

## International

Wahid plans to buy presidential jet

JAKARTA, Sept 6: Cash-strapped and crisis-ridden Indonesia is considering buying a 60 million dollar jetliner for its travel-hungry head of state, news reports said today, reports AP.

Since coming to office, 11 months ago, President Abdurrahman Wahid has become the most travelled leader in Indonesian history and has visited dozens of foreign capitals to shore up international support for his democratic and economic reforms.

Until now he has chartered aircraft from the state-owned airline, Garuda.

However, presidential aide Wahyu Mulyadi said the government was looking at whether to buy a twin-engine Boeing 737-800 for the president's use. It has a range of nearly 3,000 nautical miles (5,750 kilometers).

The possibility of its purchase comes even though the country is enduring a crippling economic crisis and is burdened with billions of dollars in debt.

In foreign countries, it is common that a president has his own presidential plane, like the US president, who travels on Air Force One. Wahyu was quoted as saying by The Jakarta Post newspaper, while travelling with Wahid to New York for the United Nations Millennium Summit.

On his way to New York, Wahid stopped briefly in Seattle where he had talks with executives from The Boeing Co.

Lankan opposition accuses govt of election ploy

COLOMBO, Sept 6: A 10 per cent pay hike announced by the government for all state employees and pensioners is nothing but a ploy to garner votes during the Oct. 10 elections. Sri Lanka's main opposition party said Wednesday, reports AP.

The raise was announced by President Chandrika Kumaratunga's office Tuesday. More than 700,000 people will benefit from the decision that will take effect on Oct. 1.

"This is a reaction to our manifesto pledge," said Karunaseuna Kodituwakku, spokesman for the opposition United National Party, referring to the promise made by the party to increase wages and allowances if it came to power.

"This is a display of the government's political bankruptcy," Kodituwakku said.

An estimated 5,048 candidates from 29 political parties will contest the elections for the 225 seats in the Sri Lankan legislature. Only 1,449 ran for office in the last parliamentary election in Aug. 1994.

There was no immediate government reaction to the opposition charge, but an official statement said that the pay hike was announced after labour unions made representations to the government.

Castro arrives in UN after five years

NEW YORK, Sept 6: With much security but little fanfare, Cuban President Fidel Castro arrived in the United States Tuesday for the first time in five years for this week's UN Millennium Summit, reports AP.

Castro was seen arriving in a black limousine at the Cuban Mission in midtown Manhattan shortly after 1 pm (1700 GMT).

He earlier landed at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport and his vehicle was led by a police escort of four motorcycles and numerous sports utility vehicles to midtown Manhattan.

Castro's automobile went directly inside the garage at the mission, where he is to stay during the three-day summit.

Cuban officials said Castro immediately went into a meeting with the foreign ministers of Cuba and Malaysia. There were no immediate details of the meeting.

Castro's arrival had not been announced and there were no protesters stationed nearby.

Castro arrived in the United States three months after winning a major victory over his political enemies in this country with the return of 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez to the communist island.

Elian was the subject of a protracted custody fight between his relatives in Miami, who fought to keep him in the United States, and his father and grandparents, who battled to have him returned to Cuba.

Five shot dead in S Africa

DURBAN, South Africa, Sept 6: Five men were shot dead and 11 were wounded in a shooting spree on the outskirts of South Africa's east coast city of Durban, police said today, reports AFP.

The men, aged between 25 and 35 years, were gunned down Tuesday evening in a street running through the grounds of a massive men's residential hostel in the shabby KwaMashu suburb north of the city. KwaZulu-Natal province police spokesman Vish Naidoo told AFP.

It is very unclear (what happened) at this stage. These people were attacked with AK-47 rifles. It looks like they were not specific targets -- they were just shot at random," Naidoo said.

No arrests have been made and police are not sure how many people were involved in the shooting.

Some residents of the hostel had earlier marched to the KwaMashu police station to demand the release of two men arrested at the weekend for murder, Naidoo said.

# Attack on UNHCR office in West Timor: Four killed

JAKARTA, Sept 6: Four people, all believed to be foreign UN staff, were killed in a savage attack by hundreds of pro-Indonesian militia on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in West Timor today, a UN official said, reports AFP.

"Yes there were three burned bodies taken out of the UNHCR building in the border town of Atambua," a UN staffer, speaking by phone from the West Timor capital of Kupang, told AFP.

"A fourth international (person) was dragged out of a hotel and burned in front of it, one of our local staff said. We don't know the name of the person or who he worked for."

"We have four foreign staff unaccounted for, but they could be in hiding, because a lot of international staff were being chased by militia," said the UNHCR worker, who gave his name only as Werner.

