

BRIEFLY

Jewish agency official on trial:

Simcha Dinitz, former head of the semi-official Jewish agency which oversees immigration to Israel, went on trial yesterday accused of aggravated fraud and breach of trust. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Prosecutor Shimon Golan told the Jerusalem district court that Dinitz ran up personal expenses of 22,000 dollars on his agency credit cards and drew up a fictitious list of foreign trips to justify the spending.

The agency quoted Zelmikhan Yandarbiyev as saying on Chechen television that forces of the opposition, with Moscow's blessing, "effectively entered the city in the evening." Tass said there were many casualties but did not give any figure.

Uzbek pianist wins competition: A 19-year-old musician from Uzbekistan took first place on Tuesday in the finals of the Triennial World Piano Competition at London's Royal Festival Hall. AFP reports from London.

Evgene Mursky was presented with his prize by the Princess of Wales making a now rare public appearance in her capacity as patron of the contest for young pianists created by Russian pianist Sulamita Aronovski.

Canada may sell arms to KSA: Canada offered to sell Challenger transport planes and arms to Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, a Canadian diplomat said. AFP reports from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Canadian Defence Minister David Collette made the offer during a meeting in Jeddah with his Saudi counterpart Prince Sultan Ben Abdel Aziz, the diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity.

NATO begins war-games: Military exercises involving about 30,000 ground, air and naval troops from seven NATO countries have begun in southwestern Turkey and will continue until October 14, a NATO commander said on Tuesday from Istanbul. AFP reports from Brussels.

The exercises, dubbed "dynamic guard," include troops from the United States, Britain, Turkey, the Netherlands, Germany and France, and began on Monday, the official said by phone.

Filipino official found dead: One of three government employees kidnapped by Muslim bandits two weeks ago was found dead by residents in a town near this southern city, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Zamboanga City.

Rolando Dizon, 69, supervising engineer of the state-run National Irrigation Administration (NIA), had died of acute diabetes and his abandoned body was found on Tuesday, regional police chief Superintendent Roberto Lastimosa said.

3 die in Mexican chemical plant: Three chemical plant workers died on Tuesday after falling into a vat of chemicals while conducting maintenance at the plant, according to company officials quoted by the news agency Notimex. AP reports from Guadalajara.

"We still don't know the cause," of the accident, said Bill Hoerger, spokesman for the Connecticut-based Praxair Inc. "We've dispatched a team of health and safety specialists to Mexico to investigate."

5 SA soldiers killed: A South African National Defence Force soldier on Tuesday gunned down four of his colleagues before turning the gun on himself, a military spokesman said. AFP reports from Johannesburg.

The spokesman said the soldier opened fire for no apparent reason on a group of soldiers, killing two instantly. Two others died later. The soldier then shot himself.

China returns remains: China returned to the US government on Wednesday the remains of two American airmen killed during World War II when their plane crashed in Tibet. AP reports from Beijing.

The two airmen were part of US efforts to support Chinese troops battling invading Japanese forces. Historians say nearly 500 US planes were shot down or crashed during the 1942-1945 "Hump" airlift over the Himalayas from northeastern India to China's landlocked forces in Kunming.

Russia launches satellite: A Russian military satellite was launched on Tuesday from the Plesetsk Space centre, the Itar-Tass news agency reported. AFP says from Moscow.

The launching of the satellite, called Kosmos-2292, was originally scheduled for last week but was delayed due to poor weather.

Flood kills 64 in Vietnam: The most devastating flooding of the Mekong river in decades has killed 64 people since the beginning of September, officials reported yesterday. AFP says from Hanoi.

A violent typhoon that struck the central province of Thanh Hoa at the beginning of the month has also killed 14 people and caused six million dollars in damage, according to local authorities.

Diarrhoea claims 21 Indonesians: An outbreak of diarrhoea has killed at least 21 people and forced the hospitalisation of 45 others in the northwestern most province of Aceh, a press report said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

The Suara Karaya Daily quoted a provincial Health Ministry official Syarifuddin Anwar as saying that the diarrhoea epidemic, which has struck at Blangkegeren since August 31, killed 21 people.

Cholera spreads to Romania: Cholera has spread to Romania, where 28 cases have been confirmed, the Health Ministry said on Tuesday, as the disease continued to rage in Albania and the Russian Caucasus. AFP reports from Bucharest.

Cholera hit Romania's central Mures region, where a further 20 people have been found to be carrying the cholera virus, said the same source.

Angola executes 54, says UNITA: The Angolan rebel movement UNITA accused the government on Tuesday of executing 54 citizens suspected of collaborating with the rebels. Reuter reports from Sao Tome.

UNITA radio, monitored in the island state of Sao Tome and Principe, said government troops shot the suspected rebel agents in the besieged central town of Cutito. It gave no further information.

