

# BRIEFLY

## DPRK closes port to foreigners:

North Korea has closed its western port of Nampo to foreigners without any official explanation, the Itar-Tass news agency said in a report out of Pyongyang. AFP says from Moscow.

It said the port was closed several days ago. Diplomatic sources cited by the agency said the move could be linked to an alleged cholera epidemic that broke out there several days ago, or to the presence of several Chinese ships, at Nampo which, according to the agency, could be carrying strategic material.

**20 Tajiks, Kazakh guard killed:** A clash along the Tajik-Afghan border killed 20 Tajik rebels and one Kazakh border guard, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported Thursday. AP says from Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Two Tajik government soldiers were also killed in the fighting Wednesday, when Kazakh soldiers freed 16 other Tajik servicemen who had been taken prisoner by the rebels. Several weapons were seized in the raid, ITAR-Tass said.

**4 hostages freed in Norway:** Police yesterday said four hostages held by two armed robbers at an airport in southern Norway were free and the hostages were unharmed. Reuter reports from Oslo.

"It's all over. The hostages are unharmed," police officer Tore Olsen told Reuters. He declined all further comment.

**Serb radical leader held:** Serbian police yesterday arrested ultra-nationalist leader Vojislav Seselj as he left home on his way to his party headquarters, his bodyguard Petar Panic said. AP reports from Belgrade.

Seselj, head of the Serbian radical party and leader of a Serb militia group said to have taken part in the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, had his parliamentary immunity removed Wednesday after he sat at the Speaker of the Yugoslav federal parliament, Radovan Bozovic.

**Ju CPC Political Bureau member:**

Huang Ju, Mayor of Shanghai, was elected a member of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party central committee at the committee's fourth plenary session, which concluded in Beijing on Wednesday, Xinhua reports from Beijing.

According to a decision of the meeting, Wu Bangguo and Jiang Chunyun, both members of the Politburo, were added to the secretariat of the party central committee.

**Myanmar blast leaves 2 dead:** Two people died and four others injured as a walkie-talkie exploded recently in a village of Mudon township in southeast Myanmar, local press reported yesterday, Xinhua says from Yangon.

The walkie-talkie was sent by the Mon minority nationality armed group who said that they will return to legal fold. But the walkie-talkie suddenly exploded when the head of the village switched it on.

**Forest fire kills 9 in S Africa:** A forest fire swept through a workers' compound in northern South Africa overnight, killing nine people. State radio reported Thursday. AP says from Nelspruit, South Africa.

The fire in Frankfort State Forest was brought under control Thursday morning as a soft rain began falling and winds died down, allowing the search for more victims to resume.

**Kurds' mass grave found:** A mass grave containing the bodies of 44 Kurds executed by Iraqi soldiers has been found on the outskirts of the northern city of Suleymaniyah, Kurdish officials said on Wednesday. AFP reports from Suleymaniyah.

They said the discovery was made after a tip-off from the man who dug the grave in April 1991, during the Kurdish uprising against Baghdad.

**Bill to stop smoking on flights:** A bill to ban smoking on all international flights to and from the United States was approved by a House of Representatives committee on Wednesday. Reuter reports from Washington.

The bill from the House Public Works and Transportation Committee would ban smoking on all US and foreign airlines on the final leg of flights to the United States and the first leg of flights from the United States.

**7 die in Argentine plane fire:** A private plane caught fire during refueling at a regional airport, killing at least seven people and causing serious injuries to two others, a news agency reported on Wednesday. AP says from Cordoba.

The plane, a small twin-engine jet, burst into flames at the airport in the provincial capital of Cordoba, 440 miles (710 kilometers) west of Buenos Aires, the Diarios y Noticias news agency said.

**Greeks need visa:** Albanian legislators approved on Wednesday a presidential decree forbidding Greeks from entering Albania without a visa. AP reports from Tirana.

The decree, which waived visa requirements from nationals from Arab countries and Israel, was adopted by 60 of the 83 deputies taking part in the vote.

**Cholera claims 14 in Ukraine:**

Fourteen people have died of cholera in Ukraine and 568 are infected with the disease. Ukrainian radio reported late Wednesday, quoting a government health agency. AFP reports from London.

The radio, monitored in London by the BBC, said the number of cholera cases had increased by 90 on Thursday. The city of Nikolayev in southern Ukraine was worst affected, with 278 people suffering from the disease, which broke out earlier this month.

**Quake rocks Java Sea:** An intense earthquake rocked the Java Sea late Wednesday but there were no reports on damages or casualties, an official at the Meteorology and Geophysics office in Jakarta said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

Hamid Andi said the quake, which measured 6.4 on the Richter scale, broke out at 23.39 on Wednesday (17.39 GMT), and its epicenter was about 85 kilometers (52.7 miles) northwest of the central Java capital of Semarang.

**Serial killer to die in Russia:** A Siberian teacher identified by chance from an old school photo has been sentenced to die for murdering and raping five women. AP reports from Moscow.

Izvestia said he lured his victims into his car by offering them free rides, then drove to secluded sites to rape and kill them. It said he always kept something of the victim's as a memento.

**James Bond film producer Saltzman dies in France**

PARIS, Sept 29: British film producer Harry Saltzman, famous for his work on the early James Bond movies, has died in France, his family announced on Wednesday. He was 78, reports AFP.

Saltzman, who has lived in France for several years, died overnight at the American Hospital in Neuilly outside Paris.

Among his most well-known production — credits were those for the first 11 007 spy movies, including the *First Ever Doctor No*.

His output also included co-producing *Falstaff* with Orson Welles, Britain.

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Scientists say the Constant can be used to work out how fast the universe is expanding, and thus how old it is and whether it is likely to continue to expand or will eventually collapse.

The *Hubble Constant* is 87 km (54 miles) per second per megaparsec, Pierce said in an interview. A megaparsec is the distance light travels in 3.2 million years at the speed of 186,000 miles (300,000 km) a second.

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The *Hubble Constant*, a

fashionable cosmological model, conflicts with the ages of the oldest known stars, Pierce and colleagues wrote.

The age estimate for the oldest stars in the Galaxy is 16 billion years, Pierce told Reuters in a telephone interview, citing an age calculated by estimating the gas content of stars.

If you take the standard model for the big bang ... for the *Hubble Constant* we measure produces an age of something between seven and 11 billion years. That's the paradox.

Either there's a problem with the age measurements of estimates of these models ... or there is a problem with the model, the description for the big bang.

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