

BRIEFLY



A child, participating in the Muslim march to protest the Bosnian arms embargo, raises his fist Saturday outside the United Nations in New York. About 6000 Muslims from across North America converged on the UN to demonstrate solidarity with Muslims in Bosnia. — AFP/UNB photo

Pak FM visits Iran: Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sardar Asef Ahmad Ali made a brief visit to Iran Saturday to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, the official Islamic Republic news agency Irna said yesterday. AFP reports from Tehran.

Tehran has more or less openly accused Pakistan of being behind the Afghan fundamentalist militia, the Taliban, which captured all of western Afghanistan earlier this month in its drive to topple the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Road mishap claims 10 in Karachi: Ten passengers, including two children, were killed and four injured yesterday when a mini-bus plunged off a bridge in the southern port city of Karachi, doctors and ambulance sources said. Reuter reports from Karachi.

The bus carrying 20 passengers skidded while taking a sharp turn over a railway bridge near the west Wharf, an industrial area adjoining Karachi Port, an ambulance worker said.

4 Mexican jets crash: Four military planes flying in tight formation crashed during Mexican Independence Day festivities, killing six crew members, the Defence Department said. AP reports from Mexico City.

One crew member parachuted to safety in the Saturday incident and was hospitalised. A statement from the Defence Department said the accident occurred when an F-5 airplane collided with the rear of a T-33, and the falling planes forced two more T-33s to crash.

AP war correspondent Boni dies: William F Boni, a decorated World War II correspondent for The Associated Press whose memoirs were published this year, has died at age 85, AP reports from Chester, Vermont.

Chandrika vows to conscript if war prolongs Key partner in coalition calls for new nat'l govt

COLOMBO, Sept 17: A key partner in Sri Lanka's ruling coalition today called for the establishment of a new national government to crush "terrorism" and end the continuing bloodshed here, reports AFP.

In a statement issued here, Srimani Athulathmudali, leader of the Democratic United National (Lalith) Front (DUNLF) appealed to main political parties to unite to save the country from its "greatest crisis" in history.

Observers here said her call was for a new administration made up of both coalition partners and the main opposition United National Party (UNP).

In an apparent reference to the on-going conflict in the northeast between government troops and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Athulathmudali called for a national government to finish off terrorism.

The main political parties should join hands and work together "until the inhuman and brutal hands of terrorism

are crushed one and for all," said Athulathmudali, who is also Minister for Transport and Women's Affairs.

"Let us resolve to act as one, fight as one and win as one. This is what a national government can achieve meaningfully and quickly without all this bloodshed and destruction," Athulathmudali said.

The DUNLF is a constituent partner of the People's Alliance (PA) coalition government, which has a slim majority in parliament. The government depends on the DUNLF and other minority parties for its survival.

Athulathmudali said there should be no question of aligning with "dubious friends" just to be in power because what mattered most was not power or position but the future of the present generation and those still to come.

AP adds: President Chandrika Kumaratunga has warned that if no political solution is found to the country's 12-year-old war by Tamil separatists, Sri Lankan

youths may be drafted into the military, a local newspaper reported Sunday.

"If the war is prolonged, the government may introduce compulsory military service for youths over 18 years in order to sustain the military effort," Mrs Kumaratunga told the Sinhala-language Silumina.

In the interview, the President did not predict when conscription could begin, but said the government will have to strengthen its military capability if the war continues and that could involve enlisting men for at least three years of service.

At present military recruitment is on a voluntary basis.

Mrs Kumaratunga said some members of the nation's Buddhist clergy and academics were not prepared to accept the government's latest peace proposals even with amendments. They insist that the issue should be settled militarily alone," she said.

She said most of these people have sent their chil-

dren abroad for higher education, and the poor and innocent people from the villages were being sent to the war front. A mandatory draft for all people could end this unfairness, she said.