Iran deports 1500 Afghans

NICOSIA, Sept 28: Iranian police have rounded up and deported 1,500 unauthorised Afghan refugees from Tehran Province, Tehran radio reported on Tuesday, says Reuter.

The crackdown on illegal Afghans would be seriously pursued, it quoted Tehran's Governor-General Mohammad Seyedzadeh as saying. It did not say over what period the 1,500 were arrested.

Iran has stepped up efforts to send home Afghans who took refuge there during the Soviet intervention in their country, but denies charges of mistreating them in the repatriation process.

Peace talks with LTTE in two weeks

Tamils kill 14 Lankan soldiers

COLOMBO, Sept 28: Tamil rebels killed 14 soldiers in eastern Sri Lanka on Wednesday, officials said, one week before a government team plans to hold peace talks with the insurgents, reports AP.

Thirteen soldiers were ambushed and killed in Kattankulam, 180 kilometers (110 miles) east of Colombo, Wednesday morning, and another soldier died in a nearby attack Tuesday night, said Brig. Gen. M. Kulatunga, the military's spokesman.

No rebel casualties were immediately reported.

A four-member team of government officials is expected to leave for the rebel-held northern town of Jaffna next week for the first peace talks in the 11-year insurrection

since June 1990.

The new socialist government came to power in August, pledging to end the brutal ethnic war, which has killed more than 34,000 people by holding unconditional peace talks with the rebels.

The guerillas have agreed and invited Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga to Jaffna, even though the government has rejected their demand for a cease fire and fighting has escalated.

Tamils make up 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 17 million people. They say they are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese population, which controls the government and military.

Reuter adds: Four government officials will visit war-

tor north in two weeks to

discuss peace talks, Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte said today.

He said Prime Minister's Secretary K. Balapatabandi, Information Ministry Secretary Lionel Fernando, People's Bank Chairman Rajan Asirvatham and design engineer Navin Gunaratne will be in Jaffna on October 13 and 14.

Ratwatte told reporters a decision on a ceasefire would be taken after the meeting.

People's Alliance (PA) government, which came to power last month, has promised to settle a 11-year ethnic war with Tamil rebels.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), under their leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, have been fighting for a

separate state in the north and east. More than 30,000 people have died in the conflict since 1983.

Ratwatte said recent clashes between government security forces and the Tigers, including today's rebel attack on a military patrol in the east in which 13 soldiers were killed, would not derail the talks.

The security forces have not been asked to stop offensives. These incidents are not a setback and won't affect the peace process," he said.

He said the team will also talk about restoring infrastructure such as power and communications which has been destroyed in the rebel-held Jaffna peninsula since 1990.



A social worker distributing medicines on Wednesday to the residents of the plague-affected Surat city in India. — AFP photo

Russia backs US to lift arms embargo on Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: A senior Russian official Tuesday backed Washington's idea of asking the United Nations to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims but delay implementing the move by six months, reports Reuter.

"Logically speaking, this would be the most logical way to proceed with the Bosnian affair," foreign ministry press chief Grigory Karasin told reporters.

"The recent situation in Bosnia makes it more favourable for positive approaches," he said.

It was not immediately clear if his comment reflected a change in position by President Boris Yeltsin, who said earlier Tuesday that he would oppose lifting the embargo. Russia is a traditional ally of the Serbs.

The US administration has been told by congress to press the UN Security Council to lift the embargo if the Bosnian

Serbs fail to accept the latest international peace plan for Bosnia by October 15.

But President Clinton said the issue might be "largely academic" because of a six-month delay in lifting the embargo officially proposed Tuesday by Bosnian Muslim leaders.

A Russian official said Clinton and Yeltsin Tuesday agreed on their first day of their Washington summit on the need for an international conference on Bosnia but said no date had been set.

Meanwhile, AFP from Belgrade adds: International mediators Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg said Tuesday they expected UN sanctions against rump Yugoslavia to be eased "very soon" as they saw no obstacles toward such a move.

The two men spoke following a three-and-a-half-hour meeting with Serbian President Thorvald Stoltenberg and separate talks with retired

Swedish General Bo Pellnas, who heads an international observer mission monitoring Serbia's blockade against Bosnia.

Owen said the meeting with Milosevic went well and he did not expect any "problems in terms of easing the UN sanctions."

"I would expect that (the easing of sanctions) would happen very soon now," he said, adding that the UN monitoring mission had gone "very well" and that there was "an excellent cooperation with the police and the customs people of Yugoslavia."

He said he and Stoltenberg talked with Milosevic about "all aspects of the situation in the region," specifically "improving dialogue between Belgrade and Zagreb," and only briefly discussed the sanctions.

"There really was not much need to talk about this," he said. "We had a very brief discussion about it, because there are no problems."



