

BRIEFLY

Kim ends Latin America trip

President Kim Young-sam said Monday his 12-day trip to five Latin American countries has laid a foundation for more South Korean investment in the region.

"Our country will actively participate in various projects, infrastructure, building home from his trip to Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Peru. Kim's trip was the first to the region by a South Korean president.

Azeri, Kazak leaders sign accord: The presidents of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan signed agreements Monday to improve cooperation between the two former Soviet republics, especially in the development of Caspian Sea oil and gas fields, AP reports from Baku.

Azerbaijan President Geydar Aliyev and Kazak President Nursultan Nazarbayev, in their first summit meeting, agreed to accelerate oil and gas development. A joint statement on using it only for peaceful purposes.

Troops kill 11 rebels in Colombia: Colombian troops killed 11 leftist guerrillas on Monday in the latest round of clashes in a two-week-old rebel offensive. An army commander said, Reuter reports from Bogota.

The first battle took place early on Monday when soldiers headed off attacks by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on communities near the town of Puerto Perra, about 175 miles (280 km) from Bogota, in northeastern Santander province. Gen. Rafael Hernandez Lopez said seven guerrillas were shot dead and large quantities of arms and munitions were seized.

Israeli chopper crashes: An airman was killed and two were missing after an Israeli military helicopter crashed in the Mediterranean Sea during exercises, the Israeli Army said yesterday. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The army said communications with the Dolphin type helicopter were lost on Monday. Searchers found the body of one crewman about three hours later of the incident along with the wreckage in the sea opposite the northern Israeli town of Nahariya. The two other crewmen were missing.

40 held for firing in joy in Lebanon: Lebanese army troops have arrested 40 people for firing their guns in joy after a baby boy was born to prominent family in northern Lebanon, the state run National News Agency reported Monday. AP says from Beirut.

The agency said the gunfire in the town of Zgharta and Ehden Sunday night was to celebrate the birth of a baby boy to the wife of Asaad Karan, Karan, who is in his 40s, hails from a family descended from Youssef Karan, an 18th century warrior who battled Ottoman Turkish rule in Mount Lebanon.

Floods kill 12 in Sudan: Surging water swept through shantytowns near the Sudanese capital, killing dozens of people and leaving thousands homeless. Sudanese television reported Monday. AP reports from Khartoum.

The floods were the latest to devastate the poor region around Khartoum, where the White Nile and Blue Nile converge. State-owned television broadcast footage of flood waters inundating shantytowns in the southern suburbs of Mayo.

Cholera outbreak kills 77 in Yemen: A 2-month-old outbreak of cholera has killed 77 people in Yemen and infected hundreds of others, a health official said Monday. AP reports from San'a.

The epidemic broke out in mid-July in the country's southern Hodeidah province and was diagnosed as cholera with the help of international aid agencies, said Abdul-Kader Muttahar.

Space Shuttle Atlantis blast off

The Space Shuttle Atlantis blast off launch pad 39A at Kennedy Space Centre early Monday. Atlantis and a crew of six are scheduled to dock with the Russian Space Station Mir.

— AFP/UNB photo

France starts scrapping N-missiles in Alps

AP, France, Sept. 17: Part of a streamlining of its post-Cold War defence, France on Monday started scrapping its 18 land-based nuclear missiles in the Alps, and will rely solely on planes and submarines for its nuclear deterrent, reports AP.

In a ceremony led by top French military brass, the commanders of the installation at Albion Plateau in southeastern France handed over the keys that launch the missiles.

Actual dismantling of the missiles, each 50 times stronger than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, is to last two years. The S3D missiles, weighing 25 tons, were kept in concrete silos on the base stretching over 300 square kilometres (115 square miles).

The missiles of the First Strategic Missile Group, with a range of 3,500 kilometres (2,100 miles), went into service in 1971 during the Cold War and were aimed at cities in the Soviet Union.

Two teams of two officers, stationed 450 metres (1,300 feet)

underground, were on permanent alert, capable of launching the missiles within 40 seconds.

"A page of military history has turned," President Jacques Chirac said in a mess age read during the ceremony. "But the will of the nation to guarantee its ultimate security in all circumstances remains."

In abandoning its nuclear defence triad, France still maintains five submarines with nuclear-tipped missiles and about 60 Mirage 2000N and Super Etendard bombers with nuclear warheads.

Despite the end of the Cold War, France insists on maintaining an independent nuclear defence.

When Chirac announced the closing of the Albion Plateau in January, he completed a final series of underground nuclear test blasts aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of a new warhead.

"It's not 25 years for nothing. On the contrary, it is 25 years of peace," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Jean Rannou.

China blasts Dalai Lama's visit to Australia

BEIJING, Sept. 17: China expressed its anger today over the visit to Australia by Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, reports Reuter.

"With regard to the Australian side ... allowing the Dalai Lama to visit and arranging meetings with senior government officials, we express deep regret and strong dissatisfaction," a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said by telephone. "Response depending on the development of the situation," the spokesman added.

China routinely opposes all overseas tour by the Dalai Lama who has been in exile since an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet in 1959.

