



French First Lady Bernadette Chirac and French Minister of Solidarity between Generations Colette Codacioni (Second row centre and right) pose for a group photograph with the medical staff at Beijing's Dongsi Maternity Hospital Sunday. — AFP/UNB photo

Serbs cold shoulder fresh NATO ultimatum

SARAJEVO, Sept 4: The Bosnian Serb army has made no response to a NATO bombing ultimatum set for this night and there is no sign that it is withdrawing heavy weapons from around Sarajevo, the United Nations said today, reports Reuter.

"So far we've received no communication from them and there's no sign of a withdrawal," said spokeswoman Major Myriam Souchak.

NATO is prepared to resume the punitive bombing wave it suspended last Friday if the Bosnian Serbs do not comply with UN demands by 2100 GMT today.

The threat to resume bombing was issued after Bosnian Serb Commander in Chief General Ratko Mladic rejected demands set out by UN Force commander General Bernard Janvier on Friday and Saturday, in marathon talks near Zvornik on the Bosnian border.

The United Nations and NATO said Mladic's response was totally unacceptable.

Early today, Bosnian Serb army headquarters faxed to Reuters the full text of Mladic's formal reply, claiming that the Serb position was being misinterpreted.

In his response, Mladic gives no guarantee to open Sarajevo airport or to unconditionally withdraw heavy weapons from Sarajevo.

Instead he demands an immediate ceasefire throughout Bosnia — a concession the Bosnian government has always resisted because it would freeze current frontlines to Serb advantage.

In addition, he presented Janvier with a draft agreement laced with conditions, including a reopening of the investigation into mortar attack on Sarajevo on August 28 which killed 37 people and which the United Nations said was unquestionably the work of Mladic's forces.

Another reports from Naples, Italy adds: NATO military officials say Bosnian Serbs had better act quickly to comply with their demands or face worse bombing than ever.

With still plenty of targets to choose from, they sent personal messages to Bosnian Serb General Mladic, urging him to move quickly to assure the western alliance that he would agree to their ultimatum.

"There's still plenty of aviation activity over Bosnia. Our pilots are still moving into that area," said Admiral Leighton Smith who commands NATO operations in Bosnia.

"If the decision is made to recommence the air strikes, there's going to be a larger number coming in," he told Cable News Network (CNN) television.

A NATO official told Reuters the current pause in bombing was meant to give Mladic a chance to assess damage done by NATO bombing and UN Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) artillery.

NATO released new video footage of last week's strikes in the hopes that Mladic would see it.

NATO and the UN have made three demands and say the air strikes will resume if they are not met quickly.

"We'd like to see first of all movements of heavy weapons out of the 112 miles or 20 km) exclusion zone around Sarajevo and I don't mean a few — I want a lot," Smith said.

The second thing is all he's got to do is say the routes into Sarajevo are open and do away with the checkpoints and then stand away and left the UN come in and the humanitarian organisations come in."

Govt warning ignored Fresh violence kills 10 in Karachi

KARACHI, Sept 4: A government warning that "troublemakers" would be shot on sight failed to stop a resurgence of violence during a general strike in strife-torn Karachi today, reports AFP.

At least 10 people were killed after the opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) called a general strike in Pakistan's largest city that closed the stock exchange, banks, businesses and schools and colleges, police said.

Factories and government offices were hit as few people could get to work. The nearby city of Hyderabad was also paralysed and gunmen exchanged fire with security forces, reports said. The Sindh province cities of Sukkur and Nawabshah were also affected.

Witnesses said security forces patrolled sensitive areas in Karachi. But at least

four people were killed today and six more in the hours running up to the strike, police said.

Snipers were behind nearly all the deaths while militants also torched at least 20 vehicles, police said.

The MQM said it called the action to condemn the continuous humiliation and arrests and torture of women supporters by Karachi security forces.

It also made new allegations that police had killed and carried out mass arrests of MQM activists during a security clampdown in areas dominated by the group.

The MQM, which represents Urdu-speaking Mohajir settlers from India since the sub-continent achieved independence in 1947, had called for a peaceful strike throughout the southern province.

