

NATO warns Serbs of resuming strikes Bosnian troops ring Serb-held town of Bosanska Krupa

BRIEFLY



Cambridge University Professor Stephen Hawking looks over to his wife Elaine Mason after their marriage ceremony at the Cambridge Register Office Friday. It is the second marriage of Professor Hawking, who is suffering from a sclerosis disease and who can communicate with his environment only by a computer attached to his wheelchair. Hawking became famous for his scientific theories on the development of the universe. — AFP/UNB photo

9 killed in Taiwan road mishap: Nine people were killed and 17 injured when a small truck carrying lion dancers overturned on a downhill curve and crashed into a creek police in southern Taiwan said yesterday. Reuter reports from Taipei.

Police had said earlier that five people had died in the accident late on Friday. We corrected our information after things became clearer. As there was a lot of confusion surrounding the accident while we tried to pursue rescue work, a police spokesman said by telephone.

Sihanouk leaves for Beijing: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk left Phnom Penh yesterday for Beijing where he will undergo eye surgery. AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

Last week, the 72-year-old monarch said he was experiencing pain in both his right and left eyes and his vision was blurred so the surgery was necessary.

Hurricane kills five in Mexico City: Five fishermen were killed and another 42 were missing late on Friday after hurricane Ismael battered Mexico's northwest coastline. Rauter reports from Mexico City.

A spokesman for the northwestern state of Sinaloa said five navy boats were searching the coastline for the missing fishermen.

The hurricane caught the boats at high sea and they couldn't get back to port in time, said spokesman Oscar Valenzuela. He said shrimp boats had picked up some survivors from the sea and rescue efforts would continue.

Quake rocks Hokkaido Island: A moderate earthquake rocked the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido yesterday registering 5.1 on the Richter Scale, the Meteorological agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or property damage resulting from the quake which occurred at 8:52 am (2325 GMT Friday) with its epicenter near the Pacific port of Kushiro. The focus of the quake was located some 120 kilometers (75 miles) below sea level, the agency said.

Jet makes emergency landing: A Royal Jordanian Airlines jet flying from Amsterdam to New York made an emergency landing at Ireland's Shannon airport after Dutch police received a telephone warning of a bomb on board, Irish police said Saturday, AP reports from Ireland.

Police who searched the Lockheed Tri-Star jet after it landed Friday night found nothing. The 267 passengers spent the night in Shannon 120 miles (192 kms) southwest of Dublin. The flight left early Saturday for New York's John F Kennedy airport.

4 foreign tourists abducted in SA: Four foreign tourists were recovering Saturday from being abducted, raped, robbed and left naked in a remote corner of the country, AP reports from Umata South Africa.

The tourists — an unidentified British man, two British women and a New Zealand woman — were touring a rural area of the Eastern Cape in a rental car Thursday. Police Capt. Monde Nqadini reported that a pickup carrying eight men started chasing the car. After a while, the tourists grew lost and stopped. They were attacked and bundled into the pickup.

Filipina maid to die in UAE: A 16-year-old Filipina maid accused of killing her employer after he allegedly tried to rape her was sentenced to death Saturday by an Islamic court, AP reports from Al Ain, United Arab Emirates.

The ruling was a dramatic turnaround from the seven-year prison term Sarah Balabagan was given by another court June 26 in this southern Gulf emirate. That ruling was scrapped by the UAE government after an outcry from the Philippines, which sought to have the conviction quashed altogether on the ground she had acted in self-defense, and a retrial ordered.

Crime declines in Latvia: Hit by a crime wave right after winning independence the former Soviet republic of Latvia now says criminal activity is on the decline, AP reports from Riga.

Officials told the Baltic News Service on Friday that the country's overall crime rate has dropped by 9 per cent since last year, the first significant decrease since independence in 1991. Officials attributed the decrease to improved crime-fighting techniques by Latvian police, including preemptive raids to break up powerful crime syndicates.

SARAJEVO, Sept 16: Bosnian government troops have encircled the Serb-held town of Bosanska Krupa and are marching towards Sanski Most, state radio reported today, says Reuter.

The surge expands on a week of stunning gains against separatist Serbs by the mainly Muslim Bosnian army, allied with Bosnian Croat militia and Croatian army troops in northwest Bosnia.