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 17: The UN General Assembly opens its 51st annual session Tuesday, facing uncertainties over its finances and the leadership of the organisation because of US opposition to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, reports AP.

Privately, many diplomats and UN believe the future of the organisation depends on the outcome of the US presidential election November 5.

They hope that if President Clinton wins re-election, he will have a freer hand in paying the US bills, which account for about half of the 2.9 billion dollar vowed the organisation.

Diplomats from major countries such as France, Britain, Russia and China have also re-

sisted US efforts to discuss a successor to Boutros-Ghali, apparently waiting to see if Clinton may soften his opposition after the election.

Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole has been outspoken in his opposition to Boutros-Ghali. The Republican-controlled US Congress has withheld payments to demand reform.

During the session, world leaders are expected to sign a ban on global nuclear test explosions, a major step toward curbing the world's nuclear threat.

But national politics have bogged down many other issues facing the 185-member General Assembly. They include re-

structuring the 15-member

Security Council and a long-term solution to the financial crisis.

A working group completed its study of the UN financial future last week but concluded little can be done unless members — especially the United States — pay their bills.

"I can see big trouble coming over the United Nations," outgoing General Assembly President Diogo Freitas do Amaral said Monday. "To be very frank and candid ... we need to see ... the United States begin paying their arrears."

Under US pressure, Boutros-Ghali has reduced the UN headquarters staff from 12,000 to about 9,000 during the past five years and pushed through a no-

growth budget for the current two years.

An efficiency board has identified about 400 projects for streamlining, cut staff travel expenses by 25 per cent and reduced the volume of officials documents and publications by 13 per cent.

The UN is discovering what we in the United States and other countries around the world have consistently found: competent management and staff are liberated by reform to do their work more creatively, efficiently and effectively," US Ambassador Madeleine Albright said Monday.

In his annual report, Boutros-Ghali said the structures of the United Nations are being streamlined .. costs re-

duced, accountability strengthened and performance improved."

But US officials insist that Boutros-Ghali, whose term expires December 31, has not been bullish enough in promoting reform. The United States has threatened to veto a second term in the Security Council.

Last month, Albright said she had asked the other permanent council members — Britain, France, Russia and China — to begin consultations on a new secretary-general.

But the others showed no interest. Albright said she suspected they were waiting to see whether Clinton would change his mind if he wins in November.

But some UN officials con-

cede that Boutros-Ghali has become a scapegoat for UN shortcomings worldwide and that Washington's opposition will remain firm regardless of the outcome of the November elections.

National politics have also stalled efforts to expand membership of the Security Council. The UN's board of directors, Italy has blocked a US proposal to add Germany and Japan as permanent members.

Other proposals for adding rotating, semi-permanent members to represent different regions of the world, but differences over which countries should be designated to represent the regions.

We have detected a suspected spot in the initial scan report and we are awaiting a detailed report," Dr. A. K. Bhardwaj of Woodlands Nursing Home in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta told Reuters. He said the revered nun was in stable condition.

The nursing staff said that Mother Teresa slept well and spoke to her doctors Tuesday morning.

International

Iraq begins to meet US demands to end Persian Gulf crisis

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17: As President Clinton offers assurances he is not trying to force a showdown, Iraq is beginning to meet American demands to end the Persian Gulf crisis, reports AP.

The key test, say US officials, is whether Saddam Hussein threatens his neighbours or allied forces.

Denying the United States is cooling down because some of the allies oppose further military action, these officials say allied support is stronger today than it was when US Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched against Iraqi military targets two weeks ago.

On a trip Defence Secretary William J. Perry and Assistant Secretary of State Robert H. Pelletreau made to the Persian Gulf "we found support for more action," said a senior US policymaker Monday, who asked not be identified. "Everybody says they would support us in defending our forces."

Kuwait agreed Monday to permit several thousand US troops to deploy near the Iraqi border, while Bahrain told Perry over the weekend it was willing to serve as a base for American forces and weaponry.

But Saudi Arabia has not permitted the United States to launch air strikes against Iraq from Saudi territory, and last Saturday foreign ministers of the Arab League endorsed Iraq's "territorial integrity" and strongly condemned "foreign interference" in Iraq — an apparent criticism of the American attacks.

On Monday, meanwhile, curving back from two weeks of bellicose US statements, Clinton said "we have sought no confrontation with Saddam Hussein. We never did and we don't now."

In fact, Clinton said the US military buildup in the Gulf did not mean the United States was seeking a clash with Iraq.

"My concern," he said, "is that we limit Saddam Hussein's ability to threaten his neighbours, that we do it with the no-fly zone and, in so doing, we keep our pilots safe."

These were two of the demands the State Department made of Baghdad last week.

"There are some signs he is doing things," the senior US official said Monday, "but we are not fully satisfied. We need to make sure he doesn't pose a threat to our troops. We are going to stay in a very alert posture."

Saddam's response to two other demands is less clear. These were that he not threaten his neighbours, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and that he comply with UN resolutions.

That is the central question," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said of Saddam's behaviour toward the two oil-rich neighbours, which the United States fought to defend against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war.

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