BRIEFLY

Fire claims 3 in S Korea: Three people were killed and four others injured in a fire yesterday in a workers' dormitory near a South Korean nuclear power plant, police said, Reuter reports from Seoul.

A police officer told reporters the fire broke out before dawn. The dormitory was used by workers building a new power plant next to the existing Wolsong plant, in the southeastern town of Yangnam.

Shevardnadze visits Uzbekistan: Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze flew to Uzbekistan for a one-day visit Monday, his first trip abroad since he narrowly survived a car bombing less than a week ago. AP reports from Tbilisi.

Shevardnadze was to meet with Uzbek President Islam Karimov in Tashkent, a spokesman said. Among issues they planned to discuss was the sale of natural gas from Uzbekistan to energy-hungry Georgia this winter.

Haryana seeks army assistance: Indian troops were called out yesterday after parts of a northern state were flooded following heavy monsoon rains, the official Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Authorities in Haryana state sought army assistance to evacuate people in Bhiwani and Rohtak districts in the wake of flash floods which were accompanied by heavy storms, the news agency said.

Chechens kill 2 Russian troops: Two Russian soldiers were killed on Sunday and five injured in attacks by Chechen rebels, Russian news agencies reported yesterday from the capital Grozny, Reuter reports from Moscow.

They quoted Russian military headquarters as saying rebels opened fire 19 times in the previous 24 hours. A third Russian soldier died earlier in the weekend.

Vietnam bans casinos: The Vietnamese government has outlawed all casinos, backing off from its earlier receptivity to foreign investment in a business once identified only with decadent capitalism, AP reports from Hanoi.

The ban was approved by Le Xuan Trinh, chairman of the prime minister's office, the state-run Vietnam News reported Monday. The report gave no reason for Trinh's decision, which hints at some of the conflicting interests in this Communist nation as it seeks to integrate into the non-Communist world and modernise its economy.

11 die in W Siberian mine blast: An explosion at a coal mine in the west Siberian region of Kemerovo has killed 11 miners and a further four are missing, Interfax news agency reported yesterday, Reuter reports from Moscow.

Local emergency officials said 66 miners were rescued after the accident, which happened during scheduled blasting work at the mine early yesterday.

6 die as hotel collapses in Meerut: At least six people died and several others were injured Sunday when a hotel packed with lunchtime guests collapsed in the northern Indian city of Meerut, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Many more are feared trapped in the debris of the privately-owned Sher-e-Punjab Hotel as the three-storied building collapsed at noon when an unspecified number of business travellers were having lunch, PTI said.

3 shot dead in Algeria: Two foreign nuns and an Algerian journalist were killed in separate attacks, officials said, AP reports from Algiers.

There was no claim of responsibility for the Sunday attacks, but foreigners and journalists have been targeted by Muslim radicals who are stepping up attacks aimed at undermining Algeria's military-installed government.

2 Sudanese killed in Ethiopia: Two Sudanese working for Islamic organisations have been shot to death by unidentified gunmen, the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry said Monday, AP reports from Addis Ababa.

The ministry identified the dead as Abdella El-Ghali, head of the International Islamic Relief Agency, and Mohammed Alfath Yusif of the World Islamic League. Though an unknown number of suspects were picked up for questioning, the motive of the killings was unclear.

Bush arrives in Hanoi: Former US President George Bush arrived in Hanoi yesterday becoming the first former or serving US chief executive to visit Vietnam in peacetime, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

Tigers guarantee safety of ferry passengers

COLOMBO, Sept 4: Tamil separatist rebels have promised not to harm the 144 people who were aboard a ferry they seized six days ago, an official said Monday, reports AP.

The rebels "have guaranteed the safety of the people and said they are taking good care of them," said Paul Fruh of the International Committee of the Red Cross mission in Sri Lanka. The Red Cross has been negotiating with the insurgents.

Government officials say the rebels have set tough conditions for the release of the hostages but would not say what they are.

The rebels seized the Iris Moana ferry and its 136 passengers and eight crew members off the coast of northeastern Sri Lanka on Monday night.



Split residents wave Croatian national flags as they watch the parade of the Fourth Croatian Army Brigade Sunday, who returned back home following their successful offensive against the Serbs in the Krajina region. — AFP/UNB photo

18 held in ROK for advocating DPRK's formula

SEOUL, Sept 4: South Korean police today announced the arrest of 18 former campus activists for allegedly organising pro-North Korean rings of advocating North Korea's unification formula, reports AFP.

