

## BRIEFLY

**Kravchuk wins by-election:** Former President Leonid Kravchuk won election to parliament, just three months after being narrowly defeated in his bid for a second term as Ukraine's leader, election officials said yesterday. AP reports from Kiev.

Kravchuk, a former Communist Party ideology chief, received 87 per cent of the votes cast in Sunday's by-election in a two-candidate race to fill a seat vacated by the death of a lawmaker.

**4 die in Indian train mishap:** Four people were killed and nine injured Sunday when they were struck by a tunnel while riding on the top of a train to Chandigarh, a railway official said. AP reports from Chandigarh.

The 13 people were among many Indians who travel to the state of Punjab each year to apply for jobs as railway ticket collectors. Every year, 32,000 people take an exam for only 600 vacancies in that position.

**Russian guards kill 22 Tajiks:** Russian guards controlling Tajikistan's uneasy frontier with Afghanistan killed 22 Tajik rebels who tried to enter the former Soviet republic over the past two days, a border-guard spokesman said yesterday. Reuters reports from Dushanbe.

He said the rebels had stepped up cross-border attacks after representatives of Tajikistan's ex-communist government and the opposition signed a temporary ceasefire in Tehran on September 12.

**Attack on Kohl's party offices:** An arson attack on the Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) offices near Bonn caused damage estimated at half-a-million marks (about 300,000 dollars), police said on Sunday. AFP reports from Bonn.

A police spokesman said the attack, which happened overnight Saturday, could have been politically motivated. The party is led by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

**18 British sailors hurt:** Eighteen British sailors were hurt, five of them seriously, when a lifeboat crashed into the sea on Sunday during a routine rescue exercise on a ferry in this French Channel port, local authorities said. AFP reports from Cherbourg.

The accident, which happened around 10:30 am (0930 GMT), involved sailors from the P and O Car ferry Pride of Hampshire, which covers the Portsmouth-Cherbourg route for the British company.

**44 arrested in China:** Forty-four people, including a Myanmarese have been arrested in a major bust that smashed eight drug rings, an official report said on Monday. AP reports from Beijing.

Yang Maoxian, from Northern Myanmar, was among those arrested by police in southwest China's Yunnan province in May, the China Daily reported. Yunnan borders Myanmar and Laos, which together with Thailand make up the "Golden Triangle," responsible for most of the world's opium and heroin production.

**Temple damaged in Australia:** Australia's largest Jewish temple, the Central Synagogue at Bondi Junction in Sydney's eastern suburbs, was greatly damaged by fire on Sunday night, Reuters reports from Sydney.

The fire gutted the main sanctuary of the three-storey synagogue, which has 3,000 members. The fire was believed to have started in a second-storey air conditioning unit, and there were no suspicious circumstances, a fire brigade spokesman said yesterday.

**Plea for Japanese citizenship:** Members of a Japanese citizens group said Monday they will ask their government to grant citizenship to children of Japanese fathers and Filipino mothers, AP reports from Manila.

Most of the mothers were Filipino entertainers in Japan, said the Rev Toshifumi Aso, a Protestant pastor and secretary general of the Citizens' Network for Japanese-Filipino Children.

**Photographer found dead:** An Algerian news photographer was found dead on Sunday from a knife attack in a town west of Algiers, security sources said. AFP reports from Algiers.

The photographer Mouloud Barroudi, worked for the National Film News Agency. His body was found at around 7:00 am (0600 GMT) on Sunday morning near his house in the town of Mahlem near to Tipaza, a security services statement said.

**Medics for former Y'slavia:** Indonesia yesterday sent 219 military medics to war-torn former Yugoslavia, Reuters reports from Jakarta.

Mainly Muslim Indonesia, which chairs the 111-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), already has 25 military observers among the UN peacekeeping forces stationed in Bosnia.

**Extremists kill 2 in Egypt:** Suspected Muslim militants killed a village guard and a farmer in the southern Egyptian town of Mallawi, which has become the focus of attacks by extremist groups, security sources said yesterday. Reuters reports from Assiut, Egypt.

They said gunmen shot and killed village guard Allam Sayyed Ibrahim as he was walking whom from his field in the village of Al-Shamasi, near Mallawi 220 km (130 miles) south of Cairo, late on Sunday.

