

US House seeks to block its troops under UN command

WASHINGTON, Sept 6: The House sought Thursday to limit the president's ability to place US troops under United Nations command, reports AP. The move came on a 299-109 largely partisan vote, even as Senate leaders were negotiating over a resolution endorsing this week's missile strikes in Iraq. The House bill conveyed the view of the Republican majority — echoed by Bob Dole on the presidential campaign trail — that Clinton too often yields command of US troops to the United Nations. However, the measure, drafted by Rep. James Lingley Jr., a freshman Republican and former marine, is a long way from becoming law. There is no guarantee the Senate will even take up the bill in the three weeks remaining in the session, and it would face a certain presidential veto. Clinton last year vetoed a defence spending bill in part because it contained a similar provision, lawmakers later removed it from the bill. On Thursday the House also passed, 276-130, an amendment stemming from the case of Michael New, an Army medic based in Germany who was court marshaled last year for refusing to wear United Nations insignia on a peacekeeping mission to Macedonia. It would prohibit the military from requiring service members to wear United Nations insignia. "What we're responding to here," said Republican Rep. Robert Dornan, "is the administration's repeated subordination of US interests to the UN agenda." Democrats called the bill a transparent political attack on Clinton.

US, UK fail to overcome Russian veto threat India slams US for launching missile attacks on Iraq

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: India today criticised the United States for launching Cruise missile attacks on Iraq and pressed Washington to end its military action, reports AFP. "The US missile attacks on September 3 and 4 are highly regrettable," External Affairs Minister Inder Kumar Gujral told parliament here. "We are unable to accept the justification for the attacks." Gujral said the attacks failed to meet "norms of international conduct." He added the New Delhi was closely monitoring the situation while liaising with other countries. The minister urged Washington not to launch further missile attacks on Iraq and to respect Baghdad's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It was India's strongest criticism of the United States in recent years and came three days after the Foreign Ministry had expressed "grave concern" over the first round of US missile attacks. India has close relations with Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of Indians fled the Middle East following the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Earlier report says, the United States and Britain on Thursday failed to overcome a Russian veto threat after three days of negotiations on a UN reaction to an Iraqi offensive which prompted US missile strikes. Russia is threatening to veto a draft resolution notably because of the lack of any reference to the US action, on which the British and Americans have so far refused to yield. Security Council president Alfredo Lopes Cabral told reporters that the council would meet again today after the UN envoys of Russia, the United States and Britain held direct talks in a bid to end the deadlock. Following the talks between

Court charges Advani for taking huge bribes

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The leader of India's main Opposition party was accused by a court today of accepting huge bribes in a multi-million-dollar pay-off scandal, reports AFP. Special Judge V B Gupta ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to charge L K Advani, president of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), with corruption and criminal conspiracy. Advani, a veteran politician who has denied the charge, was not present in the packed courtroom when the ruling was given. The judge said in his 267-page order that there was prima facie evidence that Advani had taken six million rupees (170,000 dollars) from a businessman, Surendra Jain, who is at the centre of the 21-million-dollar scandal. Jain allegedly bribed around 115 top politicians and bureaucrats between 1988 and 1991. The scandal erupted ahead of national elections in April May this year. Advani quit parliament and refused to contest the polls, saying he wanted to clear his name. "Corruption has eaten into the nation's material fibre, and rectifying this should be the top priority," Gupta said. The sweeping corruption scandal, which shook the political establishment to its roots, involved all political parties except the communists. The CBI uncovered the scandal when it seized two coded diaries from Jain which listed politicians and government officials he had given money to in return for unspecified favours.

