

International

Govt seeks int'l help to fight terrorists

75 Lankan troops, 450 Tigers killed in latest offensive

COLOMBO, Sept 27: Sri Lankan forces killed more than 450 Tamil Tiger rebels during the Tiger's counter-attacks on army advances towards their northern stronghold of Kilinochchi on Thursday, a military spokesman said today.

He confirmed that 75 government soldiers, including five officers, were killed in the battles.

The spokesman said more than 1,000 members of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had launched two simultaneous counter-attacks from the west and the south of an army column advancing on Kilinochchi early Thursday, but were repulsed by troops using artillery and mortars.

"Ground groups confirmed over 450 terrorists were killed at both locations of the counter-attacks and over 300 wounded," he said, and added

that "75 army personnel including five officers were killed. Ten officers and 146 soldiers were wounded."

The spokesman added some rebels managed to penetrate the western defences using suicide bombers who detonated their explosives near the troops.

Thursday's attacks were the first reported major assaults by the rebels since government troops launched a fresh offensive against their Kilinochchi stronghold last Sunday after a lull in the conflict of more than a month.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's foreign minister, whose government is battling Tamil Tiger separatist guerrillas, called on Thursday for international cooperation to ensure "terrorists" are denied safe havens anywhere in the world.

"The territory of any state should not be permitted to be used in any manner which

would encourage or sustain terrorist activity in another," Lakshman Kadirgamar said in a speech to the General Assembly.

"Fund raising activity on foreign soil in particular, either directly or indirectly through so-called charitable funds, must be prohibited," he said.

"Concerted international cooperation is necessary to ensure that the terrorist does not enjoy safe havens anywhere in the world."

Referring to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have been fighting a 13-year war for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka, Kadirgamar said this "extremist group does not in any meaningful sense represent the people they claim to fight for."

"They have never sought a mandate from the people at an election. They have kept out of the democratic mainstream

when many of the minority parties have entered the consultative process to seek redress for their grievances through democratic means," Kadirgamar said.

"Should terrorism be permitted, through international apathy, to fester, it would poison the international body politics, enervating democratic processes — processes the international community is obliged to sustain."

He said the LTTE drew support in the form of money, equipment and war material, not from other states but from "misguided members of the Tamil community who live and work in the affluent countries" or through extortion, drug trafficking, gun running, smuggling people and other illegal activities in many developed countries, abusing the hospitality and violating the laws of host governments.

Thai parliament dissolved, elections on Nov 17

BANGKOK, Sept 27: Thai Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa today announced the dissolution of Parliament and said fresh elections would be held on November 17, reports AFP.

He said he had decided on this action because the six parties in his government coalition "probably cannot set up a new government, which would have a negative effect on the people's trust."

Reuter Adds: Banharn today

appointed seven active and retired civil servants as caretaker cabinet ministers just hours before he surprised the country by calling snap general elections.

Radio Thailand said Banharn named former foreign minister Kasem S Kasemsart as a deputy prime minister, and chose General Viroj Saengsanit, his close ally and retiring military supreme commander, as deputy defence minister.

Deputy Central Bank Governor Chaiyayawit Wibulsawadi was appointed acting deputy finance minister, and former agriculture minister Kosit Panpiemrat was named to head the Industry Ministry in the run-up to the November 17 polls.

Turkish troops kill 60 Kurds

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey, Sept 27: Pressing a new offensive before snow begins to cover mountain bases, Turkish soldiers killed 60 Kurdish guerrillas in a series of clashes Friday, the regional governor's office said, reports AP.

The clashes occurred in Hakkari and Sirmak provinces bordering Iraq and Iran, where the rebels are based. Two soldiers were also killed, the governor's office said.

Other appointments were caretaker deputy ministers for commerce, foreign affairs and interior, which had been left vacant following the July pull-out of the Palang Dharma Party, Banharn's junior coalition partner.

"These new appointees will oversee respective ministries only for two months during the transition period," Deputy Prime Minister Amnuay Viravan told reporters.

BJP asks Rao to quit parliament

NEW DELHI, Sept 27: India's main opposition party today asked former prime minister P V Narasimha Rao to quit parliament, after authorities added charges of forgery to an existing fraud case against him, reports AFP.

"No PM or former prime minister on earth can afford to stay on in parliament after all this," the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) said.

"He should have resigned immediately when the charges were filed," BJP spokesman Krishan Lal Sharma said.

75, with forgery dating back to 1989, when he was the country's foreign minister.

This move came soon after a court rejected Rao's application for bail in a 1983 charge of cheating, also when he was the foreign minister. The court decision triggered a market crash and fears of a humiliating arrest.

