Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, who is accredited simultaneously as Bangladesh Ambassador to Chile, presenting credentials to Chilean President Edwardo Frey in presence of Hose Miguel Insulger, Foreign Minister.

Pak PM under fire for Anti-terrorism Law

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: Pakistan's new anti-terrorism law has restored normalcy to the violence-torn Punjab province, claims the government but its political opponents and even allies do not approve of the harsh measure, according to India Abroad News Service.

The fear of the new Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), passed by Parliament in mid-August, has silenced the guns of sectarian terrorists, said a senior government official.

Since its enactment, there has not been a single violent encounter between police and terrorists in Punjab which witnessed unprecedented sectarian violence in the last few months, the official told IANS.

Under the ATA, law enforcers can arrest or shoot a person even on a suspicion of terrorist intent. Observers say this is an extreme power given to the police force which has been accused, even by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif himself, of being corrupt and ruthless.

Critics of the ATA describe the new powers given to police as "a licence to kill." Detractors of the Sharif government and international human rights bodies, including Amnesty International, say ATA will encourage rights abuse by law enforcers.

However, Sharif has defended the ATA as needed to curb rising terrorist violence which it has helped control. "We have started a crusade against terrorism, sectarianism," he said.

Under the ATA, trial of a terrorist act or "heinous" crimes, including gang-rape, must begin within seven days and a judgement must be handed down within a similar period. In another seven days, the convicted person can appeal to a special bench of a High Court, which must also decide within a similar period. The High Court's decision on the lower court's verdict will be final and there will be no appeal against the tribunal's judgement.

Only two special courts set up under the Act in Punjab have so far given their verdict; one on the rape and murder of a minor girl, for which the accused was sentenced to death. In the second, a person convicted of murder was awarded capital punishment. However, neither of the two convicts was a terrorist.

Officials claim that terrorist violence has almost disappeared after the setting up of the special courts. But they still fear a resurgence of sectarian violence. There are apprehensions that the terrorists would strike again when special courts send their colleagues to the gallows under the ATA. The prevailing calm does not mean that sectarian terrorism has come to an end, they say.

Although the subdued violence, even if temporary, has given respite to the Sharif government, it is facing flak for the harsh nature of the ATA.

"It is a draconian law," says former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto who alleges that it will be used to "victimise" the government's political opponents.

Sharif's own coalition partners - the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) — and the legal fraternity have also been critical of the ATA.

The law has now been questioned in court with the Lahore High Court to rule on a petition challenging its validity on the ground that it infringes fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

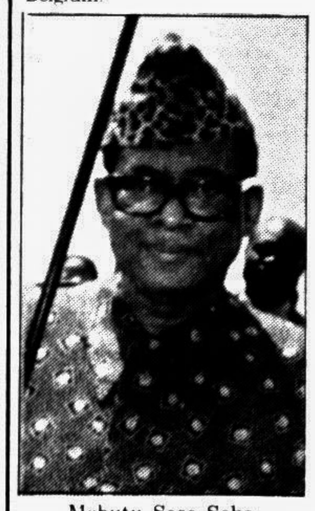
Mobutu dies neither with a title, nor a country

UNDATED, Sept 8: He was the ultimate African despot, a Cold War relic in a leopard-skin hat who lived like a king while leading his potentially magnificent country down a ruinous path, reports AP.

In the end, his excesses ruined him, and former Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko died in exile Sunday in Morocco with neither a title nor a country.

The fall from supreme autocrat to displaced dictator was swifter than anyone — certainly Mobutu himself — could have imagined. After an eight-month sweep that shed harsh light on Mobutu's pathetic army and Zairians' lack of loyalty toward their president, rebel chief Laurent Kabila seized power in May and ended a nearly 32-year reign strewn with broken promises and bloody revolts.

Joseph-Desire Mobutu's rule began with a military coup November 24, 1965, five years after the mineral-blessed colossus in the heart of the continent gained independence from Belgium.



Mobutu Sese Seko

Then a colonel and the army chief of staff, Mobutu had earned his soldiers' loyalty by building up the military forces and crushing post-independent secessionist revolts that grew to encompass nearly half the country. The country, known as the Congo, was renamed Zaire.

The coup was welcomed by Zairians weary of their long-bickering civilian government and by the west, always on the lookout for new leaders to counter Soviet influence in Africa. The pro-western Mobutu promised democracy and a quick return to civilian rule.