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EU donations for floods in China: The European Union (EU) announced Thursday it had donated 700,000 European currency units (896,000 dollars) to aid victims of China's disastrous summer flooding, AFP reports from Beijing. The donation will be channelled via the International Federation of the Red Cross and medecins sans frontiers and will be used to purchase blankets, clothes, medicine and food for the 13 Chinese provinces hit hardest by the flooding. **British diplomat convicted:** A senior British diplomat was found guilty Thursday of smuggling a large consignment of child pornography into Britain, AP reports London. Robert Coghlan's collection of 109 obscene videos, including 70 that featured child sex, were seized by British customs officials conducting a random search in March. The 54-year-old diplomat recently spent four years as a first secretary in the embassy's information department in Japan and was headed for a new appointment in Spain. **China to erect Mao's bronze statue:** China announced plans yesterday to erect a 8.15-metre (26.9 foot) bronze statue of its "great helmsman" Mao Zedong at his revolutionary base in Shaanxi province, AFP reports from Beijing. The statue is part of a one-million dollar injection of funds for Yan'an, where Mao and his revolutionaries regrouped after the Long March and spent almost a decade preparing to take control of China. **7 killed in hurricane in US:** Hurricane Fran has caused at least seven deaths since it slammed into north Carolina, Cable News Network (CNN) said early yesterday, AFP reports from South Carolina. Most of the deaths since late Thursday attributed to the storm, which has been downgraded to a category one hurricane, occurred in North Carolina, CNN said. Earlier, a spokesman for the North Carolina emergency told the news channel that there were six unconfirmed, storm-related deaths in his state. He said most of the fatalities were in traffic accidents. **15 more executed in China:** China has executed another 15 convicted criminals, including five from the troubled region of Xinjiang, reports said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing. Ten convicted robbers were executed in central Hunan Province on Thursday, according to the China Youth Daily, while five people convicted of theft and murder were executed in northwest Xinjiang, the Xinjiang Daily said. **Dengue fever claims 100 in Vietnam:** More than 100 people have died in an epidemic of dengue fever in central and south Vietnam this year, according to a health ministry report quoted by newspapers yesterday, AFP report from Hanoi. Dengue, an illness transmitted by mosquitoes, left 30 dead in the month of August alone, the union newspaper Lao Dong said without giving further explanations for the surge, labelling it "exceptional." **Blast kills 4 in Vietnam:** Four people were killed and 16 seriously injured when a gas cylinder exploded in a privately operated factory in Ho Chi Minh City, a newspaper report said yesterday, AFP reports from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The explosion was due to the carelessness of the workshop owner, the Daily Saigon Giaiphong said, without elaborating. The victims included several members of the owner's family, his staff and passers-by. **Mother, 3 children burnt to death in SA:** A mother and her three teenaged children were burnt and tortured to death by the masked attackers in the family home in Thandana reserve, north of the Kwazulu-Natal port city, police said Thursday, AFP reports from Durban, South Africa. The attackers tied the victims' hands together, hanging one of the youths, 18-year-old Thulani Nsele, by his neck to overhead rafters and setting him alight late Monday, police spokesman Erik Truter said in a written statement. **S Korean president in Chile:** South Korean President Kim Young-Sam was to meet with President Eduardo Frei on Friday as part of a trip to strengthen South Korea's trade and political ties with Latin America, AP reports from Santiago, Chile. Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza welcomed the Korean leader at the airport Thursday as he arrived here from Guatemala in the second leg of a five-nation tour. **Road mishaps claim 16 in Egypt:** Sixteen people, including children and policemen, were killed and more than 40 others injured in two road accidents in the southern province of Minya on Thursday, Egyptian police said, AFP reports from Minya, Egypt. Six children died and 26 others were hurt when a van collided with a truck near Salamut, they said. The children, aged 7 to 15, were on their way to pick cotton. Another 10 people, two of them policemen, were killed and 16 seriously injured when a bus smashed into a van near the village of Maghgha.

