

# BRIT



Miss Virginia Nicole Johnson is crowned Miss America 1999 by outgoing Miss America Kate Shindle in Atlantic City, USA, Saturday.

— AP/UNB photo

**Storm claims 21 in Philippines:** At least 21 people were killed by landslides, floods and fallen power lines after Tropical Storm Vicki swept through the Philippines over the weekend, disaster relief officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Manila.

More than 377,000 people were affected by the storm, the National Disaster Coordinating Centre said.

**Khatami to address UNGA:** Iranian President Mohammad Khatami arrived in the New York Saturday to make a landmark speech to the UN General Assembly (UNGA), airport officials said, AFP reports from New York.

Khatami will be the first Iranian head of state in 12 years to address the 185 state General Assembly.

**Saddam's aide defects to Britain:** An aide to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has defected and described to British and American intelligence officials Iraq's oil smuggling arrangements with Iran. The Sunday Telegraph reported. AP says from London.

Sami Salih, described by the newspaper as the man who "masterminded" the sanctions-busting oil smuggling network, defected to Britain with his wife and four children earlier this year, it said.

**Queen starts for Malaysia:** Britain's Queen Elizabeth left yesterday for an official visit to Malaysia after a four-day trip to Brunei, officials said, AFP says from Brunei.

The Queen, accompanied by her husband Prince Philip and British Foreign Minister Robin Cook, were seen off at the Brunei International Airport by Brunei Crown Prince Billah and other local dignitaries.

**Gunmen kill Brazilian TV host:** Gunmen in northeastern Brazil killed a television journalist famed for exposing shady dealings of politicians and businessmen, colleagues said Saturday, AP says from Rio De Janeiro.

Dornizete Aduato, 38, was hauled from his car by six men and shot just after midnight Friday, said producer Aparecida Oliveira of the Meio Norte TV station.

**ELN frees two more mayors:** Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN) freed two kidnapped mayors on Saturday, bringing to seven the number of mayors freed hours after rebels released three others, officials in the northeast state of Antioquia said, AFP reports from Bugota.

Hecator Osorio Arango of the town of Concepcion and Jorge Arias of Santo Domingo were the latest to be released by the ELN, which had promised to free the group of officials.

**2 prison inmates killed in Macau:** Two inmates were killed after a jail house brawl between two rival triad factions in the Portuguese enclave of Macau, local media reported yesterday, AFP says from Hong Kong.

Prison security chief Daniel Ferreira said fighting broke out during lunch Saturday, when more than 30 inmates attacked each other with stools and eating utensils, the South China Morning Post reported.

**German vessel capsizes in Colombo:** A German-registered feeder vessel has capsized in Colombo's port after another German-registered mainliner crashed into its side, a senior ports ministry official said yesterday, Reuters says from Colombo.

At around 6.10 pm (1210 GMT) on Saturday, the Zim Piraeus, unable to stop on time because of engine trouble, crashed into the side of a smaller feeder vessel named the Elorot, making a huge hole in its side," said Days Wijesekera, senior Assistant Information Secretary.

**India achieves breakthroughs in key battlefield technology**

PUNE, Sept 20: An Indian defence laboratory has achieved twin breakthroughs in key battlefield technology by developing a sophisticated pilot ejection system and a multi-barrel rocket propeller, reports IANS.

The line-charged canopy severance system for the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), technologically so advanced that it requires mere milliseconds to eject the pilot to safety in case of a crash, and the propeller have been developed by the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) based in the western Indian city of Pune.

While in the conventional system, the entire canopy flies off and can result in injury to the pilot, in this indigenously developed system, only a certain portion of the canopy which is line-charged gets severed. This minimises injury to the pilot," ARDE director Sudharshan Kumar Salwan told India Abroad News Service.

He claimed that no aircraft in the world had this kind of live system which could be operated from outside the aircraft, especially when the pilot was unconscious due to some injuries or in the event of crash landing.

Salwan said after the new system was tested at Martin Bakers, Britain, recently, it had been approved for use for the

LCA. Two LCAs fitted with the system were already in operation, he added.

ARDE's other major achievement has come after the successful test-firing of the Multi-barrel Rocket Launcher System (MLRS), nicknamed 'Pinaka', recently. The launchers, costing Rs. 23 million (\$47,619 dollars) each, were test-fired in Pokharan, the site of the May nuclear tests in the western desert state of Rajasthan. They will be inducted into the Indian armed forces by December, 1998, to provide that extra edge in war time.

