

BRIEFLY



A Bosnian-Croat woman prays in a destroyed church in Sarajevo's former frontline suburb of Stup on Sunday. The international organisers of Bosnia's elections, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE), announced on Saturday that the flaws in vote counts will complicate Bosnia's peace process. Validation of the election results could be delayed for several days. — AFP/UNB photo

UK police foils IRA bomb attack :

One person was killed and five others arrested in dawn raids Monday which police said had foiled a massive IRA bomb attack, AP reports from London.

Police said they uncovered large quantities of arms, explosives and bomb-making equipment in the raids at addresses in London and southern England.

"The operation has undoubtedly frustrated a serious imminent IRA terrorist attack on the British mainland involving the deployment of a large vehicle bomb likely to have caused grave loss of life and massive disruption," a police statement said.

Egypt backs Ghali for 2nd term :

Egypt on Sunday reaffirmed its support for besieged UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and said he has a right to seek another term even if it prompts the United States to exercise its veto power, AFP reports from United Nations.

In an interview with the news agency, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said that Boutros-Ghali's future remains "a point of disagreement" between Cairo and Washington on the eve of the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly.

"Our position is that Boutros-Ghali should continue as secretary general," he said, dismissing the attacks against the 73-year-old UN leader as "unjustified."

Hashimoto leaves for UN speech:

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto flew to New York Monday for a brief trip that includes a meeting with President Clinton and a speech at the United Nations, AP reports from Tokyo.

Like Clinton, Hashimoto faces the voters soon in an election for Japan's lower house of Parliament expected October 20.

The prime minister is expected to use his Tuesday meeting with the president to advertise progress in settling disputes involving US military bases on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa.

10 miners killed in SA :

Unknown attackers set off a series of explosions, then beat and stabbed people to death at a farm where transient miners live west of Johannesburg, AP reports from Stilfontein, South Africa.

Police said Monday the attack on Sunday killed 10 people and injured 18 at the Springvale farm in Stilfontein, about 180 kilometres (110 miles) from Johannesburg.

Eight home-made bombs constructed out of mining explosives went off before dawn Sunday at the farm, where miners live while working at gold mines in the area, police Superintendent Pieter du Plessis said.

Colombian troops kill 16 rebels :

Clashes with the army left at least 16 rebels dead this weekend after the armed forces were placed on alert in the face of growing guerrilla attacks, police said Sunday, AFP reports from Bogota.

Thirteen rebels were gunned down in violent battles with government troops late Saturday and Sunday in the northern province of Antioquia, where rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) tried to block major highways.

Rebel barricades along major highways in more than a third of Colombia's provinces have nearly paralysed cargo and passenger traffic.

Pope back home ending France visit :

Pope John Paul II returned home on Sunday after a controversial four-day visit to France, AFP reports from Rome.

Travelling on an Air France jet from Reims, the Roman Catholic pontiff touched down at 9:40 pm (1940 GMT) in Rome, from where he proceeded to his residence at Castelgandolfo, south of the Italian capital.

While in flight, the Pope sent a message of thanks to French President Jacques Chirac for the welcome he had received during his visit.

Chad bans independent candidates :

Chadian officials have banned independent candidates from parliamentary elections in November, state-run radio reported Sunday, AP says from N'djamena, Chad.

The Higher Transitional Council voted 27 to 18 on Friday to require candidates to be nominated by a legally constituted political party or group of political parties, the report said.

The council did not say why it amended the electoral code.

10 killed in China car plunge :

At least 10 people were killed and two went missing when a cable car plunged into a river in southwestern China, it was reported yesterday, AFP says from Hong Kong.

The accident happened on September 9 at the construction site of a hydroelectric plant at Yinlai in Sichuan province, the Hong Kong China News Service said in a report. Three workers were seriously injured in the accident in which the cable broke and all the people on board fell into the river, it said.

Guterres meets Mahathir :

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres met for two hours Sunday with his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohamad at the Seteais palace, near Lisbon, officials said, AFP reports from Lisbon.

Pak police shoot dead 5 robbers :

Pakistani police said they had shot dead five armed robbers yesterday during a gunbattle in the southern port city of Karachi, Reuters reports from Karachi.