He said the UNHCR believed the three bodies taken from the burned UNHCR office were those of their missing staff.

Earlier reports had said that only two people had been injured in the attack.

The militia attack was the deadliest since the UNHCR arrived there to help repatriate East Timorese refugees.

The survivors of the attack were in hiding awaiting rescue helicopters from the UN peacekeeping force (UNPKF) in East Timor, but in the East Timorese capital of Dili, a UNPKF said the rescue mission was stalled.

In Kupang, Chris Lom of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), whose Atambua office was also attacked Wednesday, told AFP by phone -- some six hours after the attack -- that he understood a joint evacuation effort was already underway by UNPKF and Indonesian security forces.

"About 15 international staff are being evacuated (from Atambua) but they are spread all over town, so it's very difficult," he said.

He said the 15 included staff from non-governmental organisations as well as UN agencies.

The IOM's Atambua international staff had all been evacuated last month, and were not among Wednesday's evacuees, he said.

He said the UN was also trying to get their local staff out.

Meanwhile in Kupang, Lom said 40 to 50 international staff were holding a meeting. "Essentially everyone is waiting to see what happens in Atambua," he said, when asked whether they too would leave.

Earlier Lom had told AFP that the attacks on the UNHCR and IOM offices in Atambua were launched by hundreds of militia who had been parading through town with the body of a dead militia leader, killed by unknown assassins the day before.

They burned the UNHCR building to the ground and ransacked the empty IOM office, he said.

A local journalist in Atambua told AFP that the three bodies from the UNHCR office had later been taken out of the rubble and had been laid on the ground near the burned office.

A military officer in Bali, the headquarters of the Udayana command which oversees East Timor, said Udayana commander Major General Kiki Syahna had flown to Kupang as soon as he received the news.

Tensions have been high among the militia since Indonesia pledged to close border refugee camps there within three months.

The militia, backed by the Indonesian military, laid waste to East Timor then fled to West Timor ahead of the peacekeepers' arrival after last year's vote for independence in East Timor.



Indian Muslims shout anti-government slogans in New Delhi yesterday during a protest against BJP president Bangaru Laxman's recent announcement to attract Muslims into the party. Laxman said his party will make sustained efforts to reach Muslims to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). --AFP photo

## N Korea threatens reprisals against US for security checks

DPRK team withdraws from UN summit

Yong-Nam and South Korea's President Kim Dae-Jung in New York and another with Japan's Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori.

South Korea launched diplomatic efforts in New York to avert a U.S.-North Korea crisis and Kim Dae-Jung was to raise the latest storm when he sees US President Bill Clinton on Thursday.

The 15-strong North Korean delegation had planned to take a Frankfurt-New York flight on Monday night.

But American Airlines said Kim Yong-Nam had not been allowed to take the flight "because he refused to submit himself to the security checks that all US airlines require."

A North Korean foreign ministry statement said the United States would "pay a 'dear price' for what it called a 'despicable and crafty' insult."

The US government expressed regret at the incident but denied any involvement. American Airlines apologised.

But it all came too late to save a planned meeting between Kim

Yong-Nam and South Korea's President Kim Dae-Jung in New York and another with Japan's Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori.

The North Korean foreign ministry condemned the "obstructive moves of the US administration authorities," the North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

Despite a tentative improvement in relations, North Korea is one of seven countries on a US list of nations considered sponsors of state terrorism, for which special security rules apply.

But the ministry said the security motives given were an "aburd pretext."

It added: "This is a brigandish act of violating the international usage of travel and neglecting elementary etiquette and morality for a state representative."

North Korea accused the United States of being "the world's biggest state of hooligans and rogues. It is an entirely legitimate exercise of our sovereignty for us to take a strong measure

against the brigandish and brazen-faced act of the US."

The US will come to know what a dear price it will have to pay for having hurt our people's dignity," declared the statement, without saying what action might be taken.

The statement said the US action "suggests that its hostile policy towards the DPRK (North Korea) has not changed even a bit but is getting more despicable and crafty." The incident caused consternation in South Korea.

But a spokesman for Kim Dae-Jung said in New York: "We express sincere hope that the incident should not hurt North Korea-US ties."

Also in New York, Kim Ha-Joong, senior presidential secretary for foreign affairs, said: "It's important that the United States and North Korea find out exactly what happened and remove any misunderstanding," Yonhap news agency reported.

## Nepal extradites Pakistani to India

KATHMANDU, Sept 6: Nepal quietly extradited a Pakistani to India after police recovered 35 kilograms (77 pounds) of RDX explosives from him and others in a hotel here, a local daily said today, reports AFP.

