

UN body rejects Iraqi plea to sell \$ 1.5b crude oil

Saddam launches wave of purges in Baath Party and military

BAGHDAD, July 12: Saddam Hussein has launched a new wave of purges in the ruling Baath Party and the military, executing scores of high-ranking army officers, many of them Shi'ite Muslims, sources said Thursday, reports AP.

The sources, who included foreign diplomats, interpreted the reports as a sign that the embattled dictator was shielding himself behind a hard core of loyalists to counter a feared coup. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

The expulsion of Shi'ites would reverse a decade-long effort by Saddam, a Sunni Muslim, to widen the base of support for his regime.

Among those reportedly executed was Maj. Gen. Yalchin Omer, a hero of the Iran-Iraq war who commanded an army division in the marshlands of the south, the only region where Saddam has not completely quashed rebellion.

AUN delegation attempted Thursday to visit the marshlands, where thousands of Shi'ites are believed to be trapped under intermittent shelling.

Shi'ites, who rebelled against Saddam in April, make up 55-60 per cent of Iraq's population of 17 million.

Most of Saddam's ruling circle are Sunnis. Notably, however, the highest-ranking Shi'ite official in Saddam's regime, Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, has remained in power despite the reported purges.

There are in creasing signs that Saddam fears a coup attempt because of the widespread belief among Iraqis that he is responsible for the UN economic embargo that is strangling their economy.

US and British insistence that the UN sanctions not be

lifted until Saddam leaves power is widely perceived as a signal to his generals that the only way to end the country's misery is to move against him.

Many army officers are reportedly still ranked by the Gulf War defeat and the humiliating disarmament terms Saddam accepted.

During the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice two weeks ago, when Iraqi visitors flocked to Baghdad, thousands of troops were stationed near the capital, according to several informed sources here.

Except for televised meetings with top party, army and government officials, Saddam no longer appears in public.

According to an exiled Iraqi Shi'ite religious leader in

Syria, Mohammed Taki Moddaraesi, Saddam has formed a secret police group called Rashad that has executed Shi'ite rebels in the southern cities of Basra, Nasariyah and Najaf.

AFP from New York adds: The UN sanctions Committee Thursday refused to consider Iraq's request that it be allowed to sell 1.5 billion Dollars of crude oil and have access to a billion Dollars in frozen funds.

The United Nations committee overseeing the economic embargo on Baghdad said it would reconsider the request next week after hearing a report on the country's humanitarian needs from a UN envoy to the region.

In a letter sent to the committee Wednesday, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussein said the economic embargo had already led to the death of 6,000 children could kill another 170,000 children by the end of 1991.

An embargo on all Iraqi exports was imposed by the United Nations following the August 2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Hussein said Baghdad needed 2.6 billion Dollars to begin rebuilding the country razed by allied bombing, and at least 540 million Dollars to buy and distribute medication and medical equipment.

The Sanctions Committee — an offshoot of the 15-member Security Council — adjourned a meeting Thursday



NASRIA (Iraq): Iraqi Shi'ite women waiting for water shout slogans, July 11, against the arrival of Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan, special UN delegate for humanitarian help in Iraq and Kuwait, during his visit to the marshes of Hammar 500 km south of Baghdad. —AFP photo

Rao firm to win vote of confidence

NEW DELHI, July 12: The Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, today said that he was sure that his government would succeed in getting the vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha, reports PTI.

Talking to newsmen informally after the special investiture ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhawan to confer Bharat Ratna Posthumously on Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Rao said he had no idea what the BJP was going to do when confidence motion was taken up in the House.

His predecessor Chandra Shekhar, who also briefly spoke to newsmen at the Rashtrapati Bhawan said, the vote of confidence will be passed since no one wanted election so soon.

Another former Prime Minister V. Singh, when asked about the stand of the National Front and Left Front combine on the confidence issue said, we are interacting with our constituents and it is not proper to jump the gun.

On the election of Speaker, Rao said that there was no agreement with the BJP, but the Congress-I had only followed a format under which the ruling party gets the Speakership and the main opposition party gets the Deputy Speakership.

He said there was no special agreement between the Congress-I and the BJP and that the two parties had followed a format.

Rajiv's killer used powerful transmitter

NEW DELHI, July 12: The killers of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi used a powerful transmitter to report the success of "operation massacre" to their chief in Sri Lanka, the Hindu newspaper reported today, reports Reuter.