Rao was prime minister for five years until leading the 111-year-old Congress to a rout in the April-May elections. He resigned as party president on September 21 after he was named a co-accused in the 1983 fraud case.

Sharma also criticised Rao's Congress (I) Party for retaining the former premier as leader of its parliamentary wing while suspending another party leader, Sukh Ram, for corruption charges.

"It is for the Congress to explain the double standards," he said.

The BJP demand came a day after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) charged Rao,

The scandals followed an accusation by an Indian businessman, Lakhubhai Pathak, that Rao and a Hindu mystic, Chandraswami, defrauded him to 100,000 dollars for a promised deal which never materialised.

Rao, who has not commented on the CBI and court decisions, has previously denied all accusations against him.

Iran takes 35,000 more Kurds

Iran has taken in 35,000 more Iraqi Kurd refugees in the past two days and settled them in camps, the official news agency IRNA reported on Thursday, AFP says from Tehran.

It said the refugees had been transferred to two camps on the border and another two further inside Iran.

The Iranian Red Crescent was already sheltering some 65,000 Iraqi Kurd refugees in five camps after they fled fighting between Kurdish factions in northern Iraq earlier this month, international aid officials said last week.

56 feared drowned in Nile

A ferry carrying 75 people home from a funeral sank in the Nile in southern Egypt on Thursday night and 56 of them are missing and feared drowned, the Interior ministry said, Reuter reports from Assiut.

Nineteen people were rescued and the river police were searching in the dark for more possible survivors, the ministry said in a statement. No bodies had yet been found.

Security sources said the ferry and a barge carrying goods collided near the ancient tombs at Beni Hassan in Minya province about 260 km (160 miles) south of Cairo after a funeral on the West Bank of the river.

Jakarta closes enrolment for Hajj

The Indonesian government has closed registration for the 1997 Hajj Muslim Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia after the quota of 195,000 people was filled, a report said Thursday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Suyono Yahya, assistant to the co-ordinating minister for people's welfare, said Wednesday that registration counters across the country closed on September 19 after the quota for the pilgrims was filled, the Jakarta Post reported.

The Saudi Arabian government has limited the number of Indonesians allowed to perform the Hajj to 195,000 people in 1997. Indonesia has a population of over 195 million people.

Bus mishap claims 21 in Russia

Twenty-one children were killed and 16 were injured when a packed bus collided with a train Thursday in southwest Russia, officials said, AFP reports Moscow.

Three adults were also hurt in the accident. The bus was struck by the shunting train around 7:50 am (0350 GMT) while crossing an unguarded level crossing near Zelenograd in the southern region of Rostov-on-the-Don, officials cited by Interfax said. Seventeen children were killed on the spot and another four died in hospital, Interfax said, quoting the Emergency Situations Ministry.

43 bodies unearthed in Bosnia

Forty-three bodies have been unearthed from a mass grave on the outskirts of Gorazde in east Bosnia, Bosnian television reported Thursday, AFP says from Sarajevo.

An investigating judge said that all were civilians and had been killed in May 1992, a time when the Bosnian Serb "ethnic cleansing" campaign against non-Serbs was at its height. The bodies were discovered in Muslim villages near to Gorazde, a UN-protected enclave during the war no connected by land to Sarajevo. The judge said all the dead were civilians. Some had wire binding their limbs or necks.

New Australian envoy to US

Australia announced yesterday the appointment of former Liberal opposition leader and foreign minister Andrew Peacock as ambassador to the United States, Reuter reports from Canberra.

Peacock will replace John McCarthy early next year, when McCarthy takes up his appointment as ambassador to Indonesia. "The government attaches very great importance to Australia's relationship with the United States," Prime Minister John Howard said in a statement.

Chile seeks reform of UNSC

Chile added its voice Thursday to calls for reform of the UN Security Council, AP reports from United Nations.

"It is essential to resolve once and for all the problems of increasing the membership of the Security Council," Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza told the General Assembly. He called on UN to increase the non-permanent seats on the council from 10 to 15, "with equitable geographic distribution."

US approves new asthma drug

A new oral asthma medicine, Accolate, has been approved for use in the United States, the drug's maker Zeneca Inc. said in a statement Thursday, AFP reports from Washington.

The medication is the first new asthma drug to be approved in more than 20 years. Most asthma medications are administered via an inhaler while Accolate can be taken via two pills daily. Accolate, for use by people over age 12, is part of a new class of medications that block natural substances that contribute to asthma symptoms.

Violence claims 2 in US

A man who set off a metal detector in a courthouse lobby pulled a gun and opened fire Thursday, killing a security guard and wounding another before dying in a burst of gunfire from officers nearby, AP reports from Mobile, Alabama.