In her peace plan, Mrs Kumaratunga recently proposed that Sri Lanka become a federation of eight regions, including one controlled by the nation's Tamil minority. Each region would have its own elected government, legislature, courts and police, and the power to raise foreign loans and aid.

The plan has been praised by moderate Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim politicians, but met with strong opposition from right wing Sinhalese, led by powerful Buddhist clergymen.

The proposal, which would be included in a new Constitution, will be discussed by a committee of lawmakers before Parliament considers it. It also requires a referendum to become law.

The Tamil rebels are fighting for a homeland in the north and east.

Japan wants to contribute in ME peace

JERUSALEM, Sept 17: Japan's Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama said his country wanted to contribute to the Arab-Israeli peace process as he began the first visit by a Japanese head of government to the Jewish state, reports AFP.

"Peace and stability in the region are essential for the prosperity of the entire world," Murayama said at a reception at the offices of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"We will therefore continue our active cooperation in whatever way possible," added the premier, who arrived here Saturday from Damascus where he met with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Rabin replied: "Your support for the peace process is important to us. We express our deepest thanks to you."

The peace process and the region's economy are expected to be at the top of the agenda in talks later today between Murayama and Rabin.

Japan is now Israel's second largest export market.

Ties with China to improve soon, says top US official

PORT MORESBY, Sept 17: A top US official said today that strained relations with China would soon improve with higher level ties being restored and the possibility of a presidential summit in October, reports AFP.

US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Winston Lord said here: "We still have continuing problems including on Taiwan, but we have established a process of engagement, and we would expect higher level representation to be re-established in both capitals shortly."

Relations between the two countries deteriorated after Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui made a private visit to the United States in June and US President Bill Clinton met the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in Washington last week.

Lord, a former US ambassador to Beijing, who is attending a South Pacific Forum dialogue session in Port Moresby, capital of Papua New Guinea, said it was no secret there were continuing problems in Sino-

US relations.

Recent discussion, notably in Brunei in August at the APEC foreign ministers meeting, had "served to stabilise the relationship to a certain extent," he told reporters.

1 lakh turn up for Papal mass in Johannesburg

GERMISTON, South Africa, Sept 17: Police estimated only about 100,000 people turned up for a Papal mass in suburban Johannesburg today — well below the 400,000 organisers had said they anticipated.

"There are about 100,000 people," police captain Nollies Huysamen, on crowd control duty at Gosforth Park horse racing track, told Reuters.

He added, however, this still represented one of the biggest events South Africa has seen.

Hillary Phillips of the Papal publicity office said there was no immediate explanation for the lower numbers.

Both sides have expressed an interest in a meeting between Clinton and President Jiang in late October when the Chinese leader comes to New York for the United Nations 50th anniversary celebrations.

"We are working mutually to make the atmosphere positive and the prospects productive for such a meeting," Lord said.

"We would like it to happen, so would the Chinese, and we both recognise that it is important such a meeting is productive."

Lord said he was "striving desperately" not to create headlines of Sino-US problems, "but both sides would agree that basic issues still remain on the table."

"We've told the Chinese, we've got to stay engaged and work out these problems and I think there was some recognition in that," he said.

"I don't want to pretend, we've accomplished much substantive. It has been mostly procedural. But that is the first step to getting back on track."

Off the Record



Miss Oklahoma Shawntel Smith (R) is crowned by the outgoing Miss America Heather Whitestone during the Anniversary Miss America Pageant Saturday at the Atlantic City Convention Centre. — AFP/UNB photo

Worried husband

VENTURA (California): Ninety-year-old Alfred Pohmeier told police he strangled his wife of 60 years because he was afraid no one would take care of her if he died, authorities said, reports AFP.

Pohmeier was charged Friday with first-degree murder in the death of his wife, Lidwina, 86. She died at a hospital two days after he called an emergency telephone number and said she was choking.

The elderly man faces a mandatory sentence of 25 years to life in prison, making him the oldest prisoner in California. He was in jail Saturday pending a 250,000 dollar bail.