Indian investigators knew within hours of the assassination that a message was flashed from a secret transmitter near the Tamil Nadu State, capital of Madras to a Tamil rebel chief in Sri Lanka saying "operation massacre was over and the leader was dead," the Hindu said in a front page report.

Detectives investigating Gandhi's May 21 murder by a woman suicide-bomber in Sriperumbudur, near Madras, said they were searching for more transmitters, the Hindu said.

India officials suspect Sri Lankan rebels belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) killed Gandhi. The LTTE has denied the charges.

Move to bar successful candidates Burmese junta amends poll law

BANGKOK, July 12: Burma's military authorities have amended the country's election law, in a move which could prevent many of last year's successful election candidates from taking up their seats in parliament or standing in future elections, reports AP.

The amendment bars anyone with a criminal record from standing in elections the official Working Peoples Daily reported Thursday. It specifically mentioned those convicted of treason or sentenced to life.

The new law also says that a successful candidate whose candidacy has been declared

null and void by an election tribunal will not be able to contest in elections held during the next 10 years. Successful candidates who failed to submit election expenses will also be barred for the next 10 years.

An unsuccessful candidate found to have violated an existing law cannot contest elections over the next five years according to the new law.

Objections have been raised to the elections of 11 candidates out of the 485 elected last year. Five of the cases have been tried by election tribunals but the result have not yet been made public.

The elections were won overwhelmingly by the National League for Democracy, but Burma's military government has refused to step down.

With an unspecified number already convicted and many more to be tried for breaking prevailing law, the number of successful candidates is expected to be greatly depleted.

Tamils attack Sri Lankan army camp

COLOMBO, July 12: Tamil separatist rebels pounded a key Sri Lankan army camp in the north of the island for the third day and tried to ram their way in with armoured bulldozers, a military spokesman said today, reports Reuter.

Camp defenders destroyed the bulldozers on Thursday night, the spokesman said, "we are throwing all we can at them."

Ten soldiers, including a Major, have been killed and more than 22 wounded in the three-day battle at Elephant Pass in the Jaffna Peninsula, a stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The Tigers are fighting for an independent homeland in the north and east for the island's minority Tamil community.

Elephant Pass is one of four military camps in the rebel-controlled Jaffna Peninsula, the Tamil heartland. It links the Peninsula to the rest of the island.

The camps have come under sporadic attack by the rebels for 13 months since the LTTE abandoned peace talks

Indian govt bows to demand of Assam rebels, frees 14

NEW DELHI, July 12: Indian authorities have freed 14 of the 24 prisoners whose release had been demanded by an outlawed insurgent group in the far eastern frontier state of Assam, press reports said here today, reports AP.

The prisoners were released hours after the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) threatened to execute four hostages if the 24 were not freed by a Sunday deadline, the Times of India and Indian Express said.

By Thursday evening, the Assam government had freed all but 10 of the 24, the newspapers said.

ULFA, which is fighting for the creation of a separate Assam, is holding 12 hostages, including six officials of the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) whom it kidnapped on June 30 and July 1.

An abducted Soviet engineer was killed when he tried to escape from the group's captivity. On Thursday, ULFA freed an ONGC geophysicist after the government bowed to its demands and released six insurgents.

The Assam government, controlled by India's ruling Congress (I) Party, has announced a general amnesty for ULFA prisoners, said to number about 650, and freed more than 300 of them. It was urged ULFA to talk peace.

The group said in a statement released by its "war control room" Thursday that no talks were possible unless the agenda included its demand for secession, Indian Express said.

"We may consider negotiations if sovereignty of Assam is on the top of the agenda," the statement was quoted as saying.

New Delhi refuses to negotiate with any militant group unless it abjures violence and gives up separatist demands, insisting that talks are possible only under the framework of the Indian constitution.

ULFA does not recognise the Indian constitution, maintains that Assam has historically never been a part of India and calls the federal government a colonial power.

A well-knit, well-trained and highly-motivated group, it has proclaimed its goal as the

creation of a separate Assamese nation and establishment of what it calls "scientific socialism" or Maoism, in the oil and mineral-rich state.

ULFA has been in existence since the early 1980's but came into prominence only last year with the killing of select targets and a series of kidnappings for ransom, prompting New Delhi in November to set the army after it.

The army has since been withdrawn, and elections in June brought the Congress (I) Party to power in the state. The state government almost immediately plunged into a crisis over the latest kidnappings.