The gunman had carried no identification and police hoped to identify him from fingerprints. Police said they had no motive for the attack, which took place as courthouse employees arrived for work at Mobile Government Plaza.

'Kurds no match for Saddam despite US support'

WASHINGTON, Sept 27: Despite extensive CIA and other US support Kurdish opposition forces in northern Iraq came nowhere near to toppling President Saddam Hussein, a Pentagon official told lawmakers Thursday, reports AP.

Kurdish factions were too busy fighting among themselves in the weeks before Saddam's late-summer military incursion into the region, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence Bruce Reidel told the House National Security Committee.

The frank assessment by Reidel, an intelligence official on temporary assignment to the Pentagon, reported on US-backed political movements aimed at a change in power in Iraq. He was closely questioned



Picture dated May 8, 1992 of a man on his way to the market before destroyed houses and shops in the Bala Hissar district of the Afghan capital, which was the scene of heavy rocket attacks. On Wednesday, the Taliban Islamic militia advanced towards the heart of the Afghan capital with aid workers reporting hundreds of casualties in fighting in the city's eastern suburbs. — AFP/UNB photo

UNSC meets despite US, Israeli objections

Israel imposes curfew on Hebron to prevent clashes

HEBRON, West Bank, Sept 27: The Israeli Army imposed a total curfew early today on Hebron, the only West Bank town still under full occupation, to prevent a new flare-up in clashes following the weekly Muslim prayers, residents said, reports AFP.

The city was virtually a ghost town this morning as the curfew prevented Hebron's 120,000 Palestinian residents from leaving their homes.

Like other towns in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Hebron was the scene on Thursday of Palestinian protests and clashes with Israeli soldiers, but with no armed Palestinian policemen deployed here the violence was much more limited than elsewhere.

At least 50 Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops on Thursday in fighting across the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Palestinian leaders called for protest marches to be held following Friday prayers.

Eleven Israelis also died in Thursday's violence, which involved unprecedented direct firefights between the army and armed security forces of Yasser Arafat's self-rule Palestinian Authority.

The violence was sparked by an Israeli decision to open a new entrance to a controversial archeological tunnel near Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, where weekly prayers on Friday could become a new flashpoint for unrest.

Earlier an UNISIS report says,

President Clinton is asking both sides in the Middle East to end this violence, to get back to the business of peace, to implement the agreements they've reached, to resolve their differences through negotiations."

In remarks on the South Lawn at midday September 26, Clinton said that over the past 24 hours, "We have been in constant touch with the Israelis and the Palestinians."

Our message to them is this: It is in everyone's interest to resolve their differences peacefully.

AP adds: Despite US and Israeli objections, the Security Council agreed to meet in formal session Friday to discuss the mounting violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



A wounded Palestinian woman, shot by Israeli forces next to Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem Thursday is evacuated by Palestinian youths who were clashing with the Israeli defence forces. At least 10 Palestinians were killed and 300 injured in clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police and protesters in the Gaza Strip Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

Access to Suu Kyi's house blocked

SLORC bans NLD congress

YANGON, Sept 27: Myanmar's military regime Friday banned a congress called by pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, charging her party and the United States were planning to incite unrest in the country, official sources said Friday, reports AP.

Police late Thursday threw up barricades along University Avenue, placed "no entry" signs and diverted traffic.

A senior government official, who demanded anonymity, said no arrests had been made but some members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy had been "temporarily taken in for questioning."

Despite threats against her from the state-controlled media

in recent days, there was no apparent move against Suu Kyi herself.

It was not certain what authorities would do if she carried on with plans for the three-day meeting, which was to have been attended by some 600 NLD members and supporters. A number of party members were already reported to be in her compound, which could not be reached by telephone.

The official said the party, in collusion with the US Embassy in Yangon, planned to hold the meeting in order to create instability. He said Suu Kyi had met 13 times with American diplomats since early August.

Reuter says: Myanmar

police, who blocked access to democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's house today said she alone would be permitted to enter her home where a congress of her political party had been planned.

For three days, September 27, 28 and 29, nobody is allowed to go to Aung San Suu Kyi's residence because we won't permit this seminar for the eighth National League for Democracy (NLD) Party anniversary."

Meanwhile, many politicians from the National League for Democracy (NLD) party were detained by Myanmar military government today to prevent a party congress from taking place, a senior government official told Reuter.

President detains Armenian political opponents

YEREVAN, Sept 27: Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan has moved troops and armoured vehicles into the capital Yerevan and detained political opponents following disputed election results and violence outside the parliament.