**Thai floods claim 18:** A young boy died of injuries on Monday bringing to 18 the number of holiday-makers killed when a flash flood swept down a mountainside into a stream where swimmers frolicked. AP reports from Nakhon Nayok.

"It happened so suddenly — the water overflowed from the mountain," said Charathai Teetpirach, governor of Nakhon Nayok province. "It has never happened in 40 years." The provincial hospital said the 18th victim, a boy about five or six years old, died on injuries sustained by the torrent of water on Sunday at Wang Takrai park, 90 kilometers (56 miles) northeast of Bangkok in Nakhon Nayok province. At least six others were being treated and 11 were reported missing.

**Nicole Kidman UNICEF envoy:** UNICEF on Monday appointed Nicole Kidman as its goodwill ambassador in Australia. AP reports from Sydney.

"It's work is a major contributor to correcting the problems faced by those less fortunate than we are," said the Australian-born actress, who is married to box office superstar Tom Cruise.

## Rabin-Arafat talks on polls in West Bank, Gaza Oct 3

EREZ CROSSING, Gaza Strip, Sept 26: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat agreed Sunday to start talks next week on the ambitious next phase of the peace process: Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza, reports AP.

Meeting for the second time since Palestinian autonomy began in May, the two leaders displayed a rapport noticeably absent in previous encounters.

In public statements, each addressed the lingering fears of the other's camp. Rabin pledged his commitment to the process Palestinians expect to result in an independent state, and Arafat promised to redouble efforts to curb anti-Israel terrorism by Islamic opponents of peace.

In a gesture reflecting the

new warmth in the relationship, Arafat presented Rabin with an ancient Torah scroll from Yemen and praised his spirit of cooperation.

The old enemies avoided the difficult issues that must be settled in the talks, set to begin October 3 in Cairo, agreeing only to reconvene here in a month to examine the progress.

Rabin said the negotiations are necessary to decide the nature of an elected body and to coordinate an orderly pullout of Israeli troops from West Bank cities.

"We are for elections," Rabin said. "But we have to know what will be elected, what will be the spheres of the elected body as well as the question of redeployment."

Palestinians want a quasi-parliament with about 100 members, but Israel insists last September's autonomy agree-

ment provides only for a Cabinet-like administrative body.

The Israel-PLO agreement envisioned elections in July to extend self-rule beyond the Gaza Strip and Jericho. The deadline was not met, and Arafat proposed November 1 instead.

But with the Palestinians lacking even a population registry, that deadline too is in question. Asked if November 1 was still feasible, Arafat replied: "I hope so."

Israeli officials have suggested the vote cannot be held before next summer because of the complications of withdrawing Israeli troops. The accord requires that troops be withdrawn before elections.

A hasty withdrawal could lead to increased friction between the West Bank's nearly 1 million Arabs and 120,000 Jewish settlers.



A US military patrol rides the streets of the Belair district of Port-au-Prince on Sunday as hundreds of local residents join them. In Haiti's second largest city, Cap Haitien, Haitian police and soldiers abandoned their posts as authority collapsed, following the first violent clash between US marines and a group of Haitians.

— AFP photo

## DPRK can produce 150 Scud missiles annually

SEOUL, Sept 26: North Korea can annually produce 150 medium-range Scud missiles which can reach nearly all South Korean targets, a government report here showed, says AFP.

The South's Unification Ministry said in its report to parliament that North Korea's annual production of the 500 kilometer-range (310 mile-range) Scuds was estimated at 150, and that missile exports now constitute a major source of hard currency needed to lift its hobbled economy.

From 1980 through 1993, North Korea exported more than 20 billion dollars worth of arms that accounted for one-third of its total commodity exports during the period, the report said.

South Korean experts believe that before 1996, North Korea will be able to produce

new missile whose range is estimated at up to 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles), it said.

Reuter from Tokyo reports: North Korea said today it had invited dozens of South Koreans including prominent opposition lawmakers to a ceremony marking the completion of a Tomb for Tangun, the mythical founder of the Korean race.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored in Tokyo, said the list included former opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung, current opposition leader Lee Ki-Taek and former Prime Minister Kang Young Hun.