A police officer said the bandits had fired on a police unit that was responding to an emergency call from a house that was being looted in district central's new Karachi area. All five robbers died in the 15-minute shootout, he said. No injuries were reported among police or occupants of the house.

International

Enraged protesters assault police

Gunmen attack Sunni Muslim mosque in Multan: 20 killed

MULTAN, Pakistan, Sept 23: Four gunmen attacked a Sunni Muslim mosque in the Pakistani city of Multan today killing at least 20 people and wounding many more, police said, reports Reuters.

Hundreds of enraged protesters later assaulted police outside the mosque, chanting slogans against them and against militant Shiite Muslims held responsible for the killings.

Witnesses said crowds threw stones at several Shiite homes and a Shiite place of worship in the same area, and blocked the main Multan-Bahawalpur Road with burning tyres.

"The people are understandably very agitated," said Police Deputy Superintendent Mirza Maqbool Beg at the scene.

The shooting followed the killing on Sunday night of a leader of the militant Shiite Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP) group in Bahawalpur, about 95 km (60 miles) south of Multan.

Shiite sources in Islamabad said Qamar Haider, described as a divisional commander of the SMP, had been shot dead by unidentified gunmen while sitting in his shop.

The Mosque attack occurred three days after Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's estranged brother Murtaza was shot dead in the southern city of Karachi when police clashed with his guards.

It was the latest in a bloody feud between religious militants in Pakistan. Shiites account for about 15 per cent of the country's 130 million people, most of whom are Sunnis.

Witnesses in Multan said three gunmen burst into the Al-Khair Mosque in the densely populated Murtazaabad area and opened fire as the congregation was offering Fajr prayers. They escaped in a white car driven by a fourth man.

Shahid Ansari, a local councillor, said his father had been in the mosque, frequented

by supporters of the militant Sunni Ahi-e-Hadith Organisation, but had escaped unhurt.

"He told me that as soon as the worshippers knelt in prayer, the gunmen opened up with automatic weapons, firing from three sides," he said. "The shooting went on for five minutes and there was blood and bits of flesh all over the mosque."

Ambulances ferried casualties to the city's main Nishtar Hospital. Police said nearly half the dead were boys studying at a religious school attached to the mosque. The official news agency APP said 19 of the wounded were aged 16 or under.

The mosque was run by the hardline Sunni Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) group, to which Ahi-e-Hadith is affiliated.

Sectarian tension has been especially acute in the populous Punjab province, where Multan and Bahawalpur are located. The SMP's leader, Shiite

Murid Abbas Yazdani, was shot dead at his home in Islamabad on September 12.

Gunmen killed 12 people in an SSP procession in Karachi on August 14. Up to 18 Shiites died four days later in an attack on a community meeting near Malisai in Punjab.

AP adds, the dead were all Sunni Muslims like most Pakistanis in this Islamic nation of 140 million people.

No one has taken responsibility for the killings but officials here believe it was linked to the sectarian violence of late.

Last month, also in southern Punjab, 18 Shiite Muslims were gunned down while offering their prayers. At least 100 others were injured.

At the time they blamed militant members of the rival Sunni sect.

The government has arrested dozens of leaders of both sects in an attempt to quell the violence which has begun anew in Pakistan in recent months.

Police on alert in Hyderabad fearing riot

HYDERABAD, India, Sept 23: Police were on the alert for more sectarian violence in southern India Monday following a fight between Muslims and Hindus that left one man dead, reports AP.

The violence broke out Sunday after Muslims reportedly threw stones at a Hindu religious procession. Worshippers broke away from the procession to attack Muslims and burn shops.

One Muslim man died of knife wounds and seven others were injured after the battle that lasted for several hours in Bhainsa, 260 kilometres (160 miles) north of Hyderabad. The town has 50,000 residents, half of them Muslim.

Fifteen shops were burned before the mobs were dispersed by policemen firing bullets in the air, police officials said.

"The situation is under control now," said S M Raza, police chief of Adilabad on Monday.

