

Bomb explodes in Tajik capital ahead of talks

MOSCOW, Sept 6: A bomb exploded in Tajikistan's capital at a heavily guarded hotel that was to house opposition politicians and former rebel leaders, officials said Saturday, reports AP.

No casualties were reported in the blast at Dushanbe's Vaksh Hotel, which appeared to be an attempt to wreck peace efforts in the Central Asian nation.

The bomb, with a force equivalent to 500 grams (1.1 pounds) of TNT, was planted in the hotel's dining hall, and went off shortly before midnight Friday. The hall was "practically destroyed," the Interfax news agency said, adding that the Vaksh was guarded at the time both by government security forces and opposition fighters.

Last words of Mother Teresa

CALCUTTA, Sept 6: "I can't breathe anymore" were the last words of Mother Teresa clutching her chest moments after she completed her dinner at the 'Mother House' last night, reports AFP.

Nuns in her missionaries of charity said after her frugal dinner, the Mother prayed for about ten minutes and spoke to some of them before retiring for the night.

It was then she complained of uneasiness and the sisters were taken back at the sudden deterioration of her health.

"Before she could put the glass to her lips, it fell off her hands and the mother collapsed on her bed."

Alarmed nuns called Dr Alfred Woodward, Mother's personal physician, living in the next room, who rushed in and started massaging her chest. The Mother, they said, failed to respond.

At 21:30 hours, the Mother was pronounced dead.

According to Dr Woodward of the Assembly of God Church Hospital, the Mother had mild stomach infection a few days ago, but she seemed to have recovered since yesterday.

The 87-year-old Mother, in fact, gave no time to arrange medical treatment for her, the sobbing nuns muttered.

Pak floods death toll rises to 342

ISLAMABAD, Sept 6: Recent gushing floods and torrenting rains in Pakistan have devoured 342 lives besides extensively damaging the standing crops, emergency relief officials said Friday, reports Xinhua.

The federal government has asked the administration of all the four provinces to submit details of the damages to ascertain the actual losses, they said.

These details, the officials said, will be presented before Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for the approval of compensation for the victims from the PM's relief fund.

Greece may grant legal status to half a million immigrant workers

ATHENS, Sept 6: Greece said on Friday it expected to grant legal status to almost half a million immigrant workers by this time next year in its effort to control a large illegal labour market, reports Reuters.

The completion of this process is expected by the end of September 1998, government spokesman Dimitris Reppas told reporters.

Albanians who have crossed Greece's rugged northern borders to escape violence and poverty in their country make up about half of the illegal immigrant labour force.

Others come from other eastern European countries, Africa and the Far East.

Illegal immigrants make up about five per cent of Greece's 10 million population. A law passed in June gave residence rights to many foreign workers but excluded those who came from neighbouring countries, including Albania, Turkey and Macedonia.

4 Municipal polls' candidates killed in Algeria

ALGIERS, Sept 6: Islamic militants assassinated four candidates running in municipal elections set for October, during an attack in eastern Algeria, their Conservative Party for Algerian renewal said late Friday, reports AFP.

The terrorist madness has hit citizens who offered themselves as candidates with the courage to help their countrymen," the party said in a statement without giving the exact circumstances of the assassinations.

It was the first such attack against candidates running for the October 23 elections.

Britain says goodbye to 'queen of people's hearts'

LONDON, Sept 6: Britain closes a week of shock, sorrow, regret and recriminations Saturday with a massive goodbye to Princess Diana, whose astonishing popularity troubled the royal family in life and humbled it in death, reports AP.

The funeral at Westminster Abbey follows an unprecedented outpouring of public grief, measured in hundreds of thousands of bouquets laid outside London palaces.

It came after Queen Elizabeth II shattered royal protocol by making her first live, televised address since the early days of her 45-year reign to pay tribute to her former daughter-in-law.

enormous displays of grief at Diana's death, the palace executed a series of about-turns after widespread criticism that the royals had remained aloof.

And it seemed to work, this loosening of the 71-year-old monarch, who usually epitomizes stoicism, restraint, tradition and pageantry.

The queen normally speaks to the nation only on Christmas Day. Friday's speech was the second exception in her reign; the other was on Feb 24, 1991, at the end of the Gulf War.

TV stations continuously rolled pictures of the princess — laughing with her children; clasping an AIDS victim; wearing a stunning evening gown — while playing Elton John's funeral song, "Goodbye England's Rose."

Supermarkets and museum closed, many sporting events were canceled.

World leaders pay tribute to Mother Teresa

PARIS, Sept 6: World leaders paid tribute to Mother Teresa, saying that her death Friday was a loss to humanity and describing her as a shining example of charity and a symbol of compassion, reports AFP.

"At this time of mourning for us in the United Kingdom, it was with deep sadness that I learnt this evening of the death of Mother Teresa," the Queen said in a message to the Missionaries of Charity.

