

BRIEFLY



Japanese Justice Minister Tomoharu Tazawa (C) is surrounded by journalists and policemen when he leaves the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo Monday just after he resigned his post over a dubious two million dollar loan from a powerful Buddhist group. —AFP/UNB photo

Ex-Thai PM Kukrit dies: Former Thai Prime Minister Kukrit Pramod died in Bangkok, yesterday aged 84 after a long illness, hospital officials said, AFP reports from Bangkok.

Kukrit, who served as Prime Minister from March 1975 until April 1976, had been in hospital in critical condition for several months surviving on an artificial respiratory system.

Leghari leaves for Azerbaijan: Pakistan President Farooq Ahmed Leghari left Islamabad yesterday for the Azeri capital Baku on a three-day official visit to promote bilateral relations between the two Muslim countries, officials said, AFP reports from Islamabad.

Leghari is visiting Azerbaijan at the invitation of his counterpart Haydar Aliyev, where he will hold bilateral talks with Azeri leaders on the issues of Kashmir, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Nagorno Karabakh.

Rao to attend NAM summit in Cairo: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao is leaving for Cairo on October 15 en route to Colombia to attend the 11th Non-Aligned summit there, official sources said yesterday, Xinhua reports from New Delhi.

He will also go to New York for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations on October 20. Rao will hold official talks in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The talks are expected to centre mainly on the issues which are to come up at the Colombia Summit, the sources said.

Floods claim 6 in Sri Lanka: Six people were killed and 20,000 families have been affected by raging floods caused by torrential rains lashing the Ratnapura district in central Sri Lanka Sunday, official sources said yesterday, Xinhua reports from Colombo.

A total of 200 families were evacuated from the affected areas but the exact number of people made homeless is still not known. Reports reaching Colombo indicate that large numbers have been marooned in the deluge.

DPRK names new defence minister: North Korea has named its army's Chief of General Staff, Choe Kwang, as the state's new Defence Minister, South Korea's official watcher of North Korean events said yesterday, Reuters reports from Seoul.

The Naewoo press said North Korean radio reported on Sunday that Choe was replacing O Jin-U, whose death of cancer in February widened a hole in North Korea's leadership that emerged following the death last year of the great leader Kim Il Sung.

Pope leaves for Rome: Pope John Paul II departed for Rome late Sunday after a five-day US trip that took him to New York, New Jersey and Maryland, AFP reports from Maryland.

Shortly before departing, the Pope met with Vice President Al Gore at the international airport in Maryland.

Aum member surrenders: An Aum Supreme Truth sect member suspected in a parcel bombing that targeted Tokyo Governor Yukio Aoshima has surrendered to police, ending nearly half a year of flight, Jiji Press reported Monday citing police, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Massahro Tomyama 26 was arrested after turning himself in at a police station in Saitama prefecture, north of Tokyo on charges that he plotted with other Aum members to kill Aoshima by sending a parcel bomb in May.

50 Zambian troops leave for Angola: Fifty Zambian soldiers left Lusaka yesterday for Angola to join the United Nations peace mission in that war-ravaged country, Xinhua reports from Lusaka.

They flew off from Lusaka International Airport in two C-130 UN transport aircraft.

Algerian forces kill 25 rebels

LONDON, Oct 9: Algerian security forces killed 25 members of an Islamic militant group in the western region of Sidi Bel Abbes on Saturday, Algerian radio reported, says Reuters.

The radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), said late on Sunday that the dead were members of a group led by Akal Mohamed Rachid.

It quoted a statement issued by the security forces as saying that those killed had been operating in the Sidi Bel Abbes area and in Tlemcen where they had been behind numerous assassinations and acts of sabotage.

More than 40,000 people have died in political violence in Algeria since January 1992.

Algerian newswomen devoted to their job despite all odds

ALGIERS, Oct 9: Sihem has dyed her hair and bought a gun. Karima changes her itinerary daily. Lamia has gone under ground often enduring days without a shower, reports IPS.