Before his death on July 8, North Korea's official media reported president Kim Il-Sung had ordered the newly excavated 4,000-year-old Tomb of Tangun to be rebuilt and preserved as a way of

boosting national pride and patriotism.

Over the centuries, Korean children learned at their mother's knee that Tangun was born out of the union of a tiger and a bear, consummated in a garlic-filled cave.

In modern South Korea, few people take the tale literally. Kim Jong-il, designated heir and son of Kim Il-Sung, is widely expected to be confirmed as head of North Korea's ruling Communist Party and state president in the next month.

Sources in Tokyo have said the body of Kim Il-Sung, who died in July 8, may be buried in or near the remodelled Tomb of Tangun.

They said North Korea might announce communism's first dynastic succession after burying Kim in the tomb.

## 20 Hindus die in Indian bus mishap

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: At least 20 Hindu pilgrims were killed and 25 injured when their tourist bus fell down a hill near the picturesque town of Mussoorie, a news agency said Monday, reports AP.

The accident occurred Sunday night as the pilgrims were travelling from Bombay to the holy city of Haridwar, 250 kilometers (150 miles) north-east of New Delhi.

United News of India (UNI) quoted survivors as saying the driver lost control of the bus on a blind curve on top of the hill.

Meanwhile, Reuter adds: The driver and conductor of the bus were among the dead, it said.

The bus was one of a convoy of 12 hired by the pilgrims from Bombay, UNI said.

## 80 hurt in Taiwanese election violence

TAIPEI, Sept 26: More than 80 people were injured, including five seriously, Sunday when advocates of Taiwanese independence fought rivals who want Taiwan reunited with China, police said on Monday, reports AP.

Trouble erupted when about 400 supporters of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) hurled eggs, rocks and ice cubes at candidates for the New Party who were about to address 3,000 people in a park in the southern city of Kaohsiung.

The New Party supports reunification between China and Taiwan, which has been split from the mainland since 1949. Kaohsiung is a stronghold for the DPP, which wants Taiwan to declare independence from China.

Police said DPP supporters tore down New Party banners marked: "Safeguard the Republic of China, protect Taiwan's security."

Juo Gau-jeng, the New Party's candidate in elections for Taiwan's governor, led another group of people to the park and clashed with the DPP supporters.

Riot police had to separate rivals who hit one another with clubs.

The injuries were mostly minor, but five people remained in a hospital on Monday with head injuries, police said. Eight cars used by the rival parties were burned or smashed.

Wu Den-yih, the Nationalist mayor of Kaohsiung, denounced the violence.

## Pak troops kill Indian soldier in Kashmir

JAMMU, Sept 26: An army jawan was killed in an unprovoked firing by Pakistani troops in forward area of Derian in Mendhar sub-sector while militants attempt to blow up the telephone exchange in Surankote area of Poonch district in Jammu region was foiled with detection of bomb in the premises on Saturday, says PTI.

Sources said Pakistani troops opened unprovoked firing on Indian position on Saturday forcing the Indian troops to retaliate.

In the exchange of firing an Indian jawan was killed at forward post in Derian area. The casualties on the Pakistani side were not immediately known, the sources said.

Pakistan troops also fired a rocket in Balnoi area of Poonch from across the line of control causing minor injuries to a villager working in the field, where the rocket exploded.

## Mudflows: Order to evacuate 30000 Filipinos

MANILA, Sept 26: Philippine President Fidel Ramos has ordered the evacuation of about 30,000 people from villages threatened by mudflows from Mount Pinatubo volcano, officials said today, reports Reuter.

People who refuse to leave despite the imminent danger to their communities will be forcibly evicted, the presidential palace said.

Ramos issued the order during a meeting with local officials after three days of mudflows devastated 15 villages in Pampanga province, burying 1,369 houses and killing 23 people.

Officials said at least 25,000 people in Bacolor district and about 5,000 others in Porac needed to be evacuated to prevent casualties in case of new mudflows.

There has been a continuous flow of evacuees since this morning in high-risk villages. Our first priority is to get old people and the women and children out," Bacolor Vice-Mayor Anianias Canlas said by telephone.