Meanwhile, an intensive search was under way in Assam for the body of slain Soviet engineer Sergei Grischenko.

India wants solution to ethnic problems, says Lankan Secy

LONDON, July 12: The Sri Lankan Defence Secretary Gen SC Ranatunga has said India genuinely wanted to help them "to maintain unity and integrity of the island republic and find a political solution to the ethnic problems", reports PTI.

"They (India) don't want to see the disintegration of Sri Lanka" Gen Ranatunga said in an interview with Jane's defence weekly.

He said "I am very confident that we will have peace but how soon I cannot tell you."

Shevardnadze elected head of new party

MOSCOW, July 12: Eduard A Shevardnadze was elected chairman of a new reformist movement on Thursday and given an insulting farewell from ex-comrades in the Communist Party.

The former foreign minister was chosen to head a four-man committee to organise a founding conference in September of the Movement for Democratic Reforms in September, the independent news agency Interfax reported.

Shevardnadze and eight other prominent reformers agreed last week to create the new organisation, following his statement that the country needed a loyal opposition to balance the communists and create a "two-party state."

Four days later he quit the Communist Party, telling reporters his conscience tor-

tured him after serving the party loyally for four decades.

The party Control Commission, which acts at the party disciplinary, issued a statement Thursday blasting Shevardnadze's reason for quieting and condemning him for refusing to submit to its review of his statements.

"It is apparent that the motives prompting Eduard Shevardnadze to announce his resignation from the party were far-fetched," the Commission said in a statement carried by the state news agency Tass and read on the evening TV newscast.

The Commission defended its "invitation" to Shevardnadze to explain his intention to create the party, which many officials predict would precipitate a split in the 16.3-million-member ruling organisation.

Roh proposes plan for end to conflict

SEOUL, July 12: President Roh Tae-woo on Friday proposed a non-aggression declaration, a peace treaty and a unification march across the armed border to end his nation's confrontation with North Korea, reports AP.

Roh also said high-level talks between North and South Korea must resume immediately, indicating his acceptance of North Korea's proposal Thursday to hold another round of prime ministers' talks on August 27.

"We are now ready to discuss with the North any and all issues on order to remove the pain of separation, maintain peace and speed national unification," Roh said.

No reaction came immediately from communist North

Korea, divided from the South since 1945. The border between the Koreas is tightly sealed and is the most heavily fortified permanent demarcation in the world.

The proposals, made in a speech to the government's Advisory Council on Democratic and Peaceful Unification, reflected Roh's continuing campaign to encourage North Korea to open to the West.

The new thrust comes as both Koreas prepare to enter the United Nations in September and as the major powers with vested interests in the peninsula — the Soviet Union, Japan, China and the United States — have increased pressure to ease tensions.

Killings cast shadow over Y'slav peace

BELOGRADE, July 12: A spate of killings and violent clashes between rival ethnic groups in Yugoslavia has cast a shadow over a European Community peace plan to avert full scale civil war, reports Reuter.

Two policemen from the self-proclaimed independent state of Croatia, the country's second largest and predominantly Roman Catholic northern republic were killed in the latest violence.

One was shot in an ambush and the other was killed in an eight-hour gunbattle between Croatia's militia and a group of militant nationalists from neighbouring Serbia.

A Serbian nationalist was also killed in the fighting on Thursday around the Croatian town of Otsjek 150 km (90 miles) northwest of Belgrade. Three other people were wounded seriously.

It was the worst eruption of violence since the EC bro-

kered a fragile ceasefire and peace plan on Sunday to halt a slide towards civil war by the feuding republics and ethnic groups in the country of 23.5 million people.

As part of its peace plan the Community sent a 10 member advance team on Thursday into the northern republics of Croatia and Slovenia the scene of heavy fighting in recent weeks.

The group was preparing the ground for some 50 EC ob-

servers due to take up positions in the two breakaway republics to monitor the ceasefire.

Despite the efforts by the EC and the state presidency, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday widespread inter-ethnic fighting could break out at any time.

Spokesman Milan Gvero said Croatia, with some 4.5 million people including a minority of 600,000 Serbs, was complicating efforts to maintain the fragile ceasefire.

The well-armed militia in Croatia has clashed several times in recent days with militant nationalist in its large Serbian minority. Relations between the traditional rival republics of Croatia and Serbia are now on a hair trigger.