Instead, he declared himself head of state, founded the Popular Revolutionary Movement party, banned all other political parties, and embarked on a pursuit of absolute power. To cement his dictatorship and keep potential rivals at bay, senior politicians from the previous government were appointed to overseas diplomatic posts, where most were then accused of anti-Mobutu activities and dismissed or arrested.

Powerful opponents who remained in Zaire eventually fled into exile or were imprisoned or publicly executed after sham trials. Mobutu co-opted those who remained, seducing them with gifts of limousines and luxurious villas and entwining them in his net of corruption.

Mobutu sought to shake off the remnants of colonial rule with a fierce policy of "Zairianization," which included nationalisation of mining and other major industries; ordering all government workers and ministers to wear Mao-style jackets; and outlawing Christian names. Donning his trademark leopard-skin cap, he changed his own Christian surnames to Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga, which loosely means: "The all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake."

In a 1980 speech, Mobutu said he would never authorize another political party, dashing any hopes of allowing Zaire to become a democracy.

The last presidential elections were held in July 1984, with Mobutu the sole candidate. He was re-elected to a further seven-year term by 99 per cent of the vote.

Through it all, Mobutu maintained Western support because of the region's strategic importance as a Cold War battlefield. In return for arms and aid, he allowed the Untied States to use Zaire as a conduit for sending arms to rebels fighting Angola's Soviet-backed government.

But as the Cold War waned, so too did Mobutu's glory days.

The country's deteriorating economic situation and refusal to respond to pro-democracy sentiments sweeping the continent fueled civilian protests and military riots in 1991 that required French and Belgian intervention to crush. Another such uprising in 1993 killed hundreds of civilians in the capital, including the French ambassador.

As the former Soviet bloc began competing for Western aid, money to Zaire dried up, with the United States, France, Belgium and the European Union suspending military and financial assistance to protest corruption and human rights abuses.

After the 1991 riots, France's secretary of state for humanitarian affairs, Bernard Kouchner, referred to Mobutu as a "walking bank account in a leopard-skin hat" and challenged him to spend some of his personal fortune — most of it allegedly stolen from state coffers — to feed his people.

Mobutu denied stealing anything. "No, I have a clear conscience. I am an honest man. I have not pocketed one dollar of the people's money," he said, insisting his wealth was no more than 5 million dollars, far less than the 5 billion dollars often estimated.

As neighbouring countries traded one-party rule for democracy, Mobutu hung on with promises of reform. Political opposition and public impatience were growing, however, and they snowballed with Laurent Kabila's bold military incursion into eastern Zaire in September 1996.

Indians pay respect to Mother Teresa

CALCUTTA, Sept 8: From the poorest of India's poor to the most powerful and privileged, thousands of mourners passed by the body of Mother Teresa to pay their final respects to the selfless nun, reports AP.

The Nobel laureate lay in state Sunday at St Thomas' Church, one of Calcutta's oldest and largest Roman Catholic churches, in a fashionable neighborhood that contrasted with the slums where she toiled during life.

Mother Teresa, who died of a heart attack Friday night, lay under a glass case on a platform draped in the white and blue colors of her Missionaries of Charity order, her hands folded across her chest.

Reflecting Mother Teresa's ability to touch rich and poor, mourners included barefoot paupers, government leaders, a former beauty queen and an Indian musician. They filed quickly through the church, praying, weeping or stopping for just a few moments before the body.

One man who broke down in tears after seeing Mother Teresa's body said her compassion transcended religious boundaries in this overwhelmingly Hindu country.

"She worked for the people and never thought about whether we were Muslim or Hindu," said Mohinulisam, 38, who uses only one name.

He said he saw Mother Teresa every day when she visited a home for the aged near his leather shop in Calcutta.

Mother Teresa died at the headquarters of her Missionaries of Charity, where she lived in a simple room. Her body lay in the order's small, dimly lit chapel, surrounded by flowers and praying nuns.

But the chapel was too small to accommodate crowds, so the public viewing was delayed.

Her body was moved early Sunday in a white ambulance, escorted by a police officer on motorcycle, as bells pealed in St Thomas' Church and anguished wails rose from mourners.

Mourners began gathering before dawn, and by the time the coffin arrived, the line snaked one kilometer (half a mile) along the sidewalk in front of the chapel.

Even there, the importance of caste and privilege in India was inescapable.

Politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats roared to the front of the line in bulkywhite official cars, and strode into the chapel through a special entrance.

Meanwhile, shop owners and students, clerks and children in starched Sunday best waited uncomplainingly while their line moved in spurts for the chance, however brief, to see Mother Teresa.

Israel warns of widespread violence if peace process collapses

JERUSALEM, Sept 8: Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy warned Sunday of widespread violence if the peace process collapses and said he would have no part in any government decisions which threaten signed accords, Israeli television said, reports AFP.

"If decisions are taken aimed at burying the Oslo accords (on Palestinian autonomy) we risk going down a path without end, and violence will be widespread," he told the weekly cabinet meeting, the television reported.

"I am not ready to accept such a void and I will not be a party to such decisions," Levy said.

However, Levy said Israel had the right to demand that the Palestinian Authority clamp down against radical fundamentalist groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, which are behind many anti-Israeli attacks.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has frozen further troop withdrawal from the West Bank — the focus of interim peace agreements — and said he will not resume final status talks with the Palestinians until Yasser Arafat launches a fight against terrorism.

His announcement of the suspension of the interim peace accords follow two multiple suicide bombings in Jerusalem within five weeks which have left 19 Israelis dead.

In July Netanyahu named Levy as Israel's chief negotiator with the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara met the head of the international committee monitoring a cease-fire in South Lebanon on Sunday about the latest violence there, Syria's official SANA agency said.

"Shara stressed the need to maintain the April (1996 ceasefire) accords" during his discussions with committee Chairman John Sullivan, an American, SANA reported.

The ceasefire, which ended Israel's 17-day grapes of wrath offensive in Lebanon last year, bans the targeting of civilians or the launching of attacks from civilian areas.

However, so far this year, 28 civilians have been killed and 100 injured in clashes between Israeli forces and Lebanese guerillas, mainly the Iranian-backed Shi'ite Muslim Hezbollah movement.

On Saturday, Lebanon lodged a complaint with the committee over the death of a Palestinian refugee woman during a disastrous raid by elite Israeli commando troops deep into Lebanese territory on Friday.

The freighter North Island registered in Cyprus with a cargo of 6,000 tons of fertiliser lies broken in two on the beach near San Antonio, Chile, after dragging her anchor during a storm on Sunday. The vessel's trip originated in Cuba and the 30 member crew was safely rescued. —AFP/UNB photo

Trial of Kim's son reopens in Seoul

SEOUL, Sept 8: The trial of South Korean President Kim Young-Sam's son, charged with graft, influence-peddling and tax evasion, reopened here today, Seoul district court officials said.

"If his lawyers have no more questions, prosecutors will seek terms at today's session. Otherwise it could be delayed to the next session", an official told AFP.

The second son of the president, Kim Hyun-Chul, was arrested and jailed in May. He has admitted to receiving millions of dollars from businessmen since his father took office, but denied the money was in return for favours.

Kim has also admitted keeping the money he raised in borrowed-name bank accounts, and said he spent most of it on public opinion polls during his father's presidential campaign in 1992.

In the last session, prosecutors demanded jail terms ranging from 18 months to five years for four of Kim's colleagues on trial with him for graft.

Legal experts said final decisions by the appeals court and the Supreme Court could be handed down around February next year, when the president's five-year term ends.

Ramos denies any intention to impose Martial Law

MANILA, Sept 8: Philippine President Fidel Ramos said today he was against extending his term in office and denied any intention of imposing martial law, reports Reuter.

In a statement released by the Presidential Palace Ramos also pledged that elections would proceed as scheduled next May.

Ramos has come under fierce criticism from businessmen and the influential Roman Catholic Church who accuse him of trying to engineer a change in the constitution so he can stay in power after his current term expires in June. He has also been accused of planning to impose martial law.

"These are blatant lies falsehoods and fabrications as president I categorically and emphatically deny these irresponsible accusation," he said in the statement, due to be broadcast on National Radio.

"I also categorically declare that our country will definitely have national and local elections in May 1998, as scheduled," he said.

"Likewise I am against term extension ... I have no intention whatsoever to proclaim martial law and will not proclaim martial law," he added. The country's constitution was changed after the ouster of former strongman Ferdinand Marcos to restrict presidents to one, six-year term.

