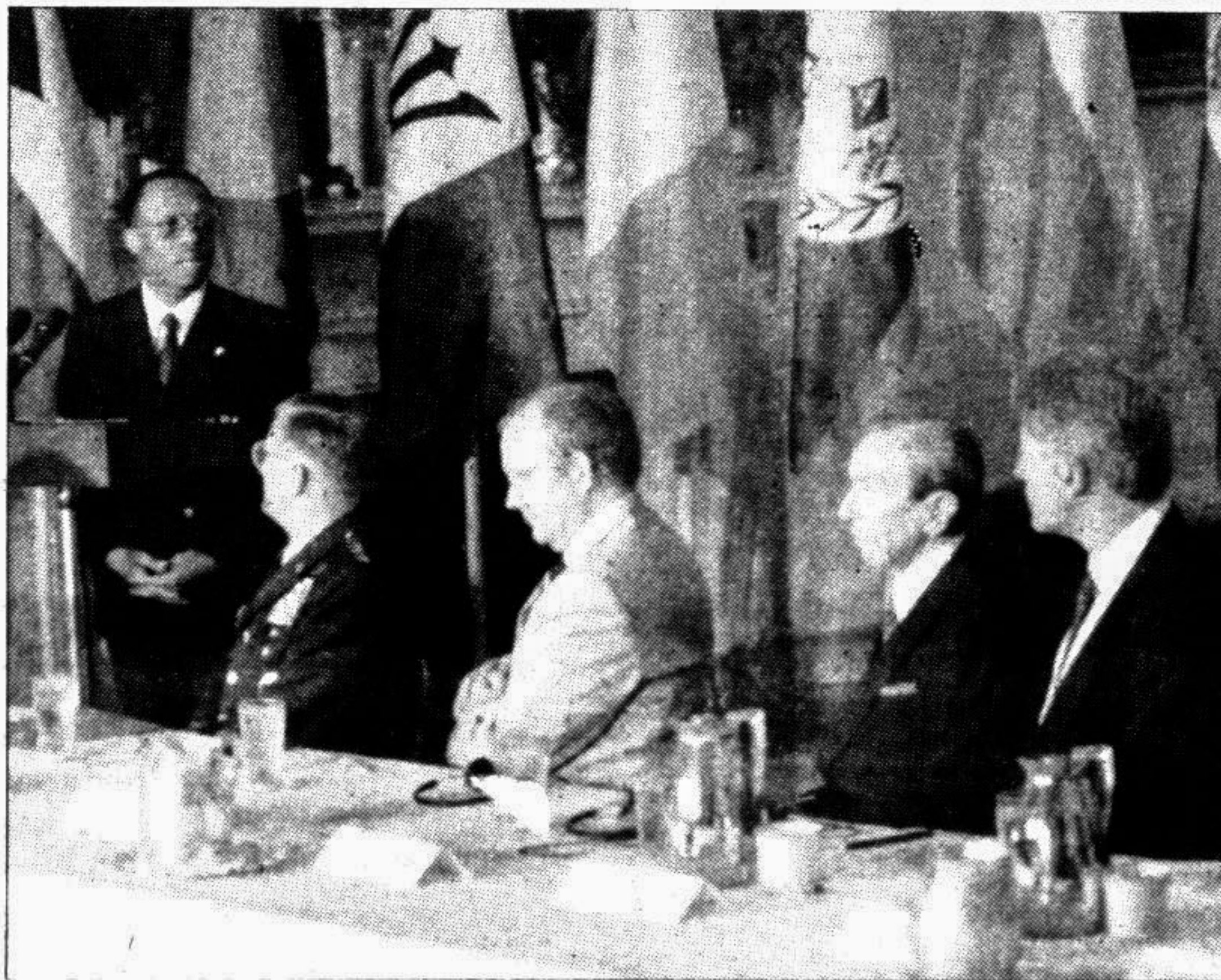
"The economic reforms in the region are still very important for US business and in-

vestments. It is even more important than the nuclear issue, a senior State Department official told IPS.

Trade and investment were high on Rao's agenda when he visited the United States with a large contingent of top Indian entrepreneurs earlier this year. US Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary travelled to India in July with representatives of leading US power and non conventional energy companies.

Still, former US National Security Council member Mitchell Riss insists: "Nuclear proliferation in South Asia is our real concern. So is the possibility of war over Kashmir. The long-term US commercial interests in South Asia are being impeded by the nuclear issue."

Comments another Senior US official: "People in the US Congress are very bitter about Pakistan's response (to US efforts at nuclear non-proliferation in the region). It has failed to keep the promises it made."



President Bill Clinton (R) listens to deposed president Jean Bertrand Aristide (L) on Friday as he addresses a summit meeting at the White House in Washington, DC. Seated at the table are: Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili (2nd L), National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher (2nd R). — AFP photo

2 SC resolutions to punish Serbs introduced

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 17: The United States, Russia, Britain, France and Germany Friday introduced two Security Council resolutions to reward the rump Yugoslav state and punish the Bosnian Serbs, reports Reuter.

