

BRIEFLY

UK restores phone link with Kuwait

British Telecommunications (BT) on Tuesday became the first telephone company to restore direct international communications with Kuwait, BT said, reports AFP from London.

The announcement was made two months after allied troops freed the Gulf Emirate and nine months after Iraq overran Kuwait.

BT opened a ground station in Kuwait city from which calls go directly to Britain. A limited service was also offered for communications with other countries via Britain.

We are delighted to be the first company to reconnect Kuwait with the rest of the world, Mike Read, BT director of international networks, said.

The new telephone link will help British companies do business in the Emirate, he added.

Kurdish team to meet Saddam:

Kurdish representatives will return to Baghdad for more talks with Iraqi leaders on regional autonomy, the Iraqi Kurdistan Front said on Tuesday, reports Reuter from London.

The front, an umbrella group of the main Kurdish parties seeking autonomy in northern Iraq, said in a statement Kurdish delegates would present proposals to the Iraqi government.

It did not say when the Kurdish delegation would return to Baghdad or whether it would be led by Jalal Talabani, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader who met Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad earlier this month.

Saddam and Talabani agreed in principle to end their decades-old conflict after the talks. A pact, yet to be signed, would give greater autonomy to Kurdistan, whose short-lived rebellion after the Gulf War was crushed by the Iraqi army.

China helps Algeria build N-plant.

Algeria Tuesday acknowledged that China was helping it build a nuclear reactor but said it was of an "exclusively peaceful nature," the Algerian news agency APS reported, says AFP from Algiers.

Algeria was prepared to admit international inspectors to examine the reactor, a 15 megawatt model which was to run on low enriched uranium, APS said.

The reactor programme was to provide the country with civilian nuclear technology "with the sole aim of mastering the application of nuclear energy in the framework of development," according to the agency.

The London Sunday Times reported in its latest edition that the reactor was a 40 megawatt model which could produce eight kilograms (17 pounds) of plutonium per year, permitting Algeria to manufacture one nuclear weapon per year after 1998.

Lesotho strongman ousted in coup:

The military leader of the southern African kingdom of Lesotho, Major-General Justin Lekhanya, was ousted in an army coup Tuesday but there was no word on who would replace him, reports Reuter from Lesotho.

Lekhanya, 53, announced his resignation with a quavering voice in a morning statement on radio Lesotho, which shortly before reported he was under arrest.

He said he had quit because of popular criticism of his rule and of the ruling six-man military council he headed.

By late afternoon the nation of 1.6 million people encircled by South Africa was still in the dark over who had taken power.

Soviet Defence Minister to visit China:

Soviet Defence Minister Dmitry Yazov will pay an official visit to China at the beginning of this month, Tass news agency said on Tuesday, reports Reuter from Moscow.

Marshal Yazov will go to China at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, Colonel-General Qin Jiwei, the official Soviet agency said. It gave no other details.

China and the Soviet Union on Monday reached agreement on troop cuts on part of their border, one of the most sensitive issues in Sino-Soviet relations.

Tibetan refugees to get \$ 5 lakh US aid:

The United States plans to extend 500,000 dollars in humanitarian aid to Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal, a state department official said Tuesday, reports AFP from Washington.

Last week President George Bush granted authority to the state department to disburse the funds.

The official, who asked not to be named, said 400,000 dollars would be channelled through the Tibet fund — a non-profit, New York-based organization providing support for Tibetan exiles — to fund aid programmes for Tibetan exiles in India.

She added that another 100,000 dollars would go to the United Nations high commissioner for refugees to finance programmes for Tibetan exiles in Nepal.

Iraq still possesses enough uranium to make N-bomb

NEW YORK, May 1: Iraq still has enough weapons-grade uranium to make one nuclear bomb despite intensive bombing during the Gulf War, the New York Times said today, reports Reuter.

Citing US government officials and scientists, the newspaper said Iraq had sent a letter to the United Nations that indicated enough uranium had survived the war to make one bomb.

At least some of Iraq's stock of potentially weapons-grade fuel had been moved from its main nuclear installation at Tuwaitha to an undisclosed site for safety reasons, said the letter delivered to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Monday.