Libel case of MP Major summoned in court

LONDON, Sept 6: British Prime Minister John Major received a summons on Thursday to give evidence in court in a libel case involving one of his members of parliament, reports Reuters. The case is expected to go to court in October and could mean that Major and deputy prime minister Michael Heseltine, who was also subpoenaed, could miss part of their Conservative Party's annual conference. If he attends, Major will be the first British Prime Minister to have given evidence in a court case. Former trade minister Neil Hamilton is suing The Guardian newspaper over it claims that he accepted money in exchange for asking questions in parliament.

Who's in charge during Yeltsin's operation?

MOSCOW, Sept 6: President Boris Yeltsin's planned heart operation leaves an authority vacuum bound to be filled with intrigue and scramble for power, reports AP. Under the Russian constitution, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin takes charge if the president is permanently incapacitated or dies. Chernomyrdin has to call new elections within three months. However, barring such extremes, a formal or even an informal transfer of power might not occur during Yeltsin's hospital stay. During previous bouts of heart trouble, Yeltsin has remained in charge, at least nominally, ruling from his hospital bed. Day-to-day matters of running the state will be left to Chernomyrdin, a Soviet-era technocrat turned reformer, but the prime minister is not likely to be ruling alone. Chernomyrdin's government is balanced by another centre of power — the presidential administration run by Anatoly Chubais, a leading reformer who was the architect of Russia's privatization programme.



US President Bill Clinton stresses a point as he delivers remarks on Thursday to the citizens of Broward County, Florida, on health care in America. The President is on a two-day campaign swing in Florida. — AFP/UNB photo

Polks won't be free, fair: UK parliamentary group 'HR abuse by govt, opponents threaten to mar Kashmir polls'

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Human rights abuses by government and opposition forces threaten to mar Kashmir's first state elections in nine years, Amnesty International warned in a statement today, reports AFP. The London-based human rights organisation in a faxed statement said there were signs that abuses reported during national elections in May could be repeated. Earlier Reuter says: A British parliamentary group said on Thursday that elections this weekend in Kashmir, which India hopes will end a six-year regional revolt, would be neither free nor fair. Parliamentary Human Rights Group, told Reuters. "To say the elections will end the problem when they do not even address this issue and there are half a million troops in the area seems absurd," he said. The elections to the Himalayan state's 87-seat assembly begin on Saturday and will be held over four days, ending on September 30. Meanwhile, some 200,000 Indian security officers fanned out across Kashmir today ahead of the first local elections since a separatist rebellion erupted six years ago. Voting in the first stage of elections to the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly was set for Saturday in 26 of the 87 constituencies in the Himalayan state. "The people of Kashmir are not going to be able to vote on the one thing that is important to them and that is the constitutional position of the territory," Lord Avebury, chairman of the

100 Hutu rebels, 3 troops killed in two days

BUJUMBURA, Sept 6: About 100 Hutu rebels and three soldiers of Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army were killed in clashes in the hills around Bujumbura in the past two days, an army spokesman told AFP early this morning. The army launched a sweep Wednesday against the guerrillas after the rebels lobbed three mortar shells into the capital on Tuesday and put on a display of automatic rifle fire-power in the hills in what a rebel spokesman said was a warning that they could attack Bujumbura any time they wanted. "Eleven weapons — kalashnikovs and automatic rifles — were seized," Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Nibizi told AFP.



Around 2,000 Bosnian-Serbs participating at a Serb Democratic party (SDS) election rally in Dobrinja, a Serb-held part of Sarajevo, hold up banners of Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian-Serb president on Thursday. Karadzic stepped down from the election under US pressure since he is an indicted war criminal wanted by the UN war crimes tribunal. — AFP/UNB photo