The first suspends selected sanctions, such as air travel, against the Yugoslav republics of Serbia and Montenegro. These activities are to reward Yugoslavia for banning war materials and other goods to the Bosnian Serbs from crossing its borders.

The second resolution tightens financial and travel

curbs against the Bosnian Serbs for rejecting the latest peace plan to end the Balkan war.

Highlights of the second resolution tightening sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs are: —Calls on states to stop any political talks with Bosnian Serb leader.

—Prohibits travel by Bosnian Serb officials, including legislative authorities and their allies outside areas under the control of Bosnian Serb forces.

—Prohibits trade or other economic activity with any entity owned or controlled by Bosnian Serb forces except

for humanitarians goods. Freezes financial assets held abroad.

—Prohibits commercial riverine traffic from entering ports in areas of Bosnian under control of Bosnian Serb forces except if authorised by the Security Council and in case of an emergency.

—Calls for all shipments of goods destined for Bosnian Serb areas of Bosnia to be inspected and certified in advance. Neighbouring states are to watch for any diversion of goods to Serb-held area of Croatia.

11 Indian mine workers killed

JAMSHERPUR, Sept 17: Eleven labourers were killed and 50 others injured, 10 of them seriously, when a company bus packed with Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) mine workers plunged into a deep gorge at the Gua mines area about 100 kms from Chaibasa in West Singhbhum district of Bihar yesterday, reports PTI.

Though official source have so far confirmed the death of only 11 persons, more workers were feared killed as bodies are likely to be under the debris of the bus or scattered around the site due to the impact from the accident in the remote forest area.

Ganesh Man Singh quits Nepali Congress

KATHMANDU, Sept 17: A senior leader of the ruling Nepali Congress party said on Friday he had quit the party because he was unhappy about the way it was being run, reports Reuter.

Ganesh Man Singh, who was with the party for more than 40 years, led pro-democracy demonstration in 1990 which ended King Birendra's system of absolute monarchy and ushered in the Himalayan Kingdom's first directly elected government.

The Nepali Congress is now being led by Singh's associate

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. "It is my conclusion that this party cannot do the work for which it was formed," Singh told a news conference. Party officials said Bhattarai had met Singh and asked him to stay.

Singh said the party's disappointing record in government had frustrated voters, whom he said might seek change in November. "People now think of giving a chance to the communists," he said.

Congress had 113 deputies in the 205-strong dissolved House of Representatives.

HK goes to polls today

HONG KONG, Sept 17: Candidates lobbied voters and distributed manifestos Saturday as Hong Kong readied for its first fully democratic election under British rule, reports AP.

The last-minute preparations for Sunday's election climaxed weeks of often-fierce campaigning which have highlighted how party politics is blooming in Hong Kong before China recovers the colony in 1997.

A record 757 candidates are contesting 364 seats on District Boards - community bodies which advise the government on garbage collection, where to put bus-stops and other local concerns.

Iraq protests violations of airspace by US

CAIRO, Sept 17: Iraq has lodged a protest with the United Nations against violations of its airspace by US planes undertaking surveillance operations over its territories, reports Xinhua.

The protest, included in a message dispatched to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was broadcast in Baghdad before noon yesterday. Egypt's Middle East news agency reported in a dispatch from the Iraqi capital.

Indonesia acquires 4000 islands

JAKARTA, Sept 17: Indonesia has acquired about 4,000 previously unknown islands, a press report said here today, reports AFP.

The Suara Karya daily quoted head of the national survey and mapping coordinating agency, Paul Suharto, as saying that the country - which already boasts 13,000 islands - has registered a further 4,000 islands after a recent geographical survey.

The newly discovered islands are thought to have been submerged when the last such survey was conducted.

2 Greek embassy officials ordered to leave Albania

TIRANA, Sept 17: Albania has ordered two Greek embassy officials to leave the country within seven days, Albanian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alfred Sereqi said on Friday, reports AFP.

Late Thursday the Greek Foreign Ministry condemned an Albanian request for Greece to reduce its embassy staff in Tirana.

Interviewed by AFP, Sereqi confirmed the expulsion of two officials: Georgios Daskalakis and Ioannis Koulas.

Off the Record



Famous French comics heroes Asterix (R) and Obelix stand in front of Big Ben tower on Friday after arriving in London from their village in the Asterix entertainment park, near Paris. The two characters celebrate the 25th anniversary of Asterix publication in the United Kingdom. — AFP photo

Man wakes from coma after six years

SEOUL: A man who had languished in a deep coma for six years defied medical science and stunned his family when he awoke suddenly in a South Korean hospital and stammered: "Hi... Amen", news reports said on Saturday reports AFP.