But the Times said some material was buried under the rubble of bombed reactors. Iraq said there was no evidence of damage to the fuel.

According to the ties, the inventory submitted by Iraq disclosed it received uranium in various forms from previously undisclosed sources.

"The imports include six tons of depleted uranium from sources which remain undisclosed, and 1.8 tons of lightly enriched uranium, which (Bush) administration officials said was sent from Italy more than a decade ago and which was subject to agency safeguards."

"The inventory also shows that Iraq possesses more than the 48 pounds of highly enriched uranium obtained from France and the Soviet Union that non-proliferation experts believed to be under IAEA inspections," the Times said.

The newspaper said Bush administration officials were pleased with Iraq's letter reporting on its nuclear inventory. It followed an earlier one the US government considered inadequate.

The letter, one administration official told the newspaper, was a "total capitulation" by Iraq.

"The Iraqis have come back with an extraordinarily detailed account of the status, location and amount of all the enriched material," the official was reported saying.

US opposes lifting of sanctions on Iraq

All destroyed to be rebuilt 10 times bigger: Saddam

BAGHDAD, May 1: Everything destroyed in Iraq will be rebuilt "10 times bigger", President Saddam Hussein vowed Tuesday amid reports that the authorities were also seeking to revive tourism, reports, AFP.

There is enough faith, determination and competence today in Iraq to rebuild what the wicked have destroyed, and 10 times bigger, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) quoted him as saying.

He was reportedly speaking to city officials in Ramadi, Western Baghdad.

In a separate dispatch INA said Iraqi travel agents and tourism officials based in Iraq and 35 other countries will meet in Jordan on May 20 to study ways of reviving the tourist trade.

INA, quoting the Director of the national carrier Iraqi Airways, said the meeting would also be attended by representatives from the International Aviation and Transport Association (IATA).

The pro-government Al-Jumhuriya newspaper earlier accused Syria and Iran of responsibility for the destruction of Iraq during the Gulf war and the subsequent Kurdish and Shi'ite rebellions.

The Iranian and Syrian regimes helped the saboteurs who massacred the Iraqis, Al-Jumhuriya said.

It also denounced a visit over the weekend by Iranian resident Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to Damascus to discuss post-Gulf war security with his Syrian counterpart Hafez Al-Assad.

A New York report says: The UN Security Council Committee on Sanctions met Tuesday but failed to act on Baghdad's request to lift the trade embargo imposed on it following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

In Washington, the White House reiterated its opposition to lifting the sanctions too quickly, expressing skepticism about the motives of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Iraq has asked the Committee to consider two requests: the first would allow Baghdad to sell one billion dollars worth of oil to finance food purchases; the second would release one billion dollars in frozen Iraqi assets held in western countries.

The committee has asked Iraq for additional information concerning the oil sale, but diplomatic sources said Baghdad had not yet complied with the request.

The Sanctions Committee discussed the first Iraq request Tuesday but has not begun debating the question of assets.

The Committee's President, Austrian Ambassador Peper Hohenfellner, said another meeting was scheduled for Friday and both demands would be discussed.

In Washington, the US administration reiterated Tuesday its opposition to Baghdad's request.

"We don't have a lot of confidence in Saddam Hussein, the way he's going to spend the money... We would approach unfreezing assets or selling the oil in our discussions with the Sanctions Committee from that same perspective," said White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

He said Washington wanted more details on what Iraq wants to do with the funds to be earned from the oil exports and with the frozen assets.

Monday, President George Bush said he opposed letting Iraq sell oil as long as it had not fully complied with the UN-set conditions for ending the war and deal with the problem of Kurdish refugees.

Further, the spreading of fine particles into the northern hemisphere was likely to bring a slight temperature increase across parts of Asia, particularly Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the northern Himalayas, while in other regions sooty fall-out was likely to make snows melt earlier than normal.

David Mage, a World Health Organization (WHO) chemist who was recently in Kuwait, said the oil fires were producing "a chemical mix that nobody has seen before." Efforts were underway to analyse the substance, he said.