"Production of Pinaka with the high-volume fire power has already started at various ordnance factories along with four public-sector undertakings (PSUs) to meet the December 1998 delivery deadline," Salwan told IANS.

He said indigenously produced Pinaka was equivalent to, but performance-wise better than, M270 MLRS of the US, 9P140 URAGAN of Russia and ASTROS-II of Brazil.

"While USA developed their MLRS in a consortium approach with France and Germany, and each launcher was steeply priced at Rs. 195 million (4.8 million dollars), India's is far cheaper and affordable for the developing countries at Rs. 23 million," Salwan said. The cost will come down with mass production, he added. Even the

Russian and Brazilian MLRS, at Rs. 38 million (904,762 dollars) each, cost much more.

A salvo of 12 rockets with 1.2 tonnes of high explosives can be fired in less than 40 seconds with a range of 7 km to a maximum of 39 km. The fire power of a battery of six launchers can totally destroy or neutralise an area of 700 metre by 500 metre.

Salwan said the 214 free-flight artillery rocket developed for Pinaka can carry different types of warheads like pre-fragmentation high explosives, incendiary warhead, anti-tank and anti-personnel mine and anti-bombard.

The Pinaka system has incorporated state-of-the-art technologies for improved combat performance, night vision devices for driver and crew, and microprocessor-based fully automatic positioning and fire control consoles, Salwan said.

"With Pinaka, the Army will now have concentrated accurate high volume fire power at higher range to destroy the enemy, targeting second line of defence, supply lines, armament supply routes and communication routes," he said. Pointing out that Pakistan did not have MLRS, Salwan said Pinaka weapon system had the shoot and scoot advantage. "After firing at a target, it can move to another place before the enemy

# Taliban leader rules out armed conflict with Iran

DUBAI, Sept 20: The leader of the Afghan Taliban, in remarks published today, ruled out armed conflict with neighbouring Iran but said the ruling militia was well-equipped to fight a long war, reports Reuters.

"Historical experiences prove that no war will break out between the two countries," Mullah Mohammad Omar said in an interview with Al-Khaleej, a newspaper published in the United Arab Emirates.

"We want good relations with all neighbouring countries including Iran, but if we feel that any state seeks to achieve covetous aims in Afghanistan, then the government and the people will respond to prevent implementation of these plans," he said.

"The Afghans have enough material weapons and weapons of faith, and as I said before we are prepared for a long-term war," Omar told the Arabic daily.

In the growing crisis with Afghanistan, Iran has massed

at least 70,000 troops on their mutual border and is sending 200,000 troops to the frontier for military exercises.

The Taliban militia says it has massed at least 6,000 fighters to the border area and has threatened to hit Iranian cities if attacked.

The Taliban have appealed to the United Nations to arbitrate in the dispute over the killing of Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan last month. There have been calls by the international community for restraint on both sides.

The bodies of seven Iranians were returned home on Monday. Two other bodies were left in Afghanistan because Iranian authorities could not verify their identities.

On Wednesday, Iran's official IRNA news agency said two diplomats among the 11 Iranians who went missing in northern Afghanistan had returned home.

AP adds from Kabul: An estimated 10,000 Afghans chanting anti-Iranian slogans staged

a rally in the eastern town of Khost Sunday to protest Tehran's massive troop buildup on the Afghan frontier, Kabul radio reported.

The Afghan demonstrators demanded that Iran pull back its forces, and vowed to turn out in defence of their country should Iran launch an attack on Afghanistan. Taliban-controlled Kabul radio reported. The protesters also shouted slogans condemning Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

The Taliban has claimed renegade soldiers, acting without orders, murdered eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist based at the Iranian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif when the city fell to the religious army on Aug 8.

The Taliban, which controls at least 90 per cent of Afghanistan, has promised to track down and punish the killers. However, its refusal to extradite any suspects to Iran, and rejected Tehran's demands for a public apology.

# Clinton allies brace for release of new details from Starr probe

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: President Bill Clinton's defenders braced Saturday for the release of a mountain of new detail from the Starr investigation, as a senior House Republican said no candidate should use the president's videotaped grand jury testimony in fall campaign commercials, reports AP.