Cardinal Basil Hume, head of the Roman Catholic church in England and Wales, said: "It is rather lovely to think that Mother Teresa, who was very friendly with Princess Diana, should have gone so soon to join her."

Fascinated social scientists say Public mourning Diana's death not as fictional character

PHILADELPHIA, Sept 6: The mass outpouring of tears and affecting for Princess Diana has begun to fascinate social scientists, some of whom say the public is not mourning a flesh-and-blood person so much as a fictional character created by the media, reports Reuters.

By way of a phenomenon known to sociologists as "parasocial interaction," the millions who would line London streets for today's funeral or get up at odd hours around the world to watch it on television have forged an emotional bond with the late Princess of Wales.

Her grace, beauty and humanitarian spirit have been praised by tearful well-wishers in countless TV interviews, written testimonials and shrines that have flourished since her death in a Paris car crash last Sunday.

Astronauts fail to pinpoint holes in damaged Mir

MOSCOW, Sept 6: Despite a spacewalk lasting six hours, an American astronaut and a Russian cosmonaut failed Saturday to pinpoint any holes in the space station Mir, damaged in the worst space collision ever, reports AP.

BRIEFLY

US troops to guard Mexico border: The US House of Representatives on Friday voted for its support for deploying up to 10,000 troops to guard the border with Mexico to keep out drugs and illegal immigrants. Xinhua reports from Washington.

The measure, proposed by Republican Jim Traficant, was approved by a vote of 261-150. Under the bill, the troops could render aid to the border patrol and immigration authorities in inspections and detaining illegal aliens.

Orchestral conductor Solti dies: Sir Georg Solti, the Hungarian-born conductor who led the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to international fame as its music director from 1969 to 1991, has died at age 84, AP reports from London.

He died peacefully in his sleep Friday while on vacation in Antibes in the south of France, said Charles Kaye, his executive assistant. Kaye said Solti became ill Tuesday, but he did not disclose the illness.

Bangkok may scrap deal with HK co: Thailand's minister of transport will ask the Cabinet to cancel its contract with Hong Kong's Hopewell Holdings to build a 3.2 billion dollars elevated road and rail system in Bangkok, local newspapers said Saturday, AP reports from Bangkok.

Minister of Transport and Communications Suwat Liptapal-pong said he will ask that the deal be scrapped when the Cabinet meets next week, the Bangkok Post reported.

5 die of food poisoning in India: A 33 year old woman and four children under ten years of age died of suspected food poisoning late on Friday night, PTI reports from Thiruvananthapuram.

About 300 persons were admitted in the Medical College Hospital and the Sree Avitram Thirunal (SAT) hospital for women and children. The condition ten of them were serious, the sources said. About 100 children were being treated at SAT hospital. Those dead and now in the hospitals were all from the Vizhinjam and Poovar coastal Panchayats in Thiruvananthapuram district. Most of them were stated to have developed giddiness and vomited after eating mussels.

Vice mayor of Beijing resigns: An aide to the disgraced former Beijing Communist Party and an enemy of party chief Jiang Zemin has resigned, just days before the start of a crucial party meeting, state media said yesterday, Reuters reports from Beijing.

Zhang Baifa, 63, vice mayor of Beijing, had tendered his resignation and this had been accepted, the capital's mayor and party chief Jia Qinglin told the closing day of a meeting of the city's local parliament on Friday, the Beijing Daily said.

Serbs fail to comply with deal: Bosnian Serbs have failed to comply fully with a deal to moderate their propaganda against a Bosnia peace agreement after getting control of a television transmitter on Tuesday, the State Department said on Friday, Reuters reports from Washington.

State Department spokesman James Foley said compliance with stipulations set out by international mediators in exchange for the for the transmitter had been "uneven." "We've been monitoring through the foreign broadcast information service, their broadcasts, and our view is that they have not met all the stipulations," Foley said at a briefing.

26 murderers executed in China: Authorities in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing have executed 26 people convicted of first-degree murder, robbery and rape, the official legal daily reported yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The executions followed a mass sentencing rally on Friday attended by 1,000 ordinary citizens, it said. The death sentences marked an important step for reinforcing the national "strike hard" anti-crime campaign and safeguarding city's peace, Vice Mayor Gan Yuping was quoted as telling the rally.

Mother Teresa made India belong to the world: Media

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The death of Mother Teresa, a Christian Missionary in a Hindu-majority country of 960 million people, dominated television news and newspaper front pages here today, reports AFP.

One newspaper went so far as to compare her to Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of modern India.

The state-run Doordarshan television channel began its news programme with a lengthy opening tribute to the 87-year-old missionary, who died in Calcutta late Friday.

The newspapers, meanwhile, dedicated most of their front pages to the Roman Catholic nun's death.

The Pioneer newspaper compared Mother Teresa to the "Father of Nation," Mahatma Gandhi, adding: "One belonged to India and shaped it in his image. The other made India belong to the world."