Serbia, the largest republic with eight million people, is predominantly Christian Orthodox and has been fighting to keep the country of feuding ethnic groups and religions united.

The recent clashes between Croats and Serbs followed a bloody confrontation between the Yugoslav army and the militia of Slovenia, Yugoslavia's wealthiest and most Westernised republic.

After Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence on June 25, the army stormed into Slovenia, which borders Italy, Austria and Hungary. A week of fighting left 64 people dead and caused 2.7 billion dollars worth of damage.

BRIEFLY

**Riyadh to buy 2,300 Humvees:** The Pentagon announced in Washington Thursday that Saudi Arabia had agreed to purchase 2,300 Humvee all-terrain military vehicles, as well as parts and equipment, together valued at 123 million Dollars, reports AP.

The Humvee, manufactured by the firm LTV, is the jeep's automotive successor. The 1.25 tonne four-wheel-drive vehicle can transport troops and arms, and can be equipped with a tow anti-tank missile launcher.

In a separate 350 million dollar accord, Saudi Arabia has accepted a service contract with the US aviation giant Boeing for the Kingdom's Awacs reconnaissance aircraft and KE3 in-flight refueling aircraft, the Pentagon said.

**Indonesian plane crashes:** An Indonesian aircraft crashed in Pekanbaru, east of Sumatra, killing five people on board, the Kompas daily reported in Jakarta Friday, reports Reuter.

It quoted a transport official as saying the light plane, owned by a state-owned plantation firm, crashed on Thursday shortly after leaving Pekanbaru Airport on its way to Medan.

The pilot, his two children and two other passengers were killed. An investigation is under way to find the cause of the crash.

**Satanic Verses' translator killed:** A Professor who translated Salman Rushdie's controversial book "The Satanic Verses" into Japanese was found dead Friday at his university campus, police said in Tokyo, reports Reuter.

The body of Hitoshi Igarashi, 44, was found with several stab wounds at the campus in Tsukuba, 60 km (37 miles) northeast of Tokyo, a police spokesman said.

British author Rushdie published the book in 1989, sparking a firestorm of protest from Muslims. The Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued an order calling on Muslims to kill him. Rushdie has lived in hiding ever since.

**British MP sentenced:** A left-wing British Member of Parliament was sentenced to 60 days in prison on Thursday in London for refusing to pay the poll tax — a deeply unpopular local authority tax the government has promised to scrap, reports Reuter.

Terry Fields, 54, an opposition Labour Party representative in the northern port city of Liverpool, had led a campaign against the tax, which prompted mass protests when it was introduced last year.

Its unpopularity was one reason for the downfall last November of its instigator, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Her successor John Major has said it will be replaced.

**More US spending for FP:** A resolution introduced Thursday recommends increasing US spending to 1.2 billion Dollar a year by the year 2000 on family planning and contraception programmes in developing countries, AP says from Washington.

The resolution, sponsored by Representative Peter Kostmayer, would affirm the country's support for the Amsterdam Declaration, a plan adopted by 79 countries in 1989 for controlling global population growth.

This year, Washington will spend about \$400 million on family planning and contraception programmes.

"Failure to curb the rate of world population growth will magnify the deterioration of the earth's environment and natural resources and undermine economic and social progress," Kostmayer's resolution says.

One section of the resolution calls for making contraceptives available to every man and woman by 2000.

**Bush to visit Japan:** President George Bush said Thursday he will visit Japan some time near the end of November, AP reports from Kennedypoint (Maine).

Bush made the announcement at a news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu.

"I was very pleased to firmly accept his very generous invitation," Bush said.

He said exact dates for the trip will be worked out at a later date.

**50 hurt in Tokyo gas leakage:** At least 50 factory workers and several passers-by were admitted to hospital in Fujinomya, 120 km (75 miles) west of Tokyo, Friday after poisonous chlorine gas leaked from a paper mill, police said, reports Reuter.

The almost colourless gas caught victims unawares, causing them to fight for breath, but no one was seriously hurt, a police spokesman said.

Police closed the area around the factory. Chlorine is used to bleach paper and pulp.



OSLJEK (Yugoslavia): Members of the Croatian special forces take cover as a hand grenade explodes near them as they try to force out Serbian Chetniks in Osljek, north eastern Croatia, Yugoslavia, July 11. The battle illustrates the deep divides and hatred between Yugoslavia's two largest nationalities. —AFP photo