Such is the life of a woman reporter in Algeria today where more than 48 journalists and other professionals — including four women — have been killed since 1993 and at least 200 forced to flee the country.

The persecution of journalists and intellectuals has taken place against a backdrop of violence that leads back to January 1992, when the Algerian authorities cancelled a general election the Islamic parties were poised to win.

Between 10,000 and 30,000 people have died in the political conflict since, and the lives of those committed to reporting the atrocities have come to resemble that of a soldier of fortune more than a white-collar professional.

Since Djaafar El Afghani, leader of the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) swore to fight with the sword those who are fighting with the pen, only war-battered Rwanda and Yugoslavia has matched Algeria's grisly record of the number of journalist deaths.

According to Paris-based rights group Reporters Sans Frontiers, 119 journalists were reportedly assassinated in 1994 and early 1995 — "an absolute record".

Amina, 35, and a journalist for eight years, remembers practising her trade before the advent of terrorism and censorship: "before, a journalist was well regarded, she didn't have to keep her profession a secret, and she did her job in all tranquillity. But now nothing is as it was before."

Like many of her colleagues, Amina no longer lives at home, the dangers attendant to her profession have forced her underground.

"Fear? yes I'm afraid. It's only human, and I'm not ashamed to admit it. But it's not death itself, it's the atrocities that go with it that I fear," she says.

Women journalists here in fact must endure the double burden of being members of two groups whose position has clearly deteriorated since the advent of the civil war.

According to an Amnesty International, rape and death

**9 elderly, 8 police commandos killed in attack
LTTE accuses govt of denying food supplies to N Jaffna**

COLOMBO, Oct 9: Tamil Tiger rebels Monday accused the government of denying food supplies to war-torn northern Jaffna Peninsula to "starve Tamils into submission," reports AP.

The rebel statement from its office in London said the distribution of bread has been rationed since Sunday following a serious wheat flour shortage.

"The government's secret agenda of straying the Tamils into submission has been revealed by several sources," the statement said.

Government officials in Colombo denied the rebel claim and said food supplies for a month are available in the Peninsula. "Loading has been slow because of various problems, but it is continuing," said Mohammed Rafeek, an official at the Commission

General of Essential Services.

But the government administrator in Jaffna warned that there could be starvation in refugee camps. "Already the displaced people who do not have money to purchase food are in difficulties... In a week's time, there could be starvation in the refugee camps," said K Ponnambalam, the government's top administrative officer in the Peninsula. He is visiting Colombo to resolve the problem.

Ships chartered by the government carry up to 9,000 metric tons of food supplies every month for the 800,000 people living in the rebel-held area. A military siege since 1991 has cut off all land routes to the Peninsula.

The fighting has forced nearly half the population to flee and live in refugee camps and depend on government

supplies.

In July, the supplies were disrupted when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stopped escorting the food ships as the rebels withdrew an assurance not to attack the vessels.

The Red Cross resumed escorting the ships a month later after talks with the government. But only two of the four vessels hired for food supplies have reached the Peninsula since then.

The rebels have warned Tamil civilians in the Peninsula that a major military offensive against Jaffna town, the rebel stronghold in Sri Lanka, is imminent.

Government officials have declined comment on the rebel claim, but there has been a military build up at Palali.

Meanwhile, Tamil rebels ambushed a patrol of elite police commandos in eastern Sri Lanka early Monday, killing at least eight of them, a police official said.

Another seven commandos were wounded in the attack by nearly 200 guerillas in Ampara district, said a local police official on condition of anonymity.

PTI adds: LTTE mortar attacks in northern Lanka killed nine inmates of a home for elders in Puttur in Jaffna Peninsula early today, the Defence Ministry said.

The spokesman said that the LTTE fired "pasilan" mortars towards Puttur area currently under the control of the army. Two of the mortar bombs fell near the Methodist Church and Puttur Hospital while the third fell on the home for the elders.

Pak air force begins wargame

SHORKOT, Pakistan, Oct 9: The Pakistan air force said on Sunday it had begun a major exercise to assess its war readiness in regions bordering old enemy India, reports Reuters.