Donations to fund set up in memory of Di top 100m pounds in four days

LONDON, Sept 8: Donations to an official fund set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, have topped 100 million pounds (160 million dollars) in four days, the Times said today, reports AFP.

Earlier a spokeswoman for Mishconde Reya, Diana's lawyers who will administer the donations to be distributed to charities associated with the late Princess, said that money had been coming in to the fund "in floods".

The spokeswoman refused to put a precise figure on the amount already raised, stating that this will be made public towards the end of the week.

But the Times said that more than 100 million pounds had been received since the fund was opened, and the figure could reach one billion pounds, making it the largest charitable operation in the world.

Mishconde Reya said the donations range in size from a 20 pence piece (32 cents) contributed by a child to a cheque for three million pounds (4.8 million dollars) donated by a company.

Buckingham Palace said last week it was establishing a memorial fund after the Princess's most favoured charities were inundated with offers of cash in the wake of her death on August 31 following a car crash in Paris.

Tabloids promise to mend their ways, respect Di's sons' privacy

LONDON, Sept 8: Chastened by Princess Diana's brother, who said they'd hounded her with blood on their hands, British tabloids promised Monday to mend their ways and respect her sons' privacy, reports AP.

"Spencer's bitter attack on newspapers will force every editor and every journalist to reflect deeply on the way they conduct themselves," wrote The Sun, Britain's top selling newspaper.

"The Sun, for its part, has no intention of carrying photographs which invade the privacy of Princes William and Harry," said the tabloid, which has a national circulation of 4 million.

The Daily Star wrote: "Earl Spencer's angry words .... were echoed in most people's hearts. No paper or magazine, no editor, journalist, broadcaster or photographer should allow words like that ever to be uttered again." The tabloid pledged to secure privacy and respect for William, 15, and Harry, 12.

The 9th Earl Spencer, in an attack on tabloids in his oration at his sister's funeral Saturday, said the media had made Diana "the most hunted person of the modern age."

On August 31 when she, Dodi Fayed and their driver died in a car crash in Paris while being chased by paparazzi, Spencer accused editors who had ever bought paparazzi photographs of her private moments of having "blood on their hands." The Sun and other British tabloids over the years have regularly bought and printed paparazzi pictures of Diana.

Spencer went on to bar tabloid editors from her funeral, effectively canceling invitations to them from Buckingham Palace.

A spokesman for the boys father, Prince Charles, called Sunday for the media to stay away from Eton College where William goes to school and Ludgrove school which Harry attends.

"The last thing they need is to face a blast of flashguns when they go back to school (after the summer vacation)," he said.

Prime Minister Tony Blair in a BBC television interview Sunday called on newspapers to respond to public anger over paparazzi.

Blair was skeptical about calls for Britain to introduce laws to protect privacy. Indicating his preference for greater self-regulation by the media, he said: "They need to reflect and learn some lessons and I believe that they will."

In apparent compliance, Viscount Rothermere, proprietor of the tabloid the Daily Mail, later Sunday announced: "In view of Earl Spencer's strong words and my own sense of outrage, I have instructed my editors no paparazzi pictures are to be purchased without my knowledge and consent."

Members of the public look on as a young girl places a candle amongst the tributes to Princess Diana at the front gate of Althorp House in Northamptonshire on Sunday. The Princess was buried in the grounds of her ancestral home Saturday. —AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Iran welcomes EU envoys: Iran's new Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said on Sunday that ambassadors from the European Union, who were recalled by their governments in April, were welcomed to return to Tehran "any time," AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The announcement follows talks in Iran this week between a special European Union envoy and Iranian foreign Ministry officials aimed at ending the political crisis between the Islamic republic and the EU, the official IRNA news agency reported.

19 arms smugglers held in China: Chinese authorities have smashed an arms trafficking ring, arresting 19 people, a newspaper in Hong Kong said yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The suspects, in Shantou, in southeastern coastal Guangdong province, were believed to have smuggled in 15 pistols and 1,000 rounds of ammunition from Vietnam, the Chinese language newspaper Apple Daily said.

The weapons were smuggled from Vietnam through the border with Guangxi province, and intended for sale to organised criminal gangs operating along China's southern coastal regions, the report said, without specifying when the arrests were made.

Israeli F-16 jet crashes in desert: An Israeli F-16 fighter plane crashed on Sunday in the Negev Desert during an instruction flight, injuring two pilots, Xinhua reports from Jerusalem.

