

BRIEFLY



Miss Universe 1994 Sushmita Sen talks to the press on Sunday in Santiago after visiting a local mall. Miss Universe is on a four-day visit to Chile to promote the beauty contest.

— AFP photo

Arafat to meet Christopher: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat is to hold talks with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Cairo on Friday, the official daily Al-Ahram said in its Monday edition, AFP reports from Cairo.

The Palestinian authority's representative in Cairo, Zohid AL Kodra, quoted by the paper, said Arafat would also meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to discuss the situation in the autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho and the Palestinians' negotiations with Israel.

Colombian journalist shot dead: A lone gunman shot dead a Colombian journalist as he was drinking with a friend in a pub in Bogota, a police spokeswoman said on Sunday, Reuter reports from Bogota.

The unidentified man approached Orlando Villar Jimenez and shot him on Friday. Villar, 40, died instantly. She said the gunman fled in a waiting taxi and the shooting had probably been planned.

New peace accord in Niger: Niger's government and Tuareg rebels signed a new peace accord in neighbouring Burkina Faso on Sunday, agreeing a three-month renewable ceasefire and greater regional autonomy. Reuter reports from Ouagadougou.

The accord, reached on Saturday with mediation from Burkina Faso, Algeria and France after two weeks of talks in the capital Ouagadougou, must be implemented within six months.

Blast outside Belfast bar: A bomb exploded outside a bar in a mixed Roman Catholic-Protestant area of north Belfast early Monday but the bar had closed for the night and nobody was hurt, AP reports from Belfast.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but suspicion fell on Protestant extremists. Their foe, the Irish Republican Army, on September 1 began an open-ended ceasefire in its bomb and bullet war against British rule in Northern Ireland.

Flood toll rises to 175 in Vietnam: Floods in Vietnam's Mekong Delta have killed at least 175 people and caused damage of more than 55 million US dollar in six provinces, government officials said yesterday, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

The floods were caused not so much by heavy rain in the Delta but by high rainfall in Catchment area of the Mekong — one of Asia's biggest rivers — further north in China, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia.

Factory blast claims 10 in Pune: A large explosion at an ammunition factory in western India on Monday killed eight workers and injured four, the Press Trust of India news agency said. AP reports from New Delhi.

A magazine of explosives below up in a loading area as it was being inspected by workers, and the blast ripped through walls of the building and its roof, the report said.

UNITA postpones meeting: Angola's UNITA rebels postponed a meeting Monday to consider a cease-fire in the 19-year civil war because peace talks with the government had more issues to work out, AP reports from Luanda.

Rebel spokesman Jorge Valentim, a delegate to the talks in Lusaka, Zambia, said a meeting of the UNITA leadership scheduled to begin Monday in Huambo — the rebel stronghold in Angola — had been postponed indefinitely.

Israel appoints new army chief: Israel's cabinet gave final approval on Sunday to the appointment of Major-General Amnon Shahak, a senior peace negotiator with the PLO, as the next chief of staff of the army, a government spokesman said. Shahak, 50, will replace Ehud Barak as army chief next January. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Typhoon kills 5 in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Oct 10: Typhoon Seth battered Taiwan for the second day Monday, leaving five people dead and disrupting celebrations of the island's national day, police said, reports AP.

Four other people went missing, including three swept away by high waves in eastern Taiwan, police said.

Torrential rains and winds of up to 144 kph (86 mph) forced authorities to postpone until Tuesday the colorful parades marking National Day.

Instead of addressing 200,000 people in a Taipei square, President Lee Teng-hui had to deliver his National Day speech indoors.

National Day commemorates the Nationalists' seizure of power in China in 1911.

A man and a woman were killed in Taipei when a rock-slide buried their house.

Probe into deaths of cult members spreads to France, Australia

GENEVA, Oct 10: The probe into the deaths of 53 members of a doomsday cult spread to France and Australia as investigators checked reports that cult leaders may have been involved in arms trafficking and money laundering, reports AP.

The newest mystery was why the passports of Joseph di Mambro, a cult leader, and his wife, Jocelyne, were delivered to the French Interior Ministry in Paris. In a statement Sunday, the ministry would not say if it knew who sent the passports or why they did.

The bodies of 48 cult followers were discovered Wednesday in the rubble of fires at three chalets and a farm in Switzerland. Five other bodies were found in a charred

International

Heath urges US, British govts to open direct talks with Iraq

Jordan against use of force to resolve inter-Arab disputes

AMMAN, Oct 10: Jordan, which sympathised with Baghdad in the crisis over Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, said on Sunday it was opposed to the use of force to resolve inter-Arab disputes under any pretext, reports Reuter.

A government spokesman, quoted by state news agency Petra, said Jordan was "deeply concerned" over the massing of tens of thousands of Iraqi troops near the border with Kuwait.

The possibilities of escalation of the situation will not be in the interest of any Arab," the spokesman said in the first official statement on heightened tension in the Gulf.