Several blocs from the White House, government printers worked through the weekend to prepare 2,800 pages of written material for Monday's scheduled release. The documents include a written transcript of Monica Lewinsky's testimony detailing her accounts of numerous trysts with the president in the Oval Office suite.

The videotape of Clinton's testimony, which runs more than four hours, also is to be made public Monday. Already, broadcast outlets were making plans for an unprecedented airing of images of a president being questioned under oath about sexual relations with a young aide.

"Playboy would not be allowed to put that kind of pornography on their airways," Democratic Rep. WG Hefner of North Carolina said after visiting the White House.

"And I don't know what it does to build a case because the case is already there. It's been admitted to," he added. "That, in my opinion, is just to embar-

pass the president."

Republicans counter the tape is important evidence in Kenneth Starr's report, which cited 11 potentially impeachable offenses, some involving perjury.

The president himself has admitted he lied, but he doesn't admit to perjury, Rep. Bob Livingston, a Louisiana Republican, said in an interview on CNN.

"I think that the jury, in essence the Congress, has to look at the evidence. The American people are effectively the jury as well, and they have to look at the evidence."

Clinton testified in a deposition in the Paula Jones lawsuit last winter that he had not had "sexual relations" with Lewinsky. In his grand jury testimony last month, he said he had been truthful in his earlier deposition but also acknowledged an "inappropriate" relationship with Lewinsky.

The Republican-controlled House Judiciary Committee voted along partisan lines on Friday to release the written evidence and videotape, the next installment from 18 boxes of material submitted by Starr.

The balance of the material, minus anything withheld by the committee, will be made public by Sept 28 under the terms of legislation passed by the full House.

Much of the congressional attention of Starr's evidence has focused on the videotape,

being released in the shadow of midterm elections.

Livingston, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, was asked whether he thought a candidate who made use of images from the tape would be out of bounds.

"I would think they would be," he replied. Some Democrats fear an image of Clinton flashing anger at questions, or appearing evasive, could prove harmful to him.

Meanwhile, die-hard Internet fans will be able to watch President Bill Clinton's videotaped deposition online on Monday but it won't be the same as watching TV.

Even across high-speed connections under ideal conditions, Internet video is typically a grainy, jerky image the size of a Post-It note with audio that can stutter and fall out of sync. Most users, for example, can expect three to five video frames per second, up to 10 times worse than television quality.

"You're not to get television video," warned Mark Cuban, president of Broadcast Com, an Internet video company. "But if it's just Clinton standing up, looking face on at the camera, it's going to look really good."

Watching Internet video requires special software, usually available free, that must be downloaded and installed separately.

# Colombo court to try Prabhakaran in absentia

COLOMBO, Sept 20: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) chief V Prabhakaran, leader of his intelligence wing Pottu Amman and seven others will be tried in absentia by the Colombo High Court in a case relating to the 1996 bombing of the headquarters of Sri Lanka's Central Bank, reports PTI.

This was indicated by the prosecution lawyers to the judge when the case came up for hearing on Friday, media reports said here yesterday.

The prosecution wanted to go ahead with the trial against the LTTE chief in absentia in view of the unlikelihood of his arrest in the near future.

Five LTTE militants who took part in the attack were arrested. This was also the first case in the recent years that the Sri Lankan police have framed charges against Prabhakaran.

Though the counsel for prosecution has indicated its preference for the trial of Prabhakaran in his absentia, no formal application in this regard was filed, the reports said. The case was put off for further hearing on November 10, this year.

# Gore criticises Clinton for Lewinsky affair

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: US Vice President Al Gore yesterday criticised President Bill Clinton for the first time since the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke early this year saying the president's behaviour in the case was indefensible, reports PTI.

In an interview to the Concord Monitor in New Hampshire state, Gore, however, added, "As a good friend of the president and the first lady, I feel badly for them and their family."

When asked about the possibility of Clinton's resignation, Gore said it will never happen. He will finish his term with a distinguished record.

Gore passed up an opportunity to attack independent counsel Kenneth Starr, the source of Clinton's woes, sidestepping a question about Starr.

Latest polls show Gore easily leads among possible Democratic rivals for the Democratic ticket to succeed Clinton when he completes his term.

Republican George W Bush, Texas governor and son of the former president, is ahead of Gore by 10 percentage points.