A Kuwaiti expert, Manaf Behbehani, said that monitoring of the disaster had been made more difficult by the fact that the Iraqi troops who set the wells on fire had also destroyed many of the instruments needed to measure effects.

Mr. Behbehani said that there was no immediate danger for the Kuwaiti population, although he admitted that initial medical examinations of people affected by the smoke had been rudimentary.

He added that some 57 oil fires had been extinguished to date. The firefighters had not only to put out the fires but also to choke off the oil, which would otherwise cause major pollution on the ground, he said.

Current projections call for around 50 wells to be capped every month, he said.

DHAHRAN (Saudi Arabia), May 1: The oil spill left by the Gulf War with Iraq has killed more than 20,000 birds and seriously harmed 500 kilometers (300 miles) of coastline in northeast Saudi Arabia, a Saudi official said Tuesday, reports AFP.

While between 20,000 to 30,000 birds, mainly cormorants, have died, other Gulf wildlife like sea turtles have so far emerged relatively unscathed, a spokesman for Saudi Arabia's environmental protection agency said.

"The islands where they live and reproduce have not suffered a direct blow," the spokesman said.

Four hundred people are working full time at sea and on land to clean up the spills, according to the agency which is supervising anti-pollution efforts from the eastern port of Dhahran.

Allied forces said Iraqi troops had leaked massive quantities of oil into the northern Gulf from Kuwaiti terminals and tankers. The spill was at the time estimated at 11 million barrels, or more than 1.5 million tonnes of crude.

Chinese CP Secy visits USSR May 15

MOSCOW, May 1: Mr. Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, will pay a five-day visit to the Soviet Union commencing on May 15. It will be the first visit by a top Chinese leader over the past 34 years, reports IAN.

The visit of the Chinese leader, officials said, will deepen co-operation between the two parties especially as regards using the parties' potentials to modernise the economy both in China and the Soviet Union.

Both China and the Soviet Union, while remaining committed to their socialist choice, want to make economic process conform to modern views. The sides desired to adopt the advanced technologies and scientific and technical achievements.

NEW DELHI, May 1: Interveners fanned out across India Tuesday in what opinion pollsters said would be their toughest challenge — predicting the outcome of next month's general elections, reports Reuter.

In November 1989, when the world's biggest democracy handed Rajiv Gandhi's long-reigning Congress Party a stunning defeat, opinion polls were astonishingly accurate.

Pranoy Roy, one of India's most experienced practitioners, ran an exit poll predicting Congress would win 195 seats, well short of a majority in the 545-seat parliament.

After two minority governments, waves of caste and Hindu-Muslim violence in which hundreds died and a major economic crisis, an opinion poll taker is expecting the same degree of accuracy for the elections set for May 20, 23 and 26.

"I'm taking a risk by polling for publication because it's a real challenge for the opinion pollster," said Ranjit Chib, one of India's main pollsters.

Last time we were within one per cent of the final figures, which is nothing in a country of this size and complexity, Chib said. This time, if I'm within 10 per cent, I'll be happy.

The violence and political turmoil that disrupted ordinary life for weeks at a time last year have left many of India's 521 million voters disgruntled.

They are fed up with the political games played over the last 18 months, with alliances coming together and falling apart, parties splitting and politicians defecting from one to another.

Who cares who wins. What difference does it make, is a common refrain in newspaper interviews with voters.

Polls taken so far, mostly privately for political parties, show that up to half the elec-



NEW DELHI: Janata Dal leaders including VP Singh, Ajit Singh, Sharad Yadav and Mufti Mohammed Syed campaigning at Jaleswar in Uttar Pradesh.

Off the Record

What's in a name?

PARIS: More than eight out of 10 French people cannot spell the name of their President Francois Mitterrand, even after almost 10 years in office, according to a new opinion poll, reports Reuter.

The survey, carried out by the BVA Institute for Paris Match magazine, showed 84 per cent of the more than 1,000 people questioned gave an incorrect answer when asked to spell Mitterrand's name.

The per cent got the answer right and six per cent did not know the poll added.

Only 12 per cent knew Mitterrand was 74 years old, 65 per cent knew he was a Roman Catholic and 45 per cent of those questioned did not know his wife was called Danielle, the poll showed.