God is their match maker

SEOUL: Days before his wedding, Hani Lee still hasn't met his future wife. Like hundreds of thousands to be married Friday in simultaneous mass ceremonies around the world, he has put his faith in divine guidance, reports AP.

"I told my bride it was a match intended by God, and that I was so happy," said Lee, 26, who is in the United States studying advertising.

The matchmaker is the Rev Sun Myong Moon, head of the Unification Church, which preaches that arranged marriages promote family ties and even global peace: some people are paired to help heal cross-cultural rifts.

For his 13th mass wedding, Moon and his wife will bless 35,000 couples in a Seoul stadium, surpassing his record of 20,000 in 1992. Nearly half are flying in for the occasion.

A satellite link will permit simultaneous ceremonies at 545 sites in more than 100 countries.

Altogether, 720,000 people will be involved, although two-thirds will be renewing their vows. It would be the equivalent of the entire population of Amsterdam getting married at the same time.

Most of the new couples met on their own. But tens of thousands are strangers who are expected to spend the first few months getting acquainted before consummating the marriage and living together.

Jordan for Haiti-like solution in Iraq

AMMAN, Jordan, Sept 17: King Hussein has called for international mediation to settle political turmoil in Iraq and end Baghdad's confrontation with the Western world, reports AP.

The Jordanian monarch, once a key backer of the Iraqi leadership, said Saturday that calls by some governments for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime "are tantamount to an interference in the domestic affairs" of that country.

But he suggested that international mediators could secure a change in Iraq along lines followed in Haiti last year.

"When the United Nations Security Council mobilised its forces for an intervention to salvage democracy in Haiti, political mediators opened a dialogue that succeeded in finding an appropriate settlement without bloodshed."

"Why is there no dialogue, no mediation, in the case of Iraq?" he said.

Hussein was referring to US mediators who convinced Haiti's military rulers last year to step down and allow the return of the country's

lected government to power after an army coup that sparked months of civil war.

Hussein, who spoke at a meeting with local media representatives, did not say if he would undertake such a mediation if he were asked.

He also did not say if he believed Saddam, who is known not to tolerate any opposition to his leadership, would accept to step down or broaden his leadership.

Jordan had been ostracized for its pro-Saddam tilt during the 1991 Gulf War that ended a seven-month Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

More recently, however, Hussein has granted senior Iraqi defectors asylum in Jordan and criticised the Baghdad government's undemocratic policies at home and its defiance of international resolutions which helped maintain a stifling UN Security Council trade embargo against that country.

Hussein said he continues to support the Iraqi people, but not one mentioned the Iraqi leadership — a clear sign the monarch is trying to further distance himself from Saddam.



(From L to R) US magician David Copperfield, his German girlfriend top model Claudia Schiffer, Giancarlo Giammetti, partner of Italian fashion stylist Valentino and top model Elle Mac Pherson, are seated in the first row during a fashion show in Rome Friday. The proceeds of the show will go to AIDS infected children. — AFP/UNB photo

Suu Kyi asks people to be patient

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17: Suppressed Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is asking her country to be patient in bringing democracy to Myanmar as she tries to cooperate with the junta that imprisoned her, according to an interview published Sunday, reports AP.

In an interview in the Malaysian newspaper The Sunday Star, Suu Kyi said the goal of her National League for Democracy, formed in 1988 remains the same: "To bring democracy to Myanmar."

In the interview, given at her residence in Yangon last week, Suu Kyi, who was released from house arrest on July 10, said she was aware some people were growing impatient and waiting for her to act.

"There should be expectations, but it should be tempered with an intelligent observation of the situation," she said. "The people... have to learn to control their impatience," Suu Kyi said.

The current military junta,

called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), refused to hand over power to Suu Kyi's opposition party in 1990, when the NLD decisively won Myanmar first multiparty elections in 30 years.

Instead, the junta arrested her and other opposition members and renamed the country Myanmar.