# German elections Kohl's rival party leading in opinion poll

BONN, Sept 20: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's social democratic challenger in next Sunday's general elections, Gerhard Schroeder, has widened the gap again on his rival, according to the latest opinion poll, reports AFP.

The poll of 1,507 people carried out by the Forsa Institute between September 14 and 16 for the private ProSieben television channel credited Schroeder's Social Democratic Party (SPD) with 42 per cent of the vote against 38 per cent for Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

But the poll indicated that Schroeder had picked up his support at the expense of the SPD's allies, The Greens, whose 6 per cent was one point down on the previous Forsa survey.

The CDU and its Bavarian sister-party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), were unchanged, as were their allies the Free Democrats (FDP), on 5 per cent.

The former communists, the Democratic Socialists, were still stuck on 4 per cent, one point below the level needed to win seats in the German parliament.

Schroeder, who was ten points ahead of Kohl at the start of the election campaign, has seen his lead whittled away to between two and four points.

# 103 still missing in Philippines ferry disaster

NAIC, Philippines, Sept 20: Bloating and decomposing corpses were hauled from the sea and laid out on the beach at this resort town today as fishermen and commandos recovered the dead from the Philippine ferry disaster, reports AFP.

There are bodies scattered everywhere, they were covered with oil," said governor of Cavite province Bong Revilla after joining fishermen near the site where the ferry, carrying 453 people sank early Saturday.

Rescue workers today stepped up their search for 103 people still missing after the ferry was overwhelmed by waves whipped up by tropical storm Vicki.

In all, 24 bodies have been recovered and 326 survivors have been rescued, the ferry owner Ed Go, vice-president of Sulphio Lines said.

Initial optimism over the recovery of survivors on the first day, began to fade as the number of survivors from the wreckage began falling while the number of corpses started rising.

Ensign Ricardo Yang, team leader of the naval special warfare group conducting the search, said "Let's hope that there will be more survivors. We should not lose hope."

# Iraq repeats denial of using VX nerve gas

BAGHDAD, Sept 20: A senior Iraqi official on Saturday repeated a denial that the Baghdad government had filled missile warheads with the lethal VX agent, as alleged by United Nations weapons inspectors, reports Reuters.

Iraq's top chemical weapons negotiator with the United Nations, general Amir Al-Saadi also said Iraq was not able to produce VX in a stable form or use it in weapons.

"Iraq has always maintained that we have never produced stabilised VX nor weaponised VX agent of any kind in warheads," Saadi told a news conference.

He rejected the findings of a US army laboratory which said it found traces of VX nerve gas in Scud-type missile warhead fragments recovered from a destruction site in Iraq.

"We confirm that once again and therefore there was no VX to be found by the American laboratories and we reject the implications of the results."

# Newsweek survey shows 46pc Americans think Clinton should resign

WASHINGTON, Sept 20: A new poll by Newsweek magazine showed on Saturday growing support for President Bill Clinton to leave office, either by resignation or impeachment, reports Reuters.

Forty-six per cent of those polled said Clinton should consider resignation, up from 39 per cent one week ago.

Similarly, 41 per cent said Congress should begin impeachment proceedings that could lead to Clinton's removal from office, up from 35 per cent.

However, far more of those polled — 64 per cent — said Congress should formally reprimand or censure Clinton to express its disapproval, up from 54 per cent one week ago.

The new poll comes one week after special prosecutor Kenneth Starr's sexually explicit report on Clinton's affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

And it comes right before the release on Monday of videotape of Clinton's Aug 17 grand jury testimony about his relationship with Lewinsky, which is expected to contain more sexual details and show the president in a combative mode.

Only 44 per cent of those polled approved of the house Judiciary Committee's decision to release

said Saadi, who is an adviser in the presidency.

Saadi said charges about VX by the UN's chief weapons inspector Richard Butler lacked "factual and scientific basis" and that he was "running to conclusions."

Diplomats at the United Nations in New York said on Friday that UN arms officials had called in weapons experts to analyse discrepancies in results from laboratories in the United States and those in France and Switzerland after tests for VX nerve gas in Iraqi weapon fragments.

Ewen Buchanan, spokesman for the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, confirmed that meetings would take place late next week, possibly Thursday or Friday, although final results of the VX tests were not yet available from Europe.

He declined to give further details.