In a veiled reference to Iraq, the spokesman said Jordan was against the use of force by any Arab party to resolve inter-Arab disputes.

"Weapons should not be raised in the face of an Arab brother ... and Jordan would stand against any Arab party which breaches this principle," the spokesman said.

"Jordan ... in its concern over Arab interests, blood, and fate stands with all its force against the renewed use of force between Arab brothers at any circumstance or pretext," he added.

The spokesman said the kingdom had equal interests in Iraqis and Kuwaitis at heart and "hoped matters will take a different course."

— AFP from London adds:

Kuwaitis have nothing to fear, says Crown Prince

KUWAIT, Oct 10: Crown Prince Sheik Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah told an emergency session of Parliament on Monday that Kuwaitis have nothing to fear because the Emir's allies will keep Iraqi threats in check, reports AP.

The military situation has changed a lot in Kuwait's favour, and it will continue doing so in the coming hours," said Sheik Saad, who is also prime minister. "There is no reason for worry or fear on the part of my brothers the citizens."

Kuwait's Western allies are moving air, sea and land reinforcements to the region to counter an Iraqi buildup.

Worried that they could be cut off from their savings as in the 1990 Iraqi invasion, Kuwaitis lined up at banks to get cash.

Most banks limited withdrawals Monday to dls 10,000.

Lanka to go ahead with peace talks to end ethnic war

COLOMBO, Oct 10: The government said Monday it will go ahead with scheduled peace talks this week to end an ethnic war despite repeated attacks by Tamil guerrillas, reports AP.

In the last one month, the rebels have blown up two ships, including the navy's largest warship and killed at least 22 sailors. The new government has offered to hold talks, but has refused to concede the rebel demand for a ceasefire.

"We can't understand why the Tamil Tigers are continuing their attacks, but that will not deter us from going ahead with the peace process," said Information Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake.

Four government officials plan to visit Jaffna on Thursday and Friday to discuss ways of ending the war for a Tamil homeland in the north and east, which has killed more than 34,000 people.

chalet the cult leaders owned north of Montreal.

Family members in Sion, Switzerland, said they identified di Mambro, a French-Canadian who lived in Switzerland, among the victims recovered from the Swiss chalets. Swiss media reported that his wife's body also was found.

Swiss authorities, however, disputed the reports, saying none of the chalet victims, some of whom were burned beyond recognition, have been identified.

It is not known whether the cult's other leader, Luc Jouret, a Belgian physician who lived in Switzerland and Canada, was among the dead.

Switzerland has issued an international warrant for the arrest of Jouret and di Mambro.

Former British Prime Minister Edward Heath on Sunday called on the British and American governments to open direct talks with Baghdad to defuse the crisis over Iraq's troops buildup along the Kuwaiti border.

Heath, who served as an intermediary in efforts to free western hostages held by Baghdad at the beginning of the Gulf war, said during a

BBC-television interview that discussions needed to be held at the highest level.

"If you can send an ex-president over to North Korea to sort that one out and send the ex-president down to Haiti to try to sort that one out, why can't the Americans and British arrange to have face-to-face talks with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein," Heath said, referring to the role that

former US President Jimmy Carter played in North Korea and Haiti.

The former Prime Minister said he was "absolutely certain" there are some things on which a compromise can be reached.

He said that Saddam Hussein was trying to attract the world's attention at a time when easing sanctions against Iraq was to be discussed.



Iraqi citizens look at oil paintings of President Saddam Hussein at the Saddam Arts Centre in Baghdad on Sunday. Iraqis were torn between fear of another war and anger at the United States as the two enemies are locked in another showdown following the Iraqi military buildup near the Kuwaiti border.

— AFP photo

Christopher struggling to focus attention on fresh ME peace move

JERUSALEM, Oct 10: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher is struggling to focus attention on fresh drive for Arab-Israeli peace in the shadow of a new Gulf crisis and a blood attack near his Jerusalem hotel, reports Reuter.

Christopher, arrived in Israel on Sunday and scheduled separate meetings with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres for Monday in his latest effort to break the deadlock on peace between Israel and Syria.

But an Iraqi troop build-up near Kuwait's border raised fears Baghdad could repeat its 1990 invasion of the emirate, destabilising the Middle East and pushing the Arab-Jewish peace process to the back burner.

Iraq fired Scud missiles at Israel while a US-led alliance expelled the Iraqi army from

Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf War.

Israel, under US pressure not to take action that could anger Arab allies in the coalition, did not hit back.

Israel has already warned Iraq that any surprise Scud attack in the coming days would be met with an unprecedented counter-attack.

Earlier Christopher warned Iraq it would pay a "horrendous price" if it invaded Kuwait and said he hoped that despite the Gulf crisis he would be able to move Syria and Israel closer to peace on his latest of many Middle East shuttles.

Christopher said the United States would consider measures to protect Israel if it was threatened by Iraq but did not elaborate. The United States is already sending Patriot anti-missile systems to Kuwait.