An Interior Ministry spokesman told Reuters on Thursday that six opposition members of parliament had been detained after the Chamber, in which Ter-Petrosyan's ruling bloc dominates, voted to allow prosecutors to press charges against them.

Several were punched repeatedly by the deputies.

"Vazgen Manukyan is being sought," the spokesman said by telephone, referring to the opposition leader who says he won Sunday's presidential election.

But Radio Liberty correspondent Genel Malbadyan said he had seen Manukyan in a hallway of the parliament just before Thursday's session began.

DPRK to retaliate if ROK fails to return sub, crewmen

TOKYO, Sept 27: North Korea will exercise its "right to retaliate" if South Korea fails to return a submarine and its surviving and dead crew members that landed in the South last week, Pyongyang's official media said on Friday, reports Reuter.

South Korea estimates 26 North Koreans went ashore in the South from a submarine on Wednesday last week. Its security forces say they have since killed nine, while 11 were found shot dead — possibly murdered by their own colleagues — and one was captured.

"As victims, we have the right to retaliate on the offenders," said a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), which reiterated Pyongyang's assertion that the submarine accidentally drifted into the South's waters.

US Cong accused of trying to harm Sino-US ties

BEIJING, Sept 27: China accused the US Congress on Thursday of trying to damage Chinese-US relations by passing a resolution favouring Taiwan, reports AP.

The resolution, passed by the House on Tuesday, supports Taiwan's efforts to join international organisations.

Beijing claims Taiwan as a province and has viewed Taipei's attempts to join the United Nations and other organisations as part of a plan to proclaim the island's independence.

"Taiwan is part of China's territory," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said. "Anything concerning Taiwan is China's internal affairs. We will not allow any interference from any foreign government, parliament or any element."

Russia blasts NATO's eastward expansion

BERGEN, Norway, 27: Russia's defence minister on Thursday reiterated that Moscow is alarmed about NATO's plans to expand eastward, calling it a violation of a 1990 European arms control accord, reports AP.

Yet in a boost for the sort of cooperation NATO tries hard to foster, Igor Rodionov said Russia wanted to continue in the NATO-led military operation in Bosnia if it is extended into 1997.

Rodionov said Moscow wanted to help prevent bloodshed in Bosnia, but considered NATO's enlargement a threat, adding, "One thing is not in contradiction with the other."

"It is difficult to convince our public NATO is a peaceful organisation," he told reporters.

HK's return to China

Beijing, London agree to hold dignified ceremony

HONG KONG, Sept 27: Putting a protracted wrangle behind them, Britain and China signed an agreement Friday promising a "solemn and dignified" ceremony to return Hong Kong to China and end 156 years of British colonial rule, reports AP.

The deal comes amid an apparent warming of British-Chinese relations after three years of acrimony over how much democracy Hong Kong should have under Chinese sovereignty.

For nearly a year, the two sides have disagreed over what form Britain's formal farewell should take.

Off the Record



British actor Hugh Grant (R) arrives with girlfriend, model Elizabeth Hurley at the Wednesday premiere of his new movie, "Extreme Measures" in Beverly Hills, California. Grant stars in the medical drama which was produced by Hurley. — AFP/UNB photo

Good news for vegetarians

LONDON: Vegetarians are less likely to become fat than even health-conscious meat eaters, according to the results of a Europe-wide study published here Friday, reports AFP.

The research — based on 21,000 health-conscious people and published in the British medical journal — showed that meat eaters were more likely to be clinically obese than fish eaters, vegetarians or vegans.

The findings were enthusiastically welcomed by the vegetarian society, which said it was in line with other reports that vegetarians enjoyed health benefits from their diet.

Tim Key, the doctor who conducted the survey, told the journal that obesity has doubled among British adults since 1980.

"This study shows that the increasing levels of vegetarianism here in Britain could play a key role in reducing the illnesses related to obesity and consequently reduce the costs to an overburdened health system," he said.

Einstein's love notes to be auctioned

NEW YORK: The private letters of Albert Einstein, including some 400 missives to his first wife Mileva Maric, will be auctioned by Christie's in November, the auction house announced Thursday, reports AFP.

The November 25 sale is expected to generate about two million dollars, Christie's said.

Among the most prized letters are 53 love notes Einstein and Maric exchanged between 1897 and 1903, when they were both students at the Polytechnic in Zurich.

The letters show that Maric, generally believed to have been stayed in the background of her husband's career, was actually an important factor in the budding physician's intellectual development, according to Christie's.

The letters, which were found in 1986 in a safety deposit box in a San Francisco bank, were placed on sale by the foundation that manages Einstein's estate.