Despite growing support for resignation or impeachment, 58 per cent of those polled said they still approved of Clinton's performance as president, down from 61 per cent in last week's poll.

Fifty-five per cent said it would be bad for America's global power and prestige if Clinton were to resign.

However, 48 per cent said they favoured an arrangement where Clinton could be prosecuted for any wrongdoing after he finishes his term.

Regarding Clinton's truthfulness, 66 per cent said they believed Clinton lied under oath when he testified about his relationship with Lewinsky.

But only 34 per cent felt Clinton lied more than the average politicians, up from 24 per cent last week. Thirty-nine per cent said Clinton lied more than the average American, up from 34 per cent.

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# UN concerned Travel ban on Cambodian leaders unconstitutional

PHNOM PENH, Sept 20: The United Nations on Sunday said it was "seriously concerned" about the Cambodian government's ban on international travel by opposition lawmakers, calling the move unconstitutional, reports AP.

The statement by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia, Thomas Hammarberg, followed a warning by Thailand that efforts to end the country's political crisis could be derailed if the ban is not lifted.

Cambodian leader Hun Sen ordered a travel ban on 53 newly-elected parliamentarians and more than a dozen military and police officials loyal to the opposition after a grenade attack on his Phnom Penh residence on September 7. No one was injured in the blast.

Hun Sen, who had accused opposition politicians of provoking violence through massive street rallies calling for his ouster, said then ban was necessary to prevent potential suspects from fleeing the country.

Legal experts said the real intent appeared to be to keep parliamentarians-elect in Cambodia until the new National Assembly was convened. The opposition had earlier threatened to boycott the new parliament in protest against alleged fraud by Hun Sen's party in winning the July 26 parliamentary elections.

"Government officials" have made it clear this decision has been taken at the highest levels and will not immediately be reversed," the UN representative said, adding that freedom of movement is a fundamental liberty recognised under international and Cambodian law.

Thailand's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sukhumbhand Paribatra, also expressed concern that pledges of freedom of movement have not been followed through, according to a copy of a letter from the Thai official to National Assembly president Chea Sim.

The state's governor happens to be Gerhard Schroeder, a Social Democrat challenger in the federal election. When word about the "musical collage" got out this summer, Kohl's party wasted no time blasting Schroeder and the Social Democrats for "tactlessness."

Germany's national anthem, to music written by Joseph Haydn in 1797, was kept by the western half after World War II, although the controversial first verse from 1841 starting with "Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles" (Germany above all), is no longer sung.

The general secretary of Kohl's conservative Christian Democrats, Peter Hintze, says the anthem is "the melody of freedom," and shouldn't be "disfigured" by mixing in a few bars of the anthem used in the former communist east.

Another Kohl ally, Bavarian Gov. Edmund Stoiber, said he would boycott the national ceremony if the song is played, contending that the communist-era passage would mock the memory of all who suffered under East Germany's totalitarian government.

But many in the east, far from being offended, are at a loss to understand the fuss.

# Song for unity day sparks rows in Germany

BERLIN, Sept 20: A nation's anthem is usually played and loved by all parties in an election campaign. But as Germany's race enters its final week, the "Deutschlandlied" is no longer just background music, reports AP.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's camp accuses left-wing politicians organising next month's German Unity Day celebrations of desecrating the anthem by hiring a composer to add a few bars from the one played in communist East Germany. Some are threatening to boycott the official festivities.

Leftists say the conservative stomped on the sensitivities of 18 million former East Germans in their effort to score political points.

With only a week until the Sept. 27 parliamentary election, no one is sure how the anthem fight will play among those voters, now a potentially vital swing region in a tight national race.

But the reaction underscores how Germans from the two halves are still struggling to follow the same tune, eight years after unification.

The composition — part of a longer medley — was commissioned by the Lower Saxony state government to be played at the official Oct. 3 Unity Day ceremony, to be held in the state capital of Hanover this year.

The state's governor happens to be Gerhard Schroeder, a Social Democrat challenger in the federal election. When word about the "musical collage" got out this summer, Kohl's party wasted no time blasting Schroeder and the Social Democrats for "tactlessness."

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Dennis Ross, US Middle East peace process mediator, talks to reporters as Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat looks on during their meeting at Arafat's office in Gaza City, Saturday. Arafat and Ross discussed the latest developments in Ross's efforts.

—AP/UNB photo