Israel Radio quoted military investigators as saying that the cause of the crash was that the plane might have collided with a flying bird.

The pilot, an instructor, was seriously injured in the crash, and his student moderately wounded. They were taken to a hospital in the southern city of Beersheva for treatment.

Strong quake shakes Tokyo: A strong earthquake rocked Tokyo yesterday morning, registering 5.2 on the Richter scale, with its focus located just beneath Tokyo Bay, the Meteorological Agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

A minor jolt was immediately followed by a bigger and longer pitch-and-roll movement at 8:40 am (2340 GMT Sunday).

There were no immediate reports of major property damage or casualties.

14 pc HK people living in poverty: About 14 per cent of Hong Kong's 6.4 million people are living in poverty despite the territory's status as one of the world's richest and most expensive cities a research report showed yesterday, Reuter reports from Hong Kong.

More than 856,000 of Hong Kong's population were eking out a living on HK dollar 2,732 (US dollar 353) or less a month, the survey showed.

The number living below the poverty line had almost tripled during the past 25 years, the period when Hong Kong emerged as one of the world's richest cities, famed for superlatives such as the highest per capita ownership of Rolls Royce cars and the biggest consumption of French Cognac.

***Prasad* sickens 160 pupils in India:** About 160 students of Kuanramunda Upper Primary School about 10 km from Rourkela, were taken ill after consuming *prasad* at the school on the occasion of *Ganesh Puja* on Saturday last, PTI reports from Rourkela.

According to official sources the students, suffering from suspected food poisoning were admitted to Ispat Genteral Hospital in Rourkela and other local hospitals.

Guardians of the children alleged that the *prasad* had been prepared in the school premises under the guidance of a teacher about three days prior to the *Puja* day.

Malnutrition-related disease claims 7 out of 10 children under 5 worldover

GENEVA, Sept 8: Seven out of every 10 children aged under five who die in the world today, succumb to a malnutrition-related disease, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said today, reports AFP.

Since 1990, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and rubella (measles), which are linked to malnutrition, have killed around 55 million children before they reached five years old, out of a total of 80 million infant deaths, the WHO said in a statement ahead of a conference on child deaths in San Domingo in the Dominican Republic.

In many cases, healthcare workers treating the children do not distinguish the symptoms, which can be similar for the different illnesses, the organisations said.

Instead of trying to treat each disease separately, an 'integrated management of childhood illness" is needed, the WHO advised.

The four-day conference in San Domingo from today to Thursday will be attended by representatives from around 30 countries, the WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and around 20 non-governmental organisations.

"A vast majority of health workers do not approach management of the sick child very well," Doctor Jim Tulloch, the director of the division of child health and development of the WHO, said.

"They need to know simple doable things they can recommend to families," he said.

Inexpensive treatments, including vaccinations, vitamins, antibiotics and mosquito nets impregnated with insecticide, could save many children if they were properly organised, Tulloch said.

Chinese leaders urged to adopt democratic reforms

SHANGHAI, China, Sept 8: A veteran democracy campaigner urged Chinese leaders Monday to adopt democratic reforms and prove their commitment to change by burning the body of Mao Tse-tung, reports AP.

Bao Ge's appeal to the Communist Party is the latest of several petitions demanding leaders take up political reform at a major congress that opens Friday.

Bao's open letter, addressed to the party's Central Committee and General Secretary Jiang Zemin, warned they could only delay political reform at their peril. He cited recent protests by workers and peasants around the country against official corruption and unfair policies.

"Your party must see that .... the people's demands for democracy are growing stronger day by day. To move ahead with the tide, your party now must fight actively," said the letter, copies of which Bao distributed to reporters in Shanghai.

"Bao recommended strengthening agencies for fighting corruption, improving the rule of law and protection of civil rights and permitting new political parties, including his planned Citizens Congress Party.

"Forbidding people from setting up political parties shows a lack of confidence. Political parties ought to be able win the people's support to advance their policies and not rely on ironhanded controls," the letter said.

To show they have left dictatorship behind, party leaders at the upcoming congress should call for the cremation of Mao's body, Bao said.

Mao led the communists to power. Deified by the party in life, his body lies in a glass coffin in a showy mausoleum on vast Tiananmen Square. But his legacy remains troublesome to many Chinese. Mao's ruinous economic policies and divisive politics is blamed for the deaths of at least 31 million people.