The allied advance against minimal Serb resistance has left Serb forces reeling and has stamped tens of thousands of refugees towards the northern Serb stronghold of Banja Luka.

The United Nations could not immediately confirm the

Bosnian radio report of gains around Bosanska Krupa but the radio has been a reliable source of information on activity in the northwest in recent days.

Bosnian Croat militia backed by regular Croatian Army troops captured the key town of Jajce earlier in the week and government 7th corps troops seized Donji Vakuf to the south.

Bosnian Army 5th Corps forces pushing south and east out of Bihac took Kula Vakuf and Bosanski Petrovac, followed on Friday night by the capture of Ključ, just 65 km (37 miles) northeast of Jajce.

Several hundred kilometers further east Bosnian Army forces have made significant gains on Ozren

Mountain west of Tuzla and are rolling back Serb forces towards to strategically vital town of Doboj in the north of the country.

The past week has been the worst for separatist Serbs in the 41-month Bosnian war.

The Serb territorial losses, totalling several thousands of square kilometres in the northwest alone, came during the last half of a two-week NATO bombing campaign against the Serbs which disrupted their command, communications and supply capability.

Another reports from Naples adds: NATO's southern commander has warned Bosnian Serbs to move their siege, guns from around Sarajevo or face the threat of renewed air strikes.

The blunt warning came from NATO's southern commander Admiral Leighton Smith, who will decide with UN commander General Bernard Janvier on Sunday night if there has been enough progress to extend a pause in air strikes.

In the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, air and land relief routes reopened on Friday after Serb forces agreed to end their 2-year siege, but there was no immediate sign of a full pull-back of weapons.

Smith's message came shortly after anti-aircraft missiles were fired at two NATO reconnaissance planes flying over Bosnia. No shots were fired back and the planes landed safely.



A Hong Kong dancer performs in front of the Houses of Parliament in London, Friday with music from the Hong Kong police band as Londoners experience a week-end of Chinese cultural performances including lion and dragon dances, dragon boat racing, acrobatics, Kung Fu, Tai Chi, cultural arts and cookery. — AFP/UNB photo

Rao's cabinet reshuffle leaves most of key posts undisturbed

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao shunted his powerful interior security minister to another department in a cabinet overhaul, officials said today, reports AFP.

Rao's surprise manoeuvre ahead of next year's general election left most of the top cabinet posts undisturbed but reshuffled 16 of his 70-member expanded ministerial council; officials said of the Friday midnight share-up.

The 73-year-old Rao sidelined Interior Security Minister Rajesh Pilot to the

low-profile Environment Ministry in a bid to cool hostilities between the politician and Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan, political sources said.

The reshuffle came three days after six ministers including Kaul tendered their resignations to Rao to pave the way for the ministerial revamp.

Congress sources said some of the ministers who offered to resign may be drafted for party work ahead of the election, which most observers expect will result in a hung parliament.

Pilot's ouster from the powerful security department came a day after he ordered the arrest of Chandra Swami, a high-flying Hindu priest who has earned a reputation as a kingmaker and spiritual advisor to Rao and others.

Pilot, an outspoken dissident in Rao's government, has said he ordered Swami's arrest after a key suspect in the 1993 Bombay serial blasts last week claimed to have worked for the controversial priest.

Pilot declined to comment on his removal from the cabinet.



Iraqi delegates to the World Conference on Women demonstrates inside the building of the conference Friday asking for the lifting of the embargo against Iraq. The demonstration took place during the closing ceremony of the conference. — AFP/UNB photo

20,000 forcibly evacuated in Philippines

SAN FERNANDO, Philippines, Sept 16: Nearly 20,000 people were forcibly evacuated today as rivers of mud swamped their homes after heavy rains loosened tonnes of debris from the Pinatubo Volcano in the northern Philippines, reports Reuter.

"Our priority is saving lives," police senior superintendent Tom Lantion told reporters while supervising efforts to forcibly evacuate people from 15 towns inundated by floods and mudflows.

"We don't want residents to be trapped in case the situation becomes worse," he said. "There had been no reports of casualties."

Ramos' assurances to quit fail to end fears of power grab

MANILA, Philippines, Sept 16: Assurances by President Fidel Ramos that he will leave office on schedule in 1998 have failed to quell a controversy over what critics say is a move by his allies to extend his grip on power, reports AP.

Last Wednesday, The Manila Times published what it said was a set of proposed amendments to the constitution which would scrap the current, US-style government and replace it with a parliamentary system with real power in the hands of a prime minister.

Those changes could allow Ramos to sidestep the constitutional ban on his re-election and wield power as prime minister. The changes would reduce the president to a figurehead. The newspaper said the

proposals were drafted by the National Security Council, led by Ramos confidant retired Brig. Gen. Jose Almonte. Almonte denies that he or his staff prepared the document.

But House Speaker Jose de Venecia, a close Ramos ally, has also been pushing for a parliamentary style of government to avoid the legislative gridlock of the current, bicameral system with an executive presidency.

During a press conference, Ramos denied any intention to maintain power beyond June 1998 when his term expires. "I have no wish nor design to perpetuate myself in office," Ramos said. "I will step down at the end of my term."

That has not quashed the controversy in a politically cynical society with bitter memories of the 20-year rule

of the late President Ferdinand Marcos. He was ousted in the 1986 uprising that installed Corazon Aquino as president.

"In many countries, such a disclaimer as that issued by President Ramos would be sufficient," wrote Dr Joel Rocamora, a consultant to the Ateneo Center for Social Policy. "Here, nobody expects President Ramos to keep his word."

The constitution, ratified by a plebiscite in February 1987, has been widely criticized as unwieldy. The 80-page document was drafted by an Aquino-appointed commission in the heady days after the uprising against Marcos. Then, the principal goal was to ensure that no future authoritarianism would emerge.

Critics have long main-

tained that the document went too far in diffusing power through the three branches of government and contains portions that are vague and undefinable, such as one which opposes the establishment of "political dynasties."

Much of the reluctance to tinker with the document reflects suspicion of Ramos, a former military chief of staff, defense secretary and the national police commander during martial law.

Ramos was a key leader of the 1986 uprising against Marcos, his second cousin. As resident, however, Ramos relies heavily on a clique of former military officers, including Almonte, whose commitment to liberal democracy has never been fully accepted in a society with bitter memories of mar-

tial rule.

Vice President Joseph Estrada vowed to fight any move to amend the constitution "even if it means crossing paths with President Ramos." Estrada is considered a leading contender for the presidency in 1998, assuming no changes to the constitution.

"The cat is now out of the bag on the issue of constitutional changes to extend President Ramos' stay in power, either through an extension of his term of office or election as prime minister in a new parliamentary government," Sen Ernesto Herrera said.

The Philippines has experimented with various forms of government since independence from the United States in 1946. Until

Off the Record

The biggest cheese

OTTAWA: The biggest cheese in the world, weighing 26 tons, was unveiled on Parliament Hill in Ottawa Thursday, reports Xinhua.

The official unveiling marked Canada's entry for the Guinness Book of Records as the world's biggest cheese. It stands 1.83 meters high and stretches of over 9.753 meters long and 1.37 meters wide.

The making of the cheese took over 10 hours of straight production and required some 245,000 kilograms of milk which is the equivalent of 5,000 cows working non-stop for one day to produce.

The Guinness World Record for the largest cheese was a 18 tons block of cheese produced in the United States.

The largest cheese will tour some retail stores on a specially modified 18 wheel truck to promote the high quality of Canadian cheese.

At last she was killed in a road mishap

OMAHA, Nebraska: A woman who survived four days in a ditch after being shot in the head by an ex-boyfriend, then struggled through therapy to walk again, was killed in an auto accident, reports AP.

Laura Kucera, 20, died Wednesday on her way to visit her grandmother. Her car ran off a gravel road.

"She struggled and she fought to come back and then this happened," her father, David Kucera, said from the family's home in Clarkson. "We believe that God had a purpose for keeping her alive after the shooting and he has a reason for taking her now."

Brian Anderson, 22, shot Miss Kucera twice in the back of the head and once in the shoulder last October and left her for dead in a remote area. He later had second thoughts and led rescuers to her. He was sentenced to up to 125 years in prison.

Doctors were amazed that Miss Kucera, clad only in shorts and T-shirt, lived through three nights of temperatures in the 40s.

She spent 51 days in the hospital. She regained some use of her arms and learned to walk again with some difficulty. She was able to drive a regular car and moved in with a friend in Wakefield in May. She had started classes this summer at Wayne State College.

She was strong in a lot of areas, and she was independent and a very giving and loving person," her father said. "I think that's what she wanted most in life. To be loved."

Jeans and jackpot — what a correlation!

LONDON: British bouncer Rob Campbell retrieved a lottery ticket from his jeans as he was about to put them in the wash — and found he was 1.4 million pounds (2.17 million dollar), richer, reports Reuter.

Campbell, 29, had the crumpled ticket in his pocket for a week before he remembered it.

He had no idea it was a winner and almost chucked it away when he found it. The Sun newspaper said Friday.

On a whim he handed it to his girlfriend who checked the numbers and discovered he had hit the jackpot.

Six killed in Karachi

KARACHI, Sep 16: Three policemen were among six people killed Saturday in Pakistan's ethnically troubled port city of Karachi authorities said, reports AP.

The uniformed police officers were parked outside a shopping center in the heart of Karachi when several gunmen in a second vehicle opened fire, police said. The policemen died instantly.

No one claimed responsibility for the killings but police blamed the largest faction of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement, an ethnic group that has been waging a fierce battle against the security force in Karachi.

More than 100 police and members of paramilitary Ranger force have been killed in recent months.

Most of them have been shot in drive-by shootings, but several others have been kidnapped, tortured and later executed.

New steps to curb number of asylum seekers in Britain

LONDON, Sept 16: New measures to curb the number of immigrants seeking asylum in Britain are to be announced by the government later this year, a Home Office spokesman confirmed Friday, reports AFP.

"We are looking at a number of immigration and asylum issues. A bill will be published soon," he said.

The spokesman gave no further details, but a report in Today Times newspaper said the government action will include cutting social security payments to asylum seekers appealing against refusal to grant them refugee status.

Georgia allows Russia to keep 3 bases on its land

TBILISI, Sept 16: Georgia allowed Russia on Friday to keep three military bases on its territory in exchange for economic help and support in its disputes with separatists, reports Reuter.

The landmark agreement was signed by Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin who was accompanied during his one-day visit to Tbilisi by Defence Minister Pavel Grachev.

Chernomyrdin, whose talks with Shevardnadze lasted three hours instead of a planned 60 minutes, hailed the deal as a step forward in relations between two former Soviet states.

3m people die of TB a year worldwide

WASHINGTON, Sept 16: Health experts warned Friday that tuberculosis was still a major killer, causing three million deaths a year worldwide, and appealed for more research and money to combat the disease, reports Reuter.

The experts, concluding a tuberculosis conference, said governments and World Health Organisations had failed to respond to a global epidemic that had infected 1.7 billion people worldwide.

TB kills more people globally than any other infectious disease. About eight million new cases occur each year.

"Tuberculosis is a health problem of enormous dimensions that should be viewed from a global, rather than a national, context", Philip

Hopewell of the University of California at San Francisco told a news conference. He said TB is mistakenly thought "to be an old disease" or a "dead disease".

"Through an organised, coordinated global strategy, the resources could be mobilised to develop an efficient — and hopefully effective — global control programme."

The two-day conference in Washington of 250 doctors and researchers from more than 40 nations was sponsored by the Lancet, the Britain-based medical journal.

TB is the leading cause of death in developing nations, where 95 per cent of cases occur. More than 15 million Americans are infected with the disease. Worldwide, three million people die from TB annually.

Russian, Israeli military ties to be beneficial

MOSCOW, Sept 16: Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Friday that military cooperation with Israel would be beneficial to both countries, Interfax News Agency reported, says AFP.

Israeli Prime Minister and Defence Ministry Yitzhak Rabin, who had talks with Grachev Thursday during a one day visit to Moscow said at the time that "cooperation in some military areas had not been ruled out."

According to Grachev, both countries wanted military industrial cooperation but talks to this effect could only be held on the instruction of the two presidents or by government resolutions.

Russian cooperation with Israel is either forbidden or restricted, Grachev said.