The 18 included four army soldiers who allegedly led a subversive anti-government group at a provincial university in 1992 to disseminate the guiding philosophy of former North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung.

The four soldiers were also accused of holding a memorial service for Kim near their campus when the North Korean leader died last July.

The others, including a computer programme and a taxidriver, were accused of having led a pro-North Korean Labourgroup at the instruction of North Korean spies who had been arrested in 1990, police said.

Security along Iraq-Jordan border tightened

AMMAN, Sept 4: Iraq and Jordan have tightened security along their common border, with thorough body searches, sniffer dogs and electronic scanners, travellers said Monday, reports AP.

But despite the new measures, automatic weapons were found last week hidden in a car used by five Iraqis at a point halfway between the border and the Jordanian capital Amman, security sources said.

One source said the five appeared to have been planning attacks in Jordan, which last month gave asylum to key members of Saddam Hussein's inner circle.

Relations between one-time close allies Iraq and Jordan have been strained

since the August 8 defection of Lt. Gen. Hussein Kamel al-Majid, a son-in-law of the Iraqi president, his brother Saddam Kamel and their wives — both daughters of Saddam.

Al-Majid has publicly vowed to topple Saddam Hussein's government.

The travellers, who crossed the border over the weekend, said Iraq's measures to tighten control over traffic into Jordan appeared designed to prevent further defections and smuggling of foreign currency and other valuables.

There are at least six new checkpoints between Baghdad and the Trebil border post, said an Iraqi traveller, referring to a post about 500 kilometres (about

300 miles) west of the Iraqi capital.

"All documents are thoroughly checked and cross-verified over short-wave radio between the checkpoints and a security headquarters in Baghdad," said the Iraqi.

At the Trebil post, "Iraqi security literally take apart all vehicles, including diplomatic plate cars, and conduct thorough body searches of passengers," said the Iraqi, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The account was confirmed by several other Iraqi and Jordanian travellers, all of whom also requested anonymity.

On the Jordanian side of the border, the travellers said security officials seemed to be looking for weapons,

Nepali communists to take action over SC decision

KATHMANDU, Sept 4: Nepal's student groups and the ruling minority Communist Party are preparing to take action over a recent Supreme Court decision to restore the country's parliament, reports Reuter.

"We will file a review petition before the Supreme Court," Pradeep Nepal, a minister in the government of the United Marxist Leninist (UML) Party, said on Sunday.

The All Nepal National Free Student's Union (ANNFSU), which supports the government, called a protest strike on Sunday in the eastern region of the country against the August 28 court judgement.



US Ambassador to France Pamela Harriman (second from left) poses with actors (L to R) Ben Kingsley, Clint Eastwood and Natasha Henstridge Sunday during the 21st American Cinema festival in Deauville. — AFP/UNB photo

It's difficult to rest in peace even for departed souls

JAKARTA: In overcrowded Jakarta, even the dead have difficulty finding a place to rest in peace, reports AP.

Authorities in this city of 10 million people are planning to relocate 1,322 graves from next month to make way for building public facilities, Saifil Zainuddin, head of the City Funeral Agency, said Friday.

About half of a 9,745 square metre (11,655 square yard) graveyard in central Jakarta will be cleared to make way for a park as well as office buildings and parking lots.

Relatives of the dead have been told to register their names at the funeral agency to facilitate moving the remains and tombstones to two public cemeteries outside Jakarta.

Car bomb blast in Srinagar leaves 15 killed, 20 hurt

SRINAGAR, Sept 4: A car bomb exploded near two banks where Indian soldiers were doing business Monday, killing at least 15 people and injuring about 20, witnesses said, reports AP.

No one immediately claimed responsibility, but the bomb may have been set by one of the dozens of separatist militant groups that are fighting in Jammu-Kashmir states.

The blast occurred between branches of the State Bank of India and the Jammu-Kashmir Bank as military officers collected money to pay soldiers their monthly salaries at their bases, said the witnesses, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Security is often tightened around the banks when the military collects such payments early each month.