## Iran, Turkey won't help each other's opponents

NICOSIA, Sept 26: Senior officials from Iran and Turkey agreed in Tehran on Sunday to stop opposition groups operating on each other's territory, Iranian radio said, reports Reuter.

"Turkey will not permit various groups opposing Iran to be active in Turkey," the radio quoted Turkish deputy Interior Minister Bekir Aksoy as saying after the meeting.

The broadcast was monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

"Opponents of Turkey's government will be prevented from engaging in activities in Iran," the radio quoted Aksoy's Iranian counterpart Ali Reza Tahesh as saying.

## 50 killed in Vietnamese floods

HANOI, Sept 26: Flash floods have killed 50 people, most of them children, in areas upstream from Vietnam's Mekong River delta, officials said Monday, reports AP.

Heavy rains in the past five days caused floods that killed 17 people in Long An province, 50 kilometers (31 miles) west of Ho Chi Minh City, said an official at the National Committee for Flood and Storm Control in Hanoi. At least 12 of those killed were children.

Another 33 people died in an Giang province, 189 kilometers (117 miles) southwest of Ho Chi Minh City, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The flooding submerged more than 74,000 homes and destroyed more than 17,000 tons of rice in both provinces.

## Off the Record



A tourist photographs the Eiffel Tower on Sunday next to a replica of Big Ben erected by a watch manufacturer to mark the return to standard time in continental Europe. French Environment Minister Michel Barnier said in an interview in the French weekly Le Journal du Dimanche that he had asked the European Commission to assess the benefits of daylight saving time and added that he was personally opposed to it.

— AFP photo

## Andrew, Sarah agree to divorce

LONDON: The Duchess of York and Prince Andrew have agreed to divorce, according to a news report Monday. The couple who have two daughters aged four and six separated in March 1992, reports AP.

The London tabloid the Daily Express quoted an unnamed senior member of Queen Elizabeth II's household as saying their lawyers have been told to finalise details and that a Buckingham Palace announcement confirming the divorce is expected by Christmas.

A palace press officer said: "I am not in a position to comment." The paper said nothing about any cash and property arrangement under a divorce agreement.

Ronald Ferguson, father of the Duchess, was quoted in an interview Saturday with the Daily Mail as saying the former Sarah Ferguson would love to return to Andrew. They are both 34. She and the Queen's second son married July 23, 1986.

But the Daily Express said Monday that senior palace sources, which the paper did not name, had dismissed Ferguson's comments as "wishful thinking."

The couple appear to enjoy each other's company when photographed occasionally with their daughters, which raised speculation they might get back together.

The Daily Express said many people feel the Duchess has worked hard to rehabilitate herself since the separation and the affair involving her former American financial adviser John Bryan. Tabloids in August 1992 printed sneak photographs of her canoodling topless with Bryan. One showed him sucking her toes.

Tabloids portrayed her after her marriage as a brash, noisy young woman who preferred holidays to official duties and she was blamed for helping bring the royals into disrepute.

## Sun lost in haze

SINGAPORE: Note to tourists intending to visit Singapore in search of sunny tropical weather: Forget it, reports AP.

It's still tropical all right, but in recent weeks the sun has been hidden by a thick gray haze.

The Environment Ministry on Monday warned those with heart ailments or asthma to cut physical exertion and outdoor activities. The Pollutants Standard Index is over 100, indicating unhealthy air quality.

Officials blame forest fires in Borneo and Sumatra in Indonesia and the deliberate burning by farmers to prepare fields for planting in Sumatra.

Indonesian forestry officials estimate that since mid-August more than 6,000 hectares (14,826 acres) has burned in South Sumatra alone.

## Too much fuss about a small incident

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: A high-school student was asked to apologise to Prime Minister Jim Bolger on Monday after he accused him of being a liar, reports AFP.

Seventh-former Toby Rushbrook took on Bolger when the prime minister visited Burnside high school here on Friday. During the discussion, Bolger said nobody was starving in New Zealand, prompting Rushbrook to say he was lying.

Burnside Principal John Godfrey said Rushbrook did not show Bolger respect.

He said he was all in favour of students expressing their views and he did not want to hinder their freedom of speech.

"But he (Toby) did not show sufficient respect to a visitor to our school," Godfrey said.