Megawati, military settle defamation lawsuit

JAKARTA, Sept 23: Pro-democracy leader Megawati Sukarnoputri agreed Monday to settle out of court her defamation suit against an army general reported to have accused her of plotting a coup, reports AP.

"We have held two meetings resulting in an agreement to settle the lawsuit in a peaceful manner," Megawati's chief lawyer, R.O Tambunan, told the East Jakarta District Court.

The statement was confirmed by Col. Imron Anwar, chief lawyer for Lt Gen. Syarwan Hamid, the military's chief of social and political affairs.

Demanding US\$ 21 million, Megawati sued Syarwan for accusations he allegedly made against her and her sister, Sukmawati, following anti-government riots last month by supporters of Megawati.

Incumbent Greek PM declares victory in polls

ATHENS, Sept 23: Incumbent Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis declared Sunday that his Socialist Party Pasok had won general elections defeating its main rivaling rival New Democracy, reports AFP.

"The popular verdict has sent a very clear message on Sunday. The Greeks want to take a new direction," Simitis said in a televised speech.

"This is a victory for all the Greeks who want peace, and co-operation but who also want to defend our sovereign rights," he added.

His statement came after New Democracy leader Miltiades Evert earlier conceded defeat, after exit polls gave the Panhellenic socialist movement (Pasok) a four point lead in the elections.

The two parties had fought a close battle, with opinion polls carried out before Sunday's vote showing they were running neck and neck.

Outgoing Greek Prime Minister and President of the ruling Panhellenic Socialist party (PASOK) Costas Simitis gestures with a beaming face following a press conference at Zappion hall where he announced the victory of his PASOK party during the general elections on Sunday.

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Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (L) prays while her mother Nusrat Bhutto (C) wipes away her tears at the grave of Benazir's brother Murtaza Bhutto in Ghari Khuda Bux on Sunday. Murtaza and six of his supporters were killed in a gun-battle with police in Karachi. At right is Benazir's sister Sanam Bhutto. — AFP/UNB photo

West giving special treatment to Izetbegovic: Krajisnik

PALE, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sept 23: The Bosnian Serb elected to share power with President Alija Izetbegovic complained Sunday about what he said was the West's preferential treatment of the Muslim leader, reports AP.

Izetbegovic, Serb leader Momcilo Krajisnik and Bosnia Croat Kresimir Zubak were elected September 14 to Bosnia's collective presidency. Provisional final results released Sunday by international election organisers confirmed earlier counts showing Izetbegovic with the most votes.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which oversaw the elections, said Izetbegovic received 41,000

more votes than Krajisnik, with about 2.5 million people voting.

The OSCE released the figures after admitting Saturday to errors in an earlier preliminary count, which gave Izetbegovic a margin of about 39,000 over Krajisnik.

With the most votes, Izetbegovic gets the chairmanship of the presidency, making him the point man for the outside world. It is Izetbegovic who will address this week's UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

"One president is being promoted, and he is only one among equals," Krajisnik said, alluding to Izetbegovic, after meeting separately Sunday with US Ambassador John

Menzies and Michael Steiner, a senior envoy in the peace process. "I am hoping we will eliminate this practice,"

Political parties headed by Izetbegovic, Krajisnik and Zubak also dominated in other races, taking 35 of 42 seats in Bosnia's federal assembly, the House of Representatives, and leading in the regional assemblies elected for the Muslim-Croat and Serb halves of the country.

With Muslims the most numerous people in Bosnia, Izetbegovic's Party of Democratic Action had 19 seats in the House of Representatives. Krajisnik's Serb Democratic Party had nine, and Zubak's Croatian Democratic Union seven.

Scandals that rocked Indian politics in past decades

NEW DELHI, Sept 23: A criminal case which forced former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao to resign as Congress Party leader on Saturday is the latest in a series of scandals that have rocked Indian politics in the past decade, reports Reuters.

Following are summaries of major political scandals:

Bofors scandal— In 1987, then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's government was hit by allegations Swedish arms manufacturer AB Bofors had paid kickbacks to officials to secure a 1.3 billion dollars artillery contract. The opposition accused Rajiv of covering up a probe into the scandal, which was seen as contributing to the defeat of Gandhi's Congress Party in 1989 general elections. The allegations are still under investigation.