Soldiers and paramilitary troops died in the attack, but the fatalities also may have included civilians and security guards. As mutilated bodies were lifted from the street near the banks, police refused to immediately give an official death toll.

The explosion was no strong that it shattered many of the windows in Ahdoos Hotel, which is located about 50 yards (meters) away, said its manager, Shaikath Ahmed.

Ahdoos is one of the few hotels that still operate in war-torn Srinagar, and visiting reporters have been staying there since a militant group kidnapped six Western hostages in early July.

One of the captives escaped and one was decapitated.

Trial of Aum members begins

TOKYO, Sept 4: Japan kicked off the most dramatic trials in its modern history today, bringing to court the first of more than a hundred members of a doomsday cult on charges related to gas attacks, murders and kidnappings, reports Reuter.

Tense court officials with metal detectors scrutinised the belongings of people entering Tokyo District Court as Kumi Nebuka, a clerk at a hospital operated by the Aum Shinri Kyo (Aum Supreme Truth sect) cult, was ushered into the dock.

She was charged with a relatively minor offence — harbouring a fugitive wanted on a kidnapping charge.

Security around schools beefed up as bomb fear grips Paris

PARIS, Sept 4: Schoolchildren and their parents faced tighter security on the first day of fall classes Monday, a day after the French capital was struck by the third terrorist bombing in as many months, reports AP.

The homemade bomb, hidden in a pressure cooker, exploded under a fruit and vegetable stand of an outdoor market near Place de la Bastille on Sunday, injuring four women and setting several food stalls ablaze.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but suspicion fell on Algerian Muslim fundamentalist extremists who have threatened France for its support of the military-backed government in Algiers. The Armed Islamic Group is suspected in the two other bombings, one of which killed seven people.

As a result, security on the first day of school Monday was the tightest since the last bombing wave that hit the capital in 1986, killing 13 people.

Only the parents of children in kindergarten were allowed on school grounds, all adults were closely screened and kids were told not to gather in front of their schools or leave their backpacks on the ground. All field trips were canceled until further notice, officials said.

"The recent events are imposing the greatest vigilance on us," explained a statement by the Academy of Paris, which directs the capital's school system.

Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré held an emergency meeting Sunday night with Paris Police Chief Philippe Massoni, National Police Director Claude Gueant and other security officials but made no statement afterward.

Police have mounted a nationwide effort to tighten security and search for suspects since the first bombing in a Paris regional subway train July 25 that killed seven people and injured 84.

But after police boosted patrols and searches and covered up trash cans in subway stations, another bomb exploded on a street near the Arc de Triomphe on Aug 17, wounding 17 people, including 11 tourists.

On August, authorities found a bomb planted on a high-speed train track north of Lyon as French vacationers were returning home. The bomb, which like the other two was made from a gas canister filled with explosive and hexnuts, failed to go off.

Since the July bombing, authorities have also conducted tens of thousands of identity checks, deployed extra patrols and evacuated

train stations, stores and museums as a result of bomb scares or threats. Metal plates have covered outdoor trash bins along heavily traveled Paris streets after the August blast.

Terror worries also prompted police to ask Planet Hollywood to cancel its star-studded grand opening party that was scheduled Sunday at the new theme restaurant on the Champs-Elysees.

Investigators believe the three bombs in July and August were planted by the Armed Islamic Group, which is seeking to topple the Algerian government and

establish an Islamic state.

Security was also tight in Brussels Monday for the opening day of a trial of 13 suspected supporters of the group. About 200 police were to be deployed around the courthouse, trash cans were removed and patrols were stepped up in subways, train stations, the airport and embassies.

Although officials did not immediately announce a link to the other Paris bombings, Sunday's blast followed the pattern. Filled with nails and hexnuts, the bomb also targeted a well-populated area to inflict psychological damage.

World confce of IULA begins

THE HAGUE, Sept 4: The 32nd world congress of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) kicked off here Sunday with speeches from the city mayor Ad Havermans and Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Jan Pronk, reports AP.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is expected to be the guest of honour at Thursday's closing day sessions.

The four day congress of the IULA, a reference and information point for local authority associations, will gather together some 1,500 local authority employees from 80 countries.