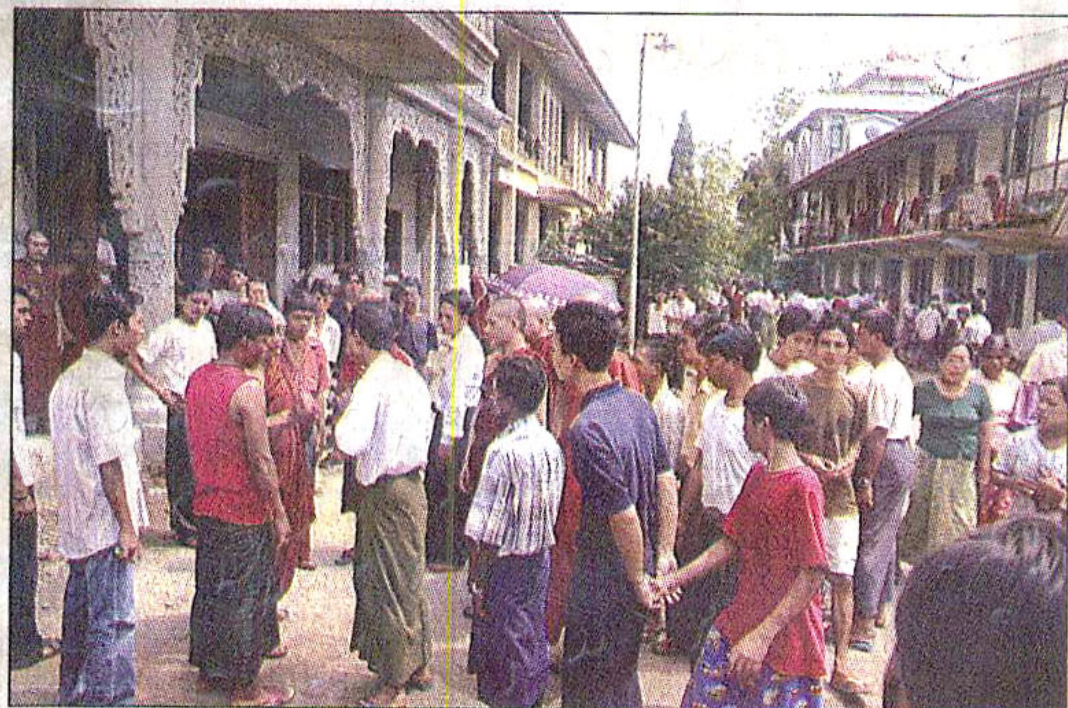




This picture dated September 27 shows Buddhist monks along with local residents gathering in front of a monastery following a raid by the law enforcing agencies. With protests quashed and many monasteries empty, fears are growing for those who have disappeared into Myanmar's grim prisons in recent days as rights groups say more than 1,000 people are missing.

'Myanmar military unlikely to make any compromise'

AP, Bangkok

Hunkered down in their war rooms hundreds of miles from mass protests, the aging, hard-line generals in Myanmar are known as a suspicious lot who view the West with disdain and depend on browbeaten advisers and astrologers to guide them.

Much like Myanmar's former kings, they see themselves as the only ones capable of ruling, and their army as the only force that can transform the country into a modern state.

Anyone questioning their 45 years of supremacy, whether a lone protester or tens of thousands on the streets of Yangon, is simply seen as a threat and dealt with the same brute force.

"They are moving to put down what they consider a threat to the nation," said Mary Callahan, a Myanmar expert at the University

of Washington. "I think these senior officers really believe they have done right by their country and the protesters are threatening the stability of the country and threatening what they consider the progress they brought."

The demonstrations are the stiffest challenge to the ruling junta in two decades, a crisis that began Aug. 19 with protests over a fuel price hike then expanded dramatically about two weeks ago when Buddhist monks joined the protests.

Since Wednesday, soldiers and riot police have clubbed, shot and detained demonstrators in Yangon, formerly known as Rangoon, the largest city in what used to be called Burma. At least 10 people were killed, dozens injured and hundreds detained, including Buddhist monks whose monasteries were shot up and destroyed in overnight raids by security forces.

US, Iraqi forces kill over 60 insurgents

AP, Baghdad

US and Iraqi forces killed more than 60 insurgent and militia fighters in intense battles over the weekend, officials said Sunday.

The US Embassy, meanwhile, joined a broad swath of Iraqi politicians both Shia and Sunni in criticising a nonbinding US Senate resolution seen here as a recipe for splitting the country along sectarian and ethnic lines.

The US military also announced the death of an American soldier killed Saturday in a roadside bombing and gunfire attack in eastern Baghdad. There were 62 US military deaths in September, the lowest monthly toll since July 2006 when 43 American soldiers were killed, according to a preliminary Associated Press tally.

US aircraft killed more than 20 al-Qaeda in Iraq fighters who

opened fire on an American air patrol northwest of Baghdad, the US command said.

The firefight between US aircraft and the insurgent fighters occurred Saturday about 17 miles northwest of the capital, the military said.

The aircraft observed about 25 al-Qaeda insurgents carrying AK-47 assault rifles one brandishing a rocket-propelled grenade walking into a palm grove, the military said.

"Shortly after spotting the men, the aircraft were fired upon by the insurgent fighters," it said.

The military did not say what kind of aircraft were involved but the fact that the fighters opened fire suggests they were low-flying Apache helicopters. The command said more than 20 of the group were killed and four vehicles were destroyed. No Iraqi civilians or US soldiers were hurt.

"Coalition forces have dealt significant blows to al-Qaeda Iraq in recent months, including the recent killing of the Tunisian head of the foreign fighter network in Iraq and the blows struck in the past 24 hours," military spokesman Col. Steven Boylan told The Associated Press.

Iraq's Defence Ministry said in an e-mail Sunday afternoon that Iraqi soldiers had killed 44 "terrorists" over the past 24 hours. The operations were centred in Salahuddin and Diyala provinces and around the city of Kirkuk, where the ministry said its soldiers had killed 40 and arrested eight. It said 52 fighters were arrested altogether.

The ministry did not further identify those killed, but use of the word "terrorists" normally indicates al-Qaeda.

Woman gives birth to own grandchildren

AP, Sao Paulo

A 51-year-old surrogate mother for her daughter has given birth to her own twin grandchildren in northeastern Brazil, the delivery hospital said.

Rosinete Palmeira Serrao, a government health worker, gave birth to twin boys by Caesarean section on Thursday at the Santa Joana Hospital in the city of Recife, the hospital said in a statement on its Website.

Hospital officials were not available for comment on Sunday, but press reports said the grandmother and twins were discharged on Saturday in excellent health. The Caesarean section was performed about two weeks ahead of time because Serrao was having trouble sleeping, the statement said.

Serrao decided to serve as a surrogate mother after four years of failed attempts at pregnancy by her 27-year-old daughter, Claudia Michelle de Brito.

Pakistan suspends police chief after clashes

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's government suspended the Islamabad police chief and two other senior officials on a judge's orders yesterday following a violent crackdown on protests against President Pervez Musharraf.

Dozens of people were injured when police baton-charged and tear-gassed lawyers and journalists during a rally on Saturday against military ruler Musharraf's plan to be re-elected in a vote on October 6.

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, a thorn in the government's side since Musharraf tried to sack him in March, told the government to arrest Islamabad inspector general Marwat Shah earlier Monday.

Shah "should be suspended and arrested because he is responsible for all that happened on Saturday," Chaudhry said at a special Supreme Court hearing that he called to probe the violence.

He also called for the suspension of the police chief's second-in-command and the city's deputy administration chief.

"The three officials have been suspended on the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan," Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema told AFP.

Saturday's clashes erupted outside the country's election commission and near the Supreme Court itself as the commission approved Musharraf's candidature for another five-year term in power.

The court had the previous day dismissed opposition petitions against Musharraf's eligibility, ruling that he could contest the vote while keeping his role as army chief.

Chaudhry was not on the nine-judge bench that heard the case.

Video footage of the bloody clashes -- dubbed the "Battle of Constitution Avenue" by Pakistani newspapers -- after the city centre location of the violence -- was also shown to the court.



Pakistani lawyers shout anti-Musharraf slogans during a protest rally in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan's government suspended the Islamabad police chief and two other officials on a judge's orders following a violent crackdown on protests against President Pervez Musharraf.

US offers bounty to catch Taliban leaders

AP, Bagram

The US military has launched a new "Most Wanted" campaign offering rewards of up to \$200,000 for information leading to the capture of 12 Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders.

Posters and billboards are being put up around eastern Afghanistan with the names and pictures of the 12, with reward amounts ranging from \$20,000 to \$200,000.

"We're trying to get more visibility on these guys like the FBI did with the mob," said Lt. Col. Rob Pollack, a US officer at the main American base in Bagram. "They operate the same way the mob did, they stay in hiding."

The list does not include internationally known names who already have large price tags on their heads like al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden who has evaded US capture since 2001 despite a \$25 million bounty or Taliban leader Mullah Omar with a \$10 million reward.

Instead the list is filled with local insurgent cell leaders responsible for roadside and suicide bomb attacks.

20 militants killed in Afghanistan

AP, Kabul

Afghan and US-led coalition troops using airstrikes killed more than 20 suspected militants in southern Afghanistan on Monday, the coalition said, days after President Hamid Karzai renewed his offer to hold peace talks with the Taliban.

The joint forces, acting on intelligence reports, were pursuing mili-

itants hiding out in the Reg district of volatile Helmand province when they came under attack, the coalition said in a statement. The troops called in airstrikes and fought the militants in a gun battle.

The coalition said more than 20 militants were killed but there were no reports of civilians hurt. It was not immediately possible to verify the death toll independently.

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