Air force officials said India had been informed about the regular biennial high mark exercise, preparations for which began last month.

Its final operational phase with a more than 300 aircraft taking part, began on Saturday in central and southern parts bordering India a senior air force official told reporters.

"As things happen across the border, the area in the middle and south has gained in importance, assistant chief of air staff Air Commodore Pervaz Mirza said.



Sarajevo children play in a yard for scrapped automobiles flashing the V-sign in expectation of a ceasefire to come into effect next Tuesday. However, Bosnia's President Alija Izetbegovic said he did not believe that a countrywide ceasefire, conditional on restoring gas and electricity to Sarajevo, would begin as planned "because the conditions have not been fulfilled." — AFP/UNB photo

Russian air raids claim 40 in Chechnya

MOSCOW, Oct 9: Forty people died and 20 were injured in Russian air raids at the weekend against two villages in Chechnya, the Interfax news agency reported today citing Chechen sources, reports AFP.

The sources said the Sunday raids targeted the village of Roshny-Chu, located 35 kilometres (20 miles) southwest of the capital Grozny, and Mesker-Yurt, located 25 kilometres (15 miles) east of Grozny.

The Sunday raids were carried out by two jets that flew from Azerbaijan, a Russian military source was quoted as saying.

UN war crimes tribunal on Bosnia begins proceedings

THE HAGUE, Oct 9: The United Nations war crimes tribunal today began proceedings at which victims and witnesses of alleged atrocities in former Yugoslavia are scheduled to give evidence in public for the first time, reports Reuters.

Judge Claude Jorda of France opened hearings at 0900 GMT in the case of Bosnian Serb Dragan Nikolic, former commander of a prison camp at Susica, near Vlasenica in northeast Bosnia, where as many as

8,000 Muslim prisoners were held.

Nikolic was the first person indicted by the UN criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia. But he has remained free since being charged in November 1994 with killing eight Muslim prisoners, torturing 10 others and injuring three more.

The hearings are likely to last a week and are expected to result in the tribunal confirming the indictment against Nikolic and issuing an international arrest warrant for him.

In his opening address chief prosecutor Richard Goldstone said he would ask 10 witnesses to testify against Nikolic.

"Ten witnesses who were present at the relevant time in Vlasenica have with great courage decided to come to The Hague to testify in these proceedings," he said.

"In full knowledge of their right to witness protection they have further elected to give their evidence openly in public."

withdrawing the soldiers protecting the refugees. The soldiers will be temporarily transferred to the nearby towns before the transfer of powers to the Palestinian authority. "Our aim is to leave populated areas of the West Bank as quickly as possible" Lerner said.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said earlier Sunday after overnight talks with PLO leader Yasser Arafat that the redeployment would begin in 10-20 days time form four villages.

Off the Record

What's the hurry O J?

LA ROMANA, Dominican Republic: Less than a week after being cleared of murder charges, O J Simpson was reportedly headed to the Dominican Republic for a speedy marriage to model Paula Barbieri. But there was no sign of the former football star and his top attorney denied the report, reports AP.

In a front-page report, the Listin Diario newspaper quoted unidentified sources as saying Simpson and Barbieri left Los Angeles on Saturday for Miami and were to fly on a private plane to the Dominican Republic on Sunday.

There was no confirmation of the report. Dominican immigration officials would not say whether Simpson had arrived or planned to arrive. Several Dominican airports and the US Embassy also said they had no information about the reports.

Attorney Johnnie L Cochran denied Sunday that Simpson was on his way to the Dominican Republic, telling KCBS-TV in Los Angeles: "No, there's no truth to that at all." Cochran, who said he spoke to Simpson on Saturday, did not return repeated messages left by The Associated Press.

Listin Diario is the newspaper that broke the news of Michael Jackson's marriage to Lisa Marie Presley in the Dominican Republic last year. The Caribbean nation offers speedy marriages that require only one witness and a brief ceremony in front of a judge.