Securities scandal— India's biggest ever financial scandal erupted in April 1992, banks and brokers were accused of colluding illegally to Siphon 1.3 billion dollars from the inter-bank securities market to fuel a boom on the Bombay stock exchange. The scandal weakened Rao's government.

Sugar scandal— In April 1994, Rao's government allowed duty-free import of sugar, banned since August 1993, sparking opposition allegations that imports had been delayed to allow domestic mills to reap enormous profits. Food Minister Kalpana Rai lost his job in the row.

Telecommunications scandal— Opposition political parties paralysed parliament in late 1995 alleging then communications minister Sukh Ram had favoured a little-known Indian firm in opening up the state monopoly over telecommunications. The supreme court dismissed the allegations and paved the way for privatisation. In August, federal agents discovered more than 1 million dollars in cash in two of Sukh Ram's homes.

Hawala Scandal— An 18 million dollar political bribery scandal in January 1996 forced seven of Rao's ministers and two governors to resign after a "Hawala," or illegal foreign ex-

change dealer, claimed to have paid more than 100 bureaucrats and ruling party and opposition politicians bribes in exchange for favours. The scandal was widely seen as contributing to the defeat of Congress in general elections this year.

Vote-buying scandal— Lawmakers of the regional Jharkhand Mukti Morcha Party said they were paid 100,000 dollars to vote against a 1993-confidence motion, which Rao's Congress-led government survived by a wafer-thin margin. Earlier this year the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a case accusing Rao and other Congress leaders of buying the votes. They have denied any wrongdoing.

Urea scandal— The CBI in June named one of Rao's sons, PV Prabhakara Rao, in a 40 million dollar kickback scandal related to the import of urea fertiliser from Turkey which never arrived. Prabhakara Rao, questioned by the CBI, denied the charges.

Cheating scandal— A Delhi criminal court judge summoned Rao to testify in a cheating case involving an expatriate Indian, Lakshubhai Pathak, who testified that he paid 100,000 dollars to a Rao acquaintance in 1983 in a failed attempt to win a government contract. A special Delhi court upheld the summons on Saturday and ordered Rao to appear as a co-accused on September 30. Rao, who denied any involvement, resigned as Congress Party head.

Perot sets goal of 25 pc vote

WASHINGTON, Sept 23: Ross Perot says he's in the presidential race to win, but he seems to cast doubt on his prospects by setting a goal of drawing 25 per cent of the vote, reports AP.

Running as the Reform Party nominee, Perot said he would file a lawsuit Monday seeking an injunction against sponsorship of the presidential debates by the bipartisan commission that voted to exclude him.

"We will not sit by," he said. "Regardless of whether he gets in the debates, Perot said: 'My goal is to make sure this new party gets at a minimum 25 per cent of the vote and I think that is easily obtainable.'"

North Korea demands return of Submarine from South

SEOUL, Sept 23: North Korea today demanded the return of a submarine which ran aground in South Korea last week, triggering a massive manhunt in which 20 of its crew were killed, reports AFP.

"The south side must unconditionally return to the North the submarine and its crew including the dead bodies at once," a spokesman for North's Armed Forces Ministry said in a statement released by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The spokesman said the submarine had been on a "routine training mission" in the Sea of Japan and carried no heavy weapons "but training small arms."

"It seemed that its crew were left with no other choice but to get to the enemy side's land, which might cause an armed conflict," said the statement which KCNA said had been released on Sunday.

It was the first official comment from Pyongyang on the 325-tonne Shark class submarine which hit a rock of Kangnung on South Korea's east coast some 100 kilometres (62 miles) south of the demilitarised zone last Wednesday.

Twenty of the fugitives from the sub have been killed, 11 of them apparently shot by their own colleagues and nine shot dead by South Korean troops.

Three South Korean soldiers have also been shot dead during the manhunt.

Reuters adds: South Korean troops shot dead a civilian by mistake today.

Off the Record

Speeding vehicles putting bird's populations at risk

BIRMINGHAM, England : Speeding vehicles on country lanes are slaughtering birds like owls and swallows across Europe, environmentalists said on Monday, reports Reuters.