Mother Teresa returns home from hospital

CALCUTTA, Sept 6: Mother Teresa left hospital and returned home here today after recovering from life-threatening heart problems, doctors said, reports AFP. She was accompanied by her personal physician, Dr Ashim Baradhan, one of six-strong team which had been caring for the 86-year-old Nobel Peace laureate at Woodlands Nursing Home. The hospital van left the hospital at 5:20 am (2350 GMT), heading for the Missionaries of Charity headquarters in the city. She was also accompanied by four nuns and her personal friend and India's former Davis Cup captain, Naresh Kumar. Mother Teresa was taken out of the building in wheelchair and then transferred to the ambulance by stretcher. Mother Teresa, awarded the Nobel Prize in 1979 for her work in the Calcutta slums, was taken to hospital on Aug 20 with an irregular heart beat, later complicated by malaria and pneumonia.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu waves as he arrives at the Likud party central committee meeting in Tel Aviv on Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

Netanyahu under fire for meeting Arafat

TEL AVIV, Israel, Sept 6: On election night, they jubilantly danced and hailed him as a political savior. But after Benjamin Netanyahu met with Yasser Arafat, Likud Party faithful greeted the prime minister in stony silence, reports AP. As shouts of "traitor" and "resign" mounted at his party convention Thursday, Netanyahu promised there would never be a Palestinian state and assured the audience that shaking the Palestinian leader's hand "wasn't easy." But one by one, speakers rose to condemn his meeting with Arafat Wednesday, the first time a right-wing Israeli premier has met the guerrilla-turned-peace-maker. The summit appears to have rekindled a peace process Netanyahu has long opposed and which he put on ice during his three months in office. Cabinet minister Ariel Sharon won rousing cheers as he tirelessly listed past terrorist incidents in which Arafat was involved. "For 20 years US presidents... did not let Arafat shake their hands or visit their capital. They knew some things mustn't be forgotten." His colleague Benny Begin — whose father, the late Likud founder and ex-premier Menachem Begin, reviled Arafat — said the meeting "signals to the PLO that Israel is trapped" in the peace process set out by the previous Labour party government. Alluding to Netanyahu's warning that Cabinet minister would be fired, Begin said he "wasn't born in the government." Tempers flared in the seemingly divided audience, with several scuffles and much shouting erupting between supporters and opponents of the peace moves. "Bibi has betrayed us," said Amram Cohavi, a veteran Likud member, referring to Netanyahu by his nickname. He was shouted down by another man, who said he was wounded in the 1973 war. "I have five children... I want them to enjoy peace and that's why Bibi had to meet Arafat," said the man. One woman stood up throughout Netanyahu's speech, holding an umbrella — an allusion to British premier Neville Chamberlain who tried to appease Hitler. As opposition leader, Netanyahu had unservingly condemned the late premier Yitzhak Rabin for his landmark peace accord with Arafat in 1993. But Netanyahu's resolve to boycott Arafat appeared to weaken as he courted centrist voters essentially supportive of the peace process but angry at mounting Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Wednesday's summit was widely interpreted as final acceptance of the peace process by the right-wing half of Israel. Haim Romon of the opposition Labour Party said it meant Likud's dream of a "Greater Land of Israel" was dead. "Netanyahu is wearing himself of his illusions," he said. But ex-premier Yitzhak Shamir was defiant, saying historic positions cannot change "because of any meeting with one Arab... The struggle for the Land of Israel is not yet over." Netanyahu's supporters at Thursday's convention — like moderate Tel Aviv mayor Roni Milo — argued the Netanyahu

Photocopier dust can cause lung disease

LONDON, Sept 6: Photocopier dust can cause serious lung disease, Austrian doctors said today, reports Reuter. Christine Armbrust and colleagues at the University of Vienna described the case of a man who evidently developed two conditions from the tiny metal particles in photocopier toner. In a letter to the Lancet Medical Journal, they said a 39-year-old man, who did not smoke had suffered a persistent dry cough for a year. He was diagnosed with granulomatous pneumonitis, caused by breathing in tiny particles of metal, and lymphadenopathy — a swelling of the lymph glands. "With increasing use of photocopiers, more patients with pulmonary disease due to exposure to toner dust expected," they wrote. Two years ago Spanish doctors wrote to the Lancet about a 44-year-old woman who suffered another lung disease, siderosilicosis from working in a photocopying shop.