Haitians ransack a food depot belonging to a religious group on Tuesday in downtown Port-au-Prince. Several looting incidents have been reported across Haiti in the past few days. — AFP photo

US against China's missiles sales to Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: The United States will press China this week to stop missile sales to Pakistan when Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Liu Haiguang visits Washington, a senior US official said on Tuesday, reports AP.

Lynn Davis, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs, said US officials would urge Beijing to respect international agreements on the sale of ballistic missiles.

The visit by Liu on Thursday and Friday will be followed by a visit next week by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

US officials last year imposed a two-year embargo on certain technology exports, claiming the sale of M-1 missiles to Pakistan violated international agreements.

Rightist rams car into Murayama's party HQs

TOKYO, Sept 28: A man identifying himself as a right-wing radical was arrested after ramming a car into the headquarters of Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama's Socialist party Wednesday, police said, reports AP.

Nobody was injured in the incident, which left minor damage in the first-floor walls, said a party spokesman. Shinnichi Sakamoto.

The driver, Hideyuki Katsuhara, a 33-year-old member of a tiny Tokyo-based rightist group, was arrested on the spot on suspicion of unauthorized trespassing, according to the Metropolitan Police Department.

US, Russia close to accord on ending arms sales to Iran

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: Secretary of State Warren Christopher said on Tuesday the United States and Russia were close to agreement on ending Moscow's arms sales to Iran, reports Reuter.

"Without being more specific, I think there's a resolution in sight on this very difficult issue," he told reporters.

Russian sales of weaponry to Iran are an irritant in US-Russian relations, Washington considers Iran the world's leading proponent of terrorism.

German shot dead in Egypt

CAIRO, Sept 28: A suspected Muslim fundamentalist shot dead two Egyptians and a German tourist and wounded two other people on Tuesday evening in the Red Sea resort of Hurghada, the Interior Ministry said, reports AP.

Shortly afterwards suspected Islamic militants also machinegunned a train, wounding two Egyptian passengers.

The gunmen escaped in both cases.

It was the first such attack at Hurghada, which lies 340 miles southeast of Cairo, since Islamic militants launched a violent anti-government campaign in March 1992.

CDLR protests arrest of Sheikh Audah

NICOSIA, Sept 28: A Saudi opposition group has repeated its allegations that over 1,000 demonstrators were arrested in Saudi Arabia while protesting the detention of a Muslim cleric.

The London-based Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia (CDLR) made the allegations in a statement received by Reuters today.

It was reacting to a Saudi Interior Ministry statement on Monday which said the authorities had arrested Sheikh Salman Al-Audah and over 100 of his followers in connection with attempts to sow dissension and chaos in the Kingdom.

It did not say when the arrests were made, but the CDLR last week reported the arrest

of over 1,000 Audah supporters.

The (Interior Ministry) statement did not admit to except a small fraction of the real number of detainees that we had referred to before," the CDLR said.

It said it "challenges" the Saudi government to prove any wrongdoing against Audah and demanded his "immediate and unconditional release along with all other detainees."

The Saudi statement was the first official confirmation that the authorities were holding Audah, a known critic of the conservative Kingdom is not strict enough in its application of Islamic law.

Diplomats say the CDLR reports on arrests were exaggerated.

Off the Record

Bobbitt convicted again

LAS VEGAS: John Bobbitt, who gained world attention after his wife severed his penis, was convicted of a second domestic battery charge Tuesday, reports AP.

Municipal Judge Ron D. Parraguirre ordered Bobbitt to serve 30 days in jail and called him a "bully."

Kristina Elliott testified her former fiance twisted her arm behind her back and threw her against an apartment wall on May 6.

Bobbitt served 12 days of a 15-day sentence earlier this month for battering Elliott in a separate incident.

Bobbitt made headlines last year when his wife, Lorena Bobbitt, sliced off his penis last year, claiming he had sexually assaulted her. The penis was surgically reattached and Bobbitt was acquitted of assault charges.

Lorena Bobbitt was found innocent by reason of insanity and fled for divorce.

Bobbitt, 27, met Elliott, 21, a former exotic dancer, while in Las Vegas on a publicity tour.

Bobbitt took the stand, admitting that he was "frustrated" that night, but said he never hurt Elliott.

Parraguirre sentenced Bobbitt to 90 days in jail with 60 days suspended and placed him on probation for one year, during which time he must remain alcohol free and receive counselling.

The conviction comes just two days before the premiere of a "John Wayne Bobbitt ... Uncut," a hard-core pornographic film starring Bobbitt as himself. Bobbitt was expected to attend the showing Thursday at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Samuel Goldwyn Theatre in Los Angeles.