The marriage rumours surfaced in the Italian media Friday, three days after a jury in Los Angeles acquitted Simpson in the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 12, 1994.

Robbers merely mistaken though journalists did

SINGAPORE: A local bar made famous by a fluke during the Barings debacle this year was robbed Monday of 20,000 Singapore dollars (14,300 dollars), a news report said, reports AP.

Harry's Quayside Pub became famous when hordes of local and foreign journalists began writing about it in the mistaken belief that rogue Barings trader Nick Leeson used to hang out there.

On Monday, two unidentified men tied and gagged two female staff of the pub, ransacked the office and took 20,000 dollars from a safe, Television Corp of Singapore reported.

It did not elaborate. The owner of Harry's pub and police were not immediately available for comment.

After the Barings collapse, much was written about Harry's Pub and the owner was interviewed by TV crews before it became known that Leeson patronised the bar only rarely.

The rumour began because the bar is frequented by scores of traders from the Singapore International Monetary Exchange where Leeson used to work until he fled in February after piling up 1.3 billion dollar in losses while trading in derivatives.

Now in a Frankfurt jail, Leeson is fighting extradition to Singapore to face fraud and forgery charges.

Redeployment of Israeli army to begin today in WB

JERUSALEM, Oct 9: The Israeli army will begin redeployment outside West Bank villages on Tuesday by pulling out of Salfit near Nablus a military spokesman said Sunday, reports AFP.

The withdrawal will ten spread Wednesday to the villages of Kharbata near Ramallah, Yata near Hebron and Kabatiya near Jenin, said spokesman Peter Lerner.

Israel will close its military administration offices in the villages, which handed out work and residency permits for the Jewish state and

Taleban reject UN plan for limited ceasefire

MAIDAN SHAHR, Afghanistan, Oct 9: The Taleban Islamic Movement on Sunday rejected a UN plan for a limited ceasefire in war-ravaged Afghanistan and vowed to attack Kabul to oust President Burhanuddin Rabbani, reports Reuters.

"We are not willing to consider a ceasefire," a Taleban frontline commander, Mullah Mashr, told reporters at his headquarters at Maidan Shahr, about 30 km (20 miles) southwest of the capital.

"Rabbani has not abided by ceasefires in the past, and we will attack when we are ready," he said. Mashr was commenting on a statement by UN peace envoy Mahmoud Mestiri on Saturday that he was trying to bring about a limited ceasefire so he could convene a conference of all the country's warring fac-

tions.

Mashr said the United Nations had lost its chance to negotiate a peace accord and there would be no peace with Rabbani in power.

"We will attack. The current situation will not stay like this for very long. We do not have any deadline or schedule for Kabul, but definitely we will attack," he said.

In Kabul, Mestiri, who has been meeting various faction leaders, acknowledged that the Taleban was unwilling to end hostilities while Rabbani occupied the presidential palace but said he was optimistic about negotiating a compromise.

His plan was to arrange a 10-day ceasefire followed by multi-faction talks to arrange the transfer of power from Rabbani to an interim administration.



Palestinian Hamas leading member Dr Mahmoud Zahar (R) smiles next to his brother (L) on his way to home after being released from the Gaza central jail, Sunday by order of PLO leader Yasser Arafat. The Islamic Resistance Movement official was among some 50 Muslim fundamentalist activists arrested on June 26, a day after a Hamas militant wounded three Israeli soldiers in a suicide attack in the south of the Gaza Strip. — AFP/UNB photo

2 Irish flogged in Pak jail

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Oct 9: Two Irish men convicted of drug smuggling were flogged in a jail here today, the first foreigners to undergo such punishment in Pakistan, prison sources said, reports AFP.

Oliver Byrne and Brian O'Laughlin, convicted by a magistrate last month under Islamic law, received five lashes each in the presence of doctors, said Arbab Islam, the central jail deputy superintendent.

The official said the two were released after they were flogged with "a four-foot cane about half an inch in diameter."

He denied a report in the local Frontier Post that they were flogged on Sunday.