STOCKHOLM: This year's Nobel prize winners will become instant dollar millionaires, reports Reuter.

The Nobel Foundation said on Monday it had raised the 1991 awards in each of six categories by 50 per cent to six million Swedish crowns, roughly a million dollars.

When the prizes were first given in 1901 under a request by Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel, they carried an award of 150,000 crowns, worth 5.5 million crowns in today's money.

The real value had sunk two-thirds by 1953 due to restrictive investment policies, the Foundation said.

"In the jubilee year of 1991 the value of the Nobel prize has thus been restored by a comfortable margin," it said, attributing the increase to successful investments.

Nobel prizes are awarded for achievements in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, economics and peace and are traditionally announced in October.

Joint winners share the money.

The foundation said it had sold a substantial number of shares in the first half of 1990, before a sharp decline in stock markets and beat a collapse in Swedish property prices when it sold the last of its stake in a real estate firm.

The foundation's operating profits were 96.3 million crowns in 1990, up almost 16 per cent on the year, and capital gains were 294 million. Nobel said the market value of its investments nevertheless fell 11 per cent to 1.5 billion crowns.

US bid to kill Noriega alleged

MIAMI (Florida): Manuel Noriega's Defence Attorneys said on Tuesday the ousted Panamanian dictator could prove that US agencies attempted to kill him but did not say when or where the alleged plots occurred, reports Reuter.

The Attorneys said Noriega, imprisoned on drugs charges in the United States since January 1990 could prove that US agencies tried to kill him and the late Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos but did not make public any evidence.

"General Noriega has documents detailing... assassination attempts against himself and Mr Torrijos by agencies of the US government," said Defence Attorney Frank Rubino, who did not elaborate.

Noriega Attorney Jon May also told a Federal judge at a hearing on Tuesday that the Panamanian General would have a hard time getting a fair trial because he was widely viewed as being guilty.

May said Noriega had been "stripped of the presumption of innocence" by US leaders, including President George Bush, who authorised the invasion of Panama that toppled Noriega.

Oil spill kills 20,000 birds

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Dy Speaker shot dead in Georgia

MOSCOW, May 1: The Deputy Speaker of the Adjara Parliament was shot dead by a fellow parliamentarian Monday during a debate in the chamber on the Georgian earthquake, which had left at least 100 people dead, reliable sources said, reports AFP.

They said that two other leaders in Adjara, an autonomous region which is part of the Georgian republic, were seriously wounded.

The official Tass news agency said only that the parliament's Vice-President Nodar Imnadze had been killed and that there had been injuries.

Local journalists contacted by telephone said that the Georgian Vice-Premier Murnal Omanidze and the Adjara Parliament's Speaker Dolan Abashidze had been badly injured.

They added that Mr Imnadze chaired the Adjara section of the round table for a free Georgia.

They said the shooting appeared to be linked to Georgian nationalism since all three victims were Georgians, who had recently been elected to leadership positions in the Muslim-populated Adjara autonomous republic.

Rumours had been circulating that Georgia pro-independence President Zviad Gamsakhurdia planned to

abolish all Georgia's autonomous authorities as it did with the autonomous region of south Ossetia last December.

36,000 communists barred from voting in Indonesia

JAKARTA, May 1: Indonesia will stop more than 36,000 former Communists from voting in next year's general election, Interior Minister Dudint said, reports Reuter.

Local newspapers today quoted him as saying the figure was below the 43,000 kept off the voting register in 1987 elections.

The 36,000 are former members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), outlawed 24 years ago.

The PKI was the world's largest communist party outside China and the Soviet Union until it was effectively wiped out following a coup attempt in 1965 which the government said the communists inspired.

At least half a million people are believed to have been killed in a bloodbath of revenge that followed. The party was banned in 1967.

Nearly 100 million people will be eligible to vote in the 1992 polls which are certain to be won by the government-backed Golkar Party.



CALCUTTA: "In the BJP, there is a certain integrity and honesty which I admire. I joined the BJP because I do not agree with the Marxist ideology," said well-known Victor Banarjee (right) this week.