Chon Young-kig, 40, came round on September 10 at a Jesuit hospital in Chonju, 240 kilometers (144 miles) south of Seoul, after remaining in a coma since suffering head injuries in a traffic accident in October 1988.

"When he opened his eyes and stammered 'anyong (hello) and amen, I was so shocked that I could not say anything," his wife told reporters.

When Chon was taken to the hospital six years ago, he was completely dependent on breathing and feeding equipment to survive, his doctor told newspapers.

A week after he came to his senses, Chon is recuperating from a hemorrhage in his fractured skull, the doctor reportedly said.

The wife has loyally nursed her husband and has launched a law suit for compensation and medical costs totalling 250,000 dollars, he said.

New tips for infertile men

LONDON: Infertile men trying to father children should have intercourse once a day or more to improve their sperm counts, a British medical journal said on Friday, reports Reuter.

The report by Israeli experts published in the Lancet contradicts previous advice that men with low sperm counts trying to have children should save up their sperm and have intercourse every other day around the time of ovulation.

Doctors at the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department of Tel Aviv University reported that most infertile men could increase their fertility potential either by pooling sequential ejaculates in test tubes or by having intercourse every day or even twice a day at the time of ovulation.

Up to 15 per cent of couples are infertile and almost 50 per cent of these cases are attributed to the male partner. Higher sperm counts are associated with increased chances of conception.

Fergie deserves a second chance

LONDON: The Duchess of York, better known as Fergie, says that she has made some mistakes but deserves a second chance, reports AP.

"What's important is making sure that you can help others from your own mistakes," according to the duchess, who hit a personal low point in August 1992 when tabloids published pictures of her topless and cavorting with an American friend.

She has been separated from Prince Andrew, the second son of Queen Elizabeth II, since March 1992.

"I've made a lot of mistakes and it's really important that I can take in what I've learnt and then try to channel my energies now into helping others," she said Friday in an interview with BBC radio.

"Youth for today is my main theme. I want to try and say... OK I made a mistake. I need a second chance... so do we all out there, too."



'Titti la rossa' — a new player in Italian politics

ROME, Sept 17: The colorful world of Italian politics is coming to terms with an unfamiliar player - Italy's new woman, reports Reuter.

The general election that swept Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to power in March saw the number of women in the lower houses of parliament double to one in eight of the 630 members - more than the French or British legislatures.

But the power dressing women who are taking on some of the top jobs in one of Europe's most male-dominated societies claim no part in the feminist movement.

"Of course the elections were a step forward for feminism," said Tiziana Parenti, president of parliament's anti-mafia commission, a job that

makes her one of Italy's most prominent and closely guarded-movers and shakers.

"But I'm not a feminist. The feminists don't even like me. Before winning a seat for media magnate Berlusconi's Conservative Forza Italia Party, Parenti was already a household name as a member of Milan's elite 'mani pulite' (clean hands) pool of graft-busting magistrates.

Nicknamed 'Titti la rossa' (Titti the red) because of her hair rather than her politics, it was she who tried to nail Italy's old Communist Party for corruption - and quit in protest when she felt colleagues were blocking her.

"One thing common to the women who are succeeding now is that we are not contaminated by the scandals of the past," Parenti told Reuters.

"We are bringing a new approach to politics, at a time when there are a lot of new ideas and projects to take on."

The most prominent woman in Italian politics used to be former porn star Ilona Staller, nicknamed 'Ciccolina' (cuddles), but the parliamentary amazon of the nineties is a more serious player.

"It's difficult to pick out one single woman to represent the new woman, because we are so different from each other," Parenti said.

The three main contenders are lower house speaker Irene Pivetti, 31, Justice Commission President Tiziana Maiolo, 53, and Parenti herself, 44.

Pivetti, a graduate of the

Catholic University of Milan and a former journalist, has been a member of parliament since 1992 in the federalist northern league and in April became the country's youngest parliamentary speaker.

Known by admirers and detractors alike as 'Joan of Arc' for her Christian fervour, Pivetti's comments have led the leader of her own party Umberto Bossi to compare her fundamentalism to that of Iran's late Ayatollah Khomeini.

She caused outrage among women's groups soon after the election with comments on the role of women in Italy.

"Mussolini had the most advanced policy towards women - and nothing was done after him in those areas," she said.

Sihanouk urges Ranariddh to free 9 Thais

PHNOM PENH, Sept 17: To improve relations with Thailand, the Cambodian King has requested the release of nine Thais detained in connection with a failed coup attempt, reports AP.

King Norodom Sihanouk noted that the government had pardoned military officials in several provinces for their part in the aborted coup in July and had earlier freed five other Thai suspects.

Sihanouk made the unusual request in a letter addressed to co-Premiers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen on Friday. The letter was seen by the Associated Press on Saturday.