Powerful, modern cars and the spread of roads across the countryside are now putting some bird populations at risk, they told Britain's main annual science festival.

Figures from the Westphalia area of Germany have shown 10 to 15 per cent of barn owl deaths alone are caused by vehicles, said Chris Mead of the British Ecological Society.

"This can't be sustained. Populations will inevitably decline," he added.

But simple changes in road planning, like lower speed restrictions on country roads, could have a dramatic effect.

The spread of roads is also dramatically reducing the areas available for wildlife.

"If we keep on building roads, we're simply going to lose wildlife sites altogether," said Mark Avery of Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Unique way to make fund

QUITO: Ecuadorian President Abdala Bucaram went on national television Sunday morning to shave off his mustache for one million dollars in cash and medicine for poor children, reports AP.

Bucaram had agreed to auction off his Hitler-style mustache while campaigning for the presidency.

After shaving off the mustache he had worn for 25 years, Bucaram said, "I feel a little naked, but I look like a spring chicken."

Int'l force will be needed after NATO peacekeepers leave Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Sept 23: There is growing agreement that an international force will be needed in Bosnia after NATO peacekeepers pack their gear and leave a few days before Christmas. The tough question this political season is what role, if any, US troops should have, reports AP.

For America's allies the question is whether a follow-on force can be effective without US participation.

But with the presidential election only six weeks away, Clinton administration officials are reluctant to speculate publicly about whether US troops will be in Bosnia next year and beyond.

Private discussion of what comes next in Bosnia will be at the top of the agenda this week when NATO defence ministers meet in Bergen, Norway.

In advance of that session, Defence Secretary William Perry met in Helsinki with Anneli Taina, Finland's defence secretary.

Afterward, Mrs. Taina told reporters the international community must stay in Bosnia after December. And, she said, "I think the presence of the USA is very important."

Although not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Finland has contributed troops to the Bosnia force.

Perry listened to Mrs. Taina's analysis without comment. Other senior US officials were equally cautious.

"We really have to take it one step at a time," said Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

"Whether something is needed afterward on the military side is not yet clear," said

Robert Hunter, the US ambassador to NATO.

Christopher and Hunter spoke shortly after voters in Bosnia chose a three-member presidency for the ethnically fractured country in an election carried out remarkably free of violence.

But even as Christopher was declaring the election "a major victory for the democratic process," it remained unclear whether the ballot box has overcome the gun in Bosnia.

For example, no date has been set for the more difficult municipal elections, which will involve far more travel by Bosnians of all ethnic groups to communities from which they were expelled over the past three years.

It's the municipal elections that hold the potential for the

ethnically cleansed to try to recover through the ballot box the control over their homes," said a senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The administration hopes the municipal elections will be held before December 20, the date for withdrawal of the NATO force.

"We are going to continue to keep robust military forces up until the moment the IFOR (NATO's implementation Force) mandate expires," said Hunter, in hopes that the military presence will be available to make the municipal elections come off with as little violence as the presidential balloting.

Republican critics of President Clinton's foreign policy are watching the discussions with intense interest.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a foreign policy adviser to

Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole, has characterised Pentagon statements on the withdrawal of US troops by the December 20 deadline as "Alice in Wonderland."

"The American people believe the whole involvement in the operation will be over in 12 months," said McCain, who was instrumental in setting the original one-year limit on the operation. "We have an Alice in Wonderland dialogue here."

The Bosnia elections were a big step forward, but conditions in the country still are far short of what the White House would like to see.

Among the most important requirements seen are a military balance of power and a political commitment to peaceful resolution of differences, particularly the difficult question of claims for justice by thou-

sands of people driven from their homes.

The administration is eager to press ahead with plans to arm and train Bosnian government troops to place them on a par militarily with Bosnian Serb forces. That plan is encountering opposition from the European allies.

Another unmet goal is a 40 per cent reduction of heavy weapons. There has been no cutback, as all sides argue over who has how many of the big guns.

"I'm not saying we can say with confidence that conditions to make things self-sustaining are going to be there on December 20," said the senior US official. "The question is how far short of the mark are we, and what range of options needs to be put together for 1997."