Brazilian teenager sues Jackson

NEW YORK: Michael Jackson is being sued for 20 million dollars by a Brazilian teenager who alleges he was hit by the pop star's van and now has huge medical bills and one leg shorter than the other, reports AP.

A federal lawsuit was filed Tuesday on behalf of Alberto de Paulo, 16, claims Jackson promised the boy financial help after the accident outside a toy factory in Brazil in October 1993, but then gave him only a toy car set.

"It appears to me to be another opportunistic attempt to cash in on Michael's success," said Jackson attorney Howard Weitzman, who had not yet seen the suit.

Weitzman said he had not heard about the complaint before, though the boy's lawyer, John Durst, said talks with Jackson's attorneys broke down last week.

Durst said the boy had to undergo three operations that cost about 20,000 dollars that one of his legs is now an inch shorter than the other.



New Party candidate beaten in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Sept 28: A vice gubernatorial candidate was dragged from a taxi and beaten on his way to give a speech at an election rally, police said Wednesday, reports AP.

The candidate, Yao-Li-ming of the New Party, cancelled a scheduled speech Tuesday night because the attackers lingered on the square he was supposed to speak, he said.

Yao accused police of protecting his attackers.

"I saw policemen tell the attackers to flee the scene without arresting them," he said Wednesday.

Police denied the accusation and said the attack is under investigation.

Yao, who said he was treated with seven stitches after the attack, is a member of the New Party, a group closely associated with the

conservative Nationalists that have ruled Taiwan since 1945.

In a separate Tuesday attack on a New Party member, Tu Chau-cheng, an aide to the gubernatorial candidate, was assaulted at the same rally Tuesday night.

Tu required eight stitches for a cut on the head.

Police said about 200 people destroyed New Party flags and heckled speakers during the rally.

Last Sunday, more than 80 people were hurt at a New Party rally in the southern city of Kaohsiung in fights with supporters of the Democratic Progressive Party, which wants Taiwan to declare independence from China.

Election violence and corruption has become common since Taiwan began moving towards democracy in late 1980s.

Buthelesi offers resignation

PRETORIA, Sept 28: Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelesi, condemned by the government for his role in a televised fracas with a political rival, said Wednesday he offered to resign his post, reports AP.

A cabinet statement criticised the Zulu nationalist leader for obstructing media freedom when he stormed a television studio Sunday night and forced a rival to flee during a live interview.

President Nelson Mandela told news conference also attended by Buthelesi that because the Zulu leader apologised, the Cabinet decided to condemn his behaviour but take no further action.

Moves in Congress to set deadline for US pullout from Haiti

WASHINGTON, Sept 28: Moves in Congress to set a deadline for US withdrawal from Haiti would set an "extremely bad precedent" for US military policy, Deputy Defence Secretary John Deutch told Congress on Tuesday, reports AP.

Despite such cautions from the administration, the House Foreign Affairs Committee planned to meet Wednesday to draw up legislation on ending the Haiti operation.

The committee was considering a date near March 1, 1995, for ending the current US operation, sources said. The Pentagon has said it probably will be the beginning of next year, before a smaller UN

mission with some American troops, can replace the 13,000 US soldiers now in Haiti.

Deutch and other officials testifying before the committee Tuesday repeated the administration argument against a "date certain." Deutch stressed that it would tie troops to an arbitrary calendar date rather than the situation on the ground.

He said it would discourage other countries from participating and "set an extremely bad precedent for the United States — that goes far beyond Haiti."

Calif. said it was "nuts" to legislate a deadline. "I can't believe a large number of our colleagues would want to turn tail and pull out tomorrow."

But many lawmakers are angry about President Clinton's refusal to seek congressional approval before committing troops to Haiti and are demanding that Congress have its say about the operation's future.

Democratic Rep. Robert Torricelli said he was "offended" that Haitian military leader Lt Gen Raoul Cedras asked for his government's approval of the agreement on the peaceful entry of US forces but Clinton went ahead on his own.

Rohrabacher of California agreed, calling it "an insult to our democratic institution that the administration received UN sanctions for the Haiti operation but ignored Congress."

Talbott insisted the president's as commander in chief had precedent and the Constitution on his side in launching the Haiti operation without a congressional vote.

The Senate was still discussing whether to call for removal of troops from Haiti on any particular date.

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell said he opposed setting a specific date and Republican Leader Bob Dole said if a date were set, it

most likely would be in a non-binding resolution.

The Senate Armed Services Committee planned to meet Wednesday for a briefing on Haiti. A senior Republican on the committee, Sen John Warner of Virginia, said he was "deeply concerned" about doing anything that would jeopardise the troops.

Democratic Sen Christopher Dodd said putting a specific date on withdrawal would be "a dangerous step" that would put the troops in danger. Dodd said a growing number of senators agreed with him.

Meanwhile, the New York Times reported in its Wednesday editions that