But Christopher sought to play down the prospect of an imminent new Gulf War. "We

are some distance away from having to — I hope we never have to — come to the point of military action that produced results in previous times," he said.

Trying to brush off the effect events in the Gulf were having on his latest Middle East peace effort, Christopher told reporters in Jerusalem.

"My principal purpose in being here is to try to move another step forward ... particularly on this trip as you know between Israel and Syria."

Asked if a breakthrough was expected Israel's chief negotiator with Syria, Itamar Rabinovich, told army radio.

"No, as I've said, this is not a visit in whose wake dramatic results are expected. There has been in recent months slow but steady progress and we expect a little more progress of a similar sort at a similar pace."



Israeli border police search for suspects at the scene of the Sunday terrorist attack in the pedestrian centre of west Jerusalem. One Israeli was killed and 14 wounded when unidentified gunmen opened fire with assault rifles and threw grenades on a crowd in the Nahal Shina district, known for its restaurants and cafes.

— AFP photo

Probe into deaths of cult members spreads to France, Australia

GENEVA, Oct 10: The probe into the deaths of 53 members of a doomsday cult spread to France and Australia as investigators checked reports that cult leaders may have been involved in arms trafficking and money laundering, reports AP.

Family members in Sion, Switzerland, said they identified di Mambro, a French-Canadian who lived in Switzerland, among the victims recovered from the Swiss chalets. Swiss media reported that his wife's body also was found.

Among 23 victims found at a farm in the western Swiss village of Cheiry, some were shot repeatedly in the head, then hooded with plastic bags, said investigative judge Andre Piller.

"One person had two bullet holes in the head but no holes in the plastic bag on the head. Another had three bullet holes in the head and one bullet hole in the plastic bag," he said.

It is not known whether the cult's other leader, Luc Jouret, a Belgian physician who lived in Switzerland and Canada, was among the dead.

Switzerland has issued an international warrant for the arrest of Jouret and di Mambro.

di Mambro lived at the Gold Coast, a popular beach resort in Queensland state, between November 1993 and last April, while immigration records showed that Jouret visited Australia five times since 1989.

The news agency also cited unconfirmed reports that di Mambro and 12 other cult members tried to go to Ayers Rock on August 13, 1993, for a Black Friday night ritual but were refused permission by park rangers. The site, in central Australia's remote Outback region, is considered sacred by the country's aboriginal people.

The French connection first surfaced Saturday when police uncovered an intricate incendiary device at an empty villa the cult used in southern France.

Somebody or a group of people went completely berserk," Piller told reporters.

On Monday, Australian Associated Press reported that

The device, which could have been triggered by a coded telephone call, was like the bombs that set off the fires last week in Switzerland and Canada.

Unconfirmed news reports from Canada and Australia said cult leaders used the group as a front for trafficking arms through Australia and laundering money in Swiss banks.

An official of the Royal Bank of Canada said the bank tipped off Canadian police in July about suspicious activity in an Ottawa account of a cult member.

Bank spokesman David Moorcroft said he was prohibited by law from releasing the account-holder's name, but added that the movement of hundreds of thousands of dollars without evidence of legit-

Protest against Criminal Justice Bill in UK

LONDON, Oct 10: Twenty-five people were slightly injured when hundreds of "hard core" protesters fought with police for several hours on Sunday at the end of a demonstration against controversial changes to Britain's justice system police said, reported AFP.

The demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill in which some 20,000 people marched through central London, passed off peacefully.

But as the marchers dispersed late afternoon police said a "hard core" of up to 700 people not forming part of the main body of demonstrators began to hurl tear gas bricks bottles and other projectiles at security forces.

Police including officers on horseback charged several times, shepherding protesters towards Hyde Park and also trapping peaceful demonstrators and passersby. A bus shelter was overturned and torched.

Witnesses reported "battle lines" being drawn by both camps.

A police spokesman said it appeared that the violence had been "fully orchestrated" by "anarchists" who had "spotted a legitimate protest."

Twenty-five people including eight police were slightly injured, most suffering from the effects of teargas, while 26 people were detained for public order offences.

Between 150 and 200 "hard core" protesters were still in Hyde Park by early evening, taunting and throwing projectiles at police surrounding them while a security forces helicopter hovered overhead.

police said.

The rally was organised by several human rights organisations.

The Criminal Justice Bill includes proposals to remove defendant's right to silence among a package of measures which Home Secretary Michael Howard intends to pass into law despite a critical report by a royal commission and a defeat in the house of Lords.

It has been denounced by human rights bodies as encroaching on Britain's traditional democratic values.

15 WWII bombs unearthed in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10: A dredger deepening the harbour in Port Klang, Malaysia's premier port, has pulled out 15 World War II bombs each weighing about 25 kilograms (55 pounds), the Sunday Mail reported, says AFP.

The operator of the dredging vessel stopped only after the 15th bomb had been dredged out and contacted its office manager, who alerted the police.

A police official on Sunday said the bombs would be transported to a sea site for detonation.