The daily Himalayan Times today, quoting an anti-terrorist squad, identified the Pakistani national as Mustaq alias Sali, who is an alleged member of a terrorist outfit.

He was extradited to India yesterday.

Meanwhile "police are interrogating Shiba Khadka and Habib Malik who have been arrested in a joint operation of the Nepali and Indian police," the newspaper said.

Khadka is a Nepali national but the nationality of Malik is yet to be ascertained.

Police confirmed they had arrested three people Saturday night for carrying 35 kilograms of highly explosive materials known as RDX on their way to India.

It was the biggest amount of RDX explosives confiscated in Nepal so far by police.

the city.

"We have pulled out of the city and we are now about five to six km to the east," he said, adding there were "no losses of men or material."

"The Taliban control only the city itself. Our forces are holding the outlying districts. Fighting is going on around Hazar Bagh (to the north).

"There are no civilians, not even a child, left in the city. They left along with our forces."

Taliban information ministry sources here said the militia led by commander Dadullah entered Talagan overnight but initially confined themselves to the city centre to avoid ambushes.

Clean-up operations at first light Wednesday captured a good number of tanks and other heavy weapons and prisoners who had hidden themselves in different places," one official said.

Taliban sources confirmed the ongoing fighting in Hazar Bagh area and that Masood supporters had fled east to the mountains of Farkhar and Keshem districts.

## Myanmar junta intensifies propaganda against Suu Kyi

YANGON, Sept 6: Myanmar's military rulers intensified their campaign against Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy movement, announcing Wednesday that 24 members of her party have resigned, reports AP.

State-run newspapers reported that the members resigned from the National League for Democracy party in Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, and an important constituency for Suu Kyi.

The New Light of Myanmar daily said the resignations were submitted to the Election Commission in March.

But making the news public now indicated that the government wants to cover the impression

Suu Kyi led pro-democracy demonstrations.

The military government allowed national elections in 1990 but refused to honour the results when the NLD won a landslide.

Suu Kyi's latest confrontation began on Aug 24 when security forces blocked her vehicle as she tried to drive out of Yangon to the countryside for party work. She camped out in the open for nine days before being forcibly returned to Yangon.

In the following days, the state press launched blistering attacks on her and the NLD. The government has ignored international condemnation and accused the West of meddling in its affairs.

In comments published Tuesday, Lt Gen Khin Nyunt, the head of military intelligence, said "two Western countries" are "creating unrest in the country by agitating a handful of disruptive and subversive groups." He did not name the countries, but apparently was referring to the United States and Britain, who have harshly criticized the military rulers.

The government has also been irked by British ambassador John Jenkins' attempt to go to the house of one of the NLD leaders, Tin Oo, over the weekend.

A government statement said Tuesday Jenkins had overstepped "universal diplomatic norms."



Unidentified Myanmar officials carry food bags through the gate of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's house in this recently released undated photo. The Myanmar junta yesterday declared that Aung San Suu Kyi and other detained opposition leaders are being taken care of by doctors, in the first confirmation of their well-being.

--AFP photo

## Barak rules out breakthrough in ME peace process

planned back-to-back sessions Wednesday with the two Middle East leaders on the fringes of the UN Millennium Summit.

During the 45-minute meeting, the statement said, Barak and Albright "agreed that without an open and realistic attitude" by Barak, it will not be possible to reach a breakthrough toward an agreement.

Indeed, the statement contin-

ued, Barak and Albright "agreed they still had not heard of a real change in Chairman Arafat's position since Camp David."

Barak's summit with Arafat at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland, collapsed in July largely over Arafat's rejection of an offer by Barak for limited control over east Jerusalem. The Palestinian leader insisted on full sovereignty over east Jerusalem, Wednesday could be critical.

which the Palestinians want as the capital of a future state.

A senior US official, briefing reporters on the meeting between Barak and Albright at Barak's New York hotel, gave a more subdued account. But the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, as Barak's statement did, that Clinton's dual sessions with the Middle East leaders

Wednesday

negotiators said, reports Reuters.

Chief government negotiator Robert Aventajado told reporters that he and Libyan envoy Rajab Azzouq, who has played a key role in the freeing of hostages previously, would go to the southern island of Jolo tomorrow for the releases.

The Filipino, two Finns, a Frenchman and a German were kidnapped along with 16 other people from a Malaysian diving

resort on April 23. The other 16 have been freed and local officials say huge ransoms have been paid.

In July, the rebels kidnapped a three-member French television crew who were on Jolo to cover the hostage crisis. One of them has also been freed.

Aventajado said that after these releases he would work to free a dozen Filipino evangelists who went to the rebel camp in July to fast and pray for the hostages.

Jolo, 960 km south of Manila,

## Quake rocks Sumatra Island: A