Suu Kyi said that since her release, she has been very busy consolidating the NLD and meeting with political, nonpolitical and student groups.

"The people all want democracy and a system in keeping with the will of the people," she said.

She said she is prepared to work with the junta to achieve a democratic government.

"The military did say their aim was to bring democracy to Myanmar. So if we have a common aim, then we should work together," she said, adding without elaboration that she has a "line of communication" with the ruling SLORC.

Algerians urged to defy rebels by voting in polls

PARIS, Sept 17: Algeria's President Liamine Zeroual urged citizens of his troubled nation on Saturday to defy Muslim guerrillas by voting in the coming presidential election but did not say whether he would be a candidate, reports Reuter.

Zeroual, in a speech broadcast on state-run radio and television, said the presidential poll due in the next two months would break the deadlock in the bloody conflict pitting his army-backed government against Muslim militants bent on toppling the country's moderate rulers and wreck the election.

Guru's arrest order leads to Pilot's exit from key ministry?

NEW DELHI, Sept 17: A Hindu guru, who counts kings and presidents among his acolytes, is in the eye of a storm in India as demands for his arrest putting the federal government into a corner, reports said Sunday, says AFP.

"If power-brokers and people with criminal records are not checked, then the future of democracy would become questionable," said Rajesh Pilot, who lost his job as internal security minister on Friday after ordering the guru's arrest.

Pilot ordered the arrest of the 47-year-old Swami Wednesday on grounds that a key suspect in the 1993

Bombay serial blasts which killed 300 people alleged last week he had worked for the controversial priest.

The minister declared Swami a potential threat to India's security.

"The last order I signed as internal security minister was that the government should not be seen adopting a different approach for the commonman and a category of power-brokers," he said of Swami's alleged clout.

Pilot's relocation to another ministry in a cabinet overhaul Friday is seen in political circles as a direct result of his order on Swami, who counts Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao among his followers.

Pilot, shunted to the Environment Ministry, refused to comment on his exit from the security department, but in comments to AFP dismissed speculation that he would quit.

Opposition parties have supported Pilot, and stepped up demands today for the arrest of the guru, who is believed to advise several cabinet ministers, bureaucrats, industrialists and top military personnel.

Swami, whose clientele includes Elizabeth Taylor, South African President Nelson Mandela, the Sultan of Brunei and Saudi financier Adnan Khashoggi, denied reports of his involvement in Pilot's ouster in the cabinet

revamp.

"I have no hand in the shifting of Pilot. I have no enmity with him," Swami said late Saturday after detectives questioned him in connection with his links with Babloo Srivastava, the Bombay blast suspect.

Swami, who is accused of siphoning bribes in a 2.3 billion-dollar Swedish Nowitzer deal in 1987 when Rajiv Gandhi was prime minister, said he would sue Pilot in a court on Monday for his "malafide order."

Newspapers said Pilot's ouster and the government's reluctance to arrest the jet-setting guru could lead to further dissidence in Rao's

Congress (I) and damage the beleaguered party's prospects in next year's general elections.

"The prime minister has so far not reacted. He is entitled to his private faith in the godman (Swami), but when the faith spills over into the domain of public life, the state apparatus is paralysed," said The Pioneer Daily.

The Hindustan Times and The Hindu, two other newspapers, said the ouster of Pilot would lead to further dissidence in the Congress, which split in May when two senior leaders raised a banner of revolt against the 73-year-old premier.

Arif Mohammad Khan, a

Malaysian jet crash probe to take a month

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17: Investigators believe it will take them about a month to find out why a Malaysia Airlines plane crashed Thursday, killing 34 of the 53 people on board, reports AP.

Department of Civil Aviation Director Zaini Omar said the airplane's flight recorder, would be sent to the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authorities on Monday for analysis, the Sunday Times reported.

The recorder was recovered intact Friday night, eight hours after the Dutch made Fokker 50 crashed today.

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