"I talked with Toby ... and we agreed that what had happened was not the right thing to do."

Toby's mother Doronthy Rushbrook would not say on Monday if Toby had apologised or how he would do it.

Bolger said he did not ask for an apology from Toby and too much fuss had been made of the incident.

## Buthelezi storms into TV studio

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 26: South African state television said it planned the "strongest possible" legal action against Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who stormed into a television studio during a live interview on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Police confirmed today that a gun was confiscated during scuffles in a Durban studio of the state-run South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) during the Prime Time Agenda programme.

Television viewers saw a handgun waved as cameras tried to track a fracas when Buthelezi, leader of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, burst into the studio to be rate Prince Sifiso Zulu.

## Garbage heaps in Surat put the lie to 'war' against plague

SURAT, Sept 26: Tons of garbage remain uncleared across this plague-infested western Indian city, mocking official claims that a war has been declared on the deadly disease, reports AFP.

Huge piles of decaying waste are a familiar sight in all residential and commercial districts, much of it left behind by unprecedented floods that ravaged Surat last month.

Tens of thousands of shanty dwellers live in the midst of such dirt and squalor, seemingly unconcerned that the rats which carry the plague-causing fleas thrive on these garbage dumps.

Panic-stricken residents have fled the city, the centre of India's diamond trade, in

the hundreds of thousands while those who have remained behind are bitter about the lethargy of the administration.

The anger has even triggered attacks on municipal sweepers in recent days.

"What can we do? Asked a worried Praveen Privedi, the district magistrate of Surat, where at least 44 people have died of plague. "We know the situation is very serious, but so many municipal employees have run away from here."

A team from the New Delhi-based National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) which toured Surat last week was shocked by what it saw — the long accumulated garbage and numerous pools of stag-

nant, dirty water.

"If the problem is not addressed immediately, it will surely lead to another epidemic," warned an NICD official speaking on condition of anonymity.

Local doctors wholeheartedly agree.

"The Surat administration is nonexistent," said Pradeep Pette, a physician. "Eighty per cent of the municipal staff is not reporting for duty. How can such filth be removed?"

Desperate residents have simply taken to burning the garbage heaps. Young men can occasionally be seen setting fire to trapped rats on busy streets in line with an official order to destroy all rodents.

Surat, with a population of

some two million, is divided into two halves by the river Tapi, which flooded the city late last month, leaving behind huge amounts of rubbish and dead animals.

Residents said carcasses were taken away days after they began to rot.

"I don't remember when I last saw anyone clearing garbage near my house," said Vishnu Saha, a 39-year-old factory worker and resident of Ved road, one of the poor neighbourhoods worst hit by the plague.

"When it comes to sanitation, there is no government in Surat," added Hari Solanki, a shopkeeper. "You have to be either influential or pay bribes to get your garbage removed."

Can you believe it?"

Most of Surat's roads are potholed forcing motorists to zig-zag along. When it rains, water collects on the roads because drainage pipes are either blocked or absent.

"The problem is mostly confined to slums," asserted Kunkun Lal, the Surat administrator. "These areas have no proper lanes, sweepings are thrown on the roads and there is so much waterlogging."

The Surat administration, under ceaseless attack from the local press, is offering 50 rupees (1.65 dollars) a day to each municipal employee who will remove garbage from the city.

But people here are not im-

pressed. In some areas, municipal employees who turned up for work following the 50 rupee offer after weeks away from the job were pounced upon and thrashed by angry residents.

"This has led to more problems," said Pravedi, Surat's senior most civil officer. "Among my staff even those who have been reporting for duty are not willing to go to many places."

On Sunday, a senior municipal officer's promise at a press conference here to have all garbage cleared away within a week drew mocking laughter from local journalists who said they had heard such pledges too many times before.

## Australia to join int'l force in Gaza, Jericho

CAIRO, Sept 26: Australia has agreed to join an international observer force for the autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho, Palestinian Planning Minister Nabil Shaath said here on Sunday, reports AFP.

Speaking after a week-long visit to Australia, Shaath said the decision followed in official Palestinian requests. It would still have to be endorsed by the Australian Parliament.

Shaath said Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans had accepted an invitation to visit the Palestinian self-rule areas at the beginning of next year.