Mother Teresa, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her missionary work, died following a cardiac arrest at 9:30 pm (1600 GMT) Friday.

Queen condoles Dodi's death

LONDON, Sept 6: With tears in his eyes, Mohamed Al-Fayed on Friday personally thanked hundreds of mourners weeping for his son Dodi and Princess Diana, reports Reuters.

"God bless you and thank you all," he told sobbing well-wishers who pressed forward to hug him outside his Harrods department store in London.

Clearly moved by the emotion-charged welcome he received, he paused to talk to mourners who had come to pay their respects at the storefront which has become an impromptu shrine.

"It's so brave of him to come out, bless him," said one woman as he reached into the crowd, obviously drawing comfort from the tidal wave of support.

Mohammed Al-Fayed, whose son died with Diana in a high-speed car chase with photographers in Paris, was surrounded by phalanx of security guards for his first appearance in public before the cameras.

He was accompanied by his brother Ali for the walk down the front of the luxury store that is covered in flowers and poems to Diana and Dodi.

Al-Fayed thanks mourners

Inside, his spokesman Michael Cole staged an equally emotional press conference where he revealed the agony of Mohamed Al-Fayed as he went to identify his son in a Paris mortuary.

AFP adds: Egyptian billionaire Mohamed Al-Fayed, whose son Dodi died alongside Diana, Princess of Wales last weekend, has received a message of condolence from the Queen, his spokesman announced Friday.

Al-Fayed, often seen as a throne in the side of the British establishment, received a letter from Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday delivered from Balmoral Castle, Scotland, the spokesman said.

"It was a most kind, warm and generous letter of condolence to Mr. and Mrs. Al-Fayed and the whole Fayed family were truly grateful," he told a news conference.

Al-Fayed owner of London's famous Harrods department store and the Paris Ritz, replied immediately with a similar letter, which was waiting for the Queen when she returned to Buckingham Palace on Friday.

Not an ornate royal tomb

GREAT BRINGTON, Sept 6: The family of Princess Diana chose as her final resting place not an ornate royal tomb, but a simple grave within the grounds of her ancestral home, awarding her the privacy she lacked in life, reports AP.

Initially, she was to have been interred with 20 generations of her ancestors at the village churchyard. But plans were changed out of concern that Great Brington would be strangled by tribute-payers.

The night before the princess' Saturday afternoon burial, the village was as quiet as the peace the nation hopes she has found.

Police had cordoned off the village two days earlier, allowing only residents to enter, and also blocked the road leading to the ancestral home of Althorp Park, which sits outside this Northamptonshire village of about 200.

Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, announced Friday she would be laid to rest privately on an island in an ornamental lake at Althorp.

The burial place would be opened to the public for a "number of weeks" each year, with appropriate safety and security measures, he said.

At the traffic cones blocking the road leading to Althorp, about a half-dozen people had gathered Friday night, holding candles and a sign reading "Princess Diana. Our Queen of Hearts. Home to Rest." A family of four was camped out down the road.

The quiet was almost unnerving compared with London, 50 miles (80 kilometers) to the south, where crowds estimated to swell into the millions gathered along the route of Diana's funeral cortege.

The burial spot is on the part of the Althorp Park grounds known as the Pleasure Gardens, in an arborium where the future princess and her sisters had planted trees.

Earl Spencer said the new site would not only take pressure off the village, but would allow her relatives — especially sons Prince William and Prince Harry — to have critically needed privacy when visiting the grave.

"In these extraordinary circumstances... it is the right thing to do," the Right Rev Paul Baker said Friday as he consecrated the burial site.

'India's deployment of Prithvi may trigger arms race in S Asia'

ISLAMABAD, Sept 6: Pakistan told the United States Friday that deployment of the nuclear-capable Prithvi missile by India had changed qualitatively the entire security environment in South Asia, official sources said, reports AFP.

"The Indian move has the potential to trigger a ballistic missiles race in the region," President Farooq Ahmed Leghari said at a meeting with Rick Inderfurth, the new US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia.

Pakistan had proposed a zero-missile regime in the region which has been rejected by India, the state run television quoted him as telling Inderfurth.

Leghari said Pakistan "firmly believes in good neighbourly relations and desires peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues including the 'core issue of Kashmir,' plugging ties with India."

"The Kashmir dispute remains the biggest threat to regional and international peace and security," he added.

Leghari also referred to "Gross human rights violations and atrocities" being committed by Indian troops in Kashmir, where a separatist drive since 1989 has claimed more than 20,000 lives, it said.



A pavement artist draws a likeness of Diana on a street in Central London, Thursday, as a tribute after hearing of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Four days after the tragic death of the Princess in a car accident in Paris whilst accompanied by her friend Dodi Al Fayed, visitors are still arriving in the hundreds and up to 2 million people are expected to watch the funeral procession on Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo