

Saddam demanded one-third of Kuwait

CAIRO (Egypt), Aug 13: Kuwait's ruler has said for the first time that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein asked him to give up one-third of Kuwait's territories three months before Iraqi troops invaded the Emirate, reports AP.

Sheik Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah made the statement in an interview scheduled for publication Tuesday in the Cairo newspaper Al-Ahram.

The interview, conducted in Kuwait, was believed to be the first by the Emir since the Aug 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion.

"I say it for the first time, that he (Saddam) asked me for one-third of Kuwait," Sheik Jaber said. "I told him no one has such authority, not even the country's Emir."

The Emir did not specify which territories Iraq demanded. Iraq has long demanded Bubuyan and Warba, two strategic islands on the Iraqi border.

Sheik Jaber said Saddam asked him for permission to

construct oil and water pipelines between Iraq and Kuwait and then added that he wanted to build airports, housing units and schools alongside the pipeline.

He said the Iraqi leader made the demands in May, 1990 while the Emir was visiting Baghdad.

Sheik Jaber rejected the suggestions, saying Kuwait would lose its independence if it allowed Iraq to establish airports on Kuwaiti soil. But he said he promised Saddam the border dispute would soon be resolved and invited the Iraqi leader to visit Kuwait.

"I will come to Kuwait after three months. I do not need an invitation, protocol or a date, you will know then," Sheik Jaber quoted Saddam as replying.

"He came just in time, but with his tanks, aircraft, the military machine," Sheik Jaber commented.



LAHORE: Veteran centrist politician Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan (C) seated between former Premier Benazir Bhutto (R) and Jul leader Moulana Fazlurraiman (L) convenes the meeting attended by about two dozen opposition groups August 12 aimed at evolving a broader front to press demand for formation of national unit government.

Security at Calcutta Airport tightened

CALCUTTA, Aug 13: Security measures at Calcutta Airport have been tightened following the threat of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) to hijack planes, kidnap officials and sabotege, reports PTI.

Top officials of various security agencies at the airport and Indian Airlines officials held a meeting immediately on receipt of the threat and chalked out a plan of action to counter it.

The airport will be closed to visitors on August 15 as a precautionary measure.

Mohammed Nizam, Superintendent of Police told newsmen that all possible security measures were being taken for the safety of passengers, safe operation of aircraft and maintenance of vigil at the airport.

Off the Record

Travoltas thrilled

LOS ANGELES: John Travolta and his fiancée, actress Kelly Preston, are expecting a child and the couple are thrilled, a publicist said Monday, reports AP.

"They just discovered it. They are both ecstatic. John has a new movie coming out in October called 'Shout'. Now he has something to shout about today," publicist Paul Bloch said.

The baby is due in the spring.

Miss Preston and the actor became engaged last New Year's Eve. When asked the wedding date during a party this summer in Malibu, Travolta said the couple would be married soon.

Bloch said no date has been set.

Travolta, 36, who starred in "Grease," "Saturday Night Fever," "Urban Cowboy" and "Look Who's Talking," has never been married. It will be the second marriage for the 28-year-old actress.

Travolta met Miss Preston when they were filming "The Experts," which came out in 1988, Bloch said.

Stephanies, Michaels rule New York City

NEW YORK: Stephanie and Michael repeated as the most popular names for babies born in New York City last year and Michelle was the only new name on the Top 10 lists, the city Health Department said Monday, reports AP.

Michelle knocked Tiffany from the 10th spot on the girls' list, and Ashley rose from fourth place to third, switching places with Jennifer. Stephanie — given to 1,155 girls — was the champ for the second straight year.

Boys' names, which generally have longer periods of popularity, were led by Michael for the 11th consecutive year. There were 2,195 new Michaels. Anthony switched places with David to finish fourth, and Daniel switched places with Joseph to finish sixth, but the top 10 names were the same as last year.

The lists:

Girls — Stephanie, Jessica, Ashley, Jennifer, Amanda, Samantha, Nicole, Christina, Melissa and Michelle.

Boys — Michael, Christopher, Jonathan, Anthony, David, Daniel, Joseph, Matthew, John and Andrew.

Miller enchanted by Swedish theatre

STOCKHOLM (Sweden): American writer Arthur Miller was so impressed by a Swedish Royal Dramatic Theatre performance in New York that he'll come here to direct one of his own plays, the theatre manager said Monday, reports AP.

It would be the second time Miller has directed one of his plays, said Lars Lofgren, who met the playwright during the New York International Festival of the Arts in June.

Miller, 75, is directing the London production of his new play, "The Ride Down Mt. Morgan," which opens Oct 23.

Miller will begin rehearsals in January for "Death of a Salesman," which will open April 24 in Stockholm, Lofgren said.

At the New York festival Miller saw the Swedish theatre's performance of one of his favourite plays, "Miss Julie," by August Strindberg, Lofgren said.

Miller told Lofgren of his interest in Swedish theatre, so Lofgren said he later invited him to Sweden to direct "Death of a Salesman."

Dame Anderson hospitalised

SANTA BARBARA (Calif): Dame Judith Anderson, the actress best known for her roles in the TV soap opera "Santa Barbara" and the film classic "Rebecca," was being treated Monday for an undisclosed ailment, a hospital spokeswoman said, reports AP.

The 93-year-old Australian native was admitted to St. Francis Hospital on Aug 4 for tests. No other details were disclosed.

"She is alert and responding normally. That's all we can say," said hospital spokeswoman Debbie Cloud.

Anderson's long career has spanned stage, movies and television. She may be best known as the malcontent housekeeper Mrs. Danvers in the 1940 Alfred Hitchcock movie "Rebecca." She was given the title of dame by Queen Elizabeth II in 1960.

She played the grande dame in NBC's "Santa Barbara" from 1984 to 1987.

BRIEFLY

20 injured in Indian bomb blast:

Some 20 people were injured in a bomb attack late Monday evening in a busy marketplace of the northern Indian city of Jammu, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Tuesday from New Delhi.

Unidentified attackers riding a motorised Pedicab hurled a bomb at shoppers in Jammu, the winter capital of troubled Kashmir state, PTI said, adding that three of the victims were hospitalised in critical condition.

So far no one has claimed responsibility for the bomb attack in the Hindu-majority city.

Report on Third World arms sales misleading: US: The State Department on Monday rejected as misleading a report asserting that the United States has become the chief arms supplier to Third World countries, AP from Washington says.

The report by the Congressional Research Service, released over the weekend, said US military exports totalled \$18.5 billion last year, up from \$7.8 billion in 1989. It said Soviet weapons sales declined to \$12.1 billion from \$12.7 billion.

State Department press officer Cynthia Whittlesey said the report was founded on dollar-value comparisons, which she called a misleading index.

"In dollar terms, the largest share of US military exports are not for weapons but for construction, spare parts, and support," she said.

Perez asked to press Iraq to free Kuwaitis:

Kuwait has asked the UN Secretary-General to press Iraq to release 2,479 residents of the Emirate, including 1,839 Kuwaitis, who it said were still imprisoned or detained in Iraq, reports Reuter from United Nations.

In a letter to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar circulated on Monday, Kuwaiti UN representative Mohammad Abul Hasan said he hoped all states and international organisations would condemn the "inhumane practices of the Iraq authorities in detaining them."

12 Chilean prisoners flee from jail:

Twelve prisoners escaped from a jail in the Chilean capital through a 30-metre (100-foot) tunnel on Monday, Deputy Interior Minister Belisario Velasco told reporters, says Reuter from Santiago.

The prisoners tunneled into a court building where they tied up a court official and fled. They had earlier taken prison guards hostage, police said.

Police said the tunnel had been used in April by three other criminals to escape.

Two Albanians killed:

Two Albanians were killed Monday when Yugoslav border guards opened fire to prevent their group from crossing into Yugoslavia, Belgrade television said, reports AP from Belgrade.

The incident happened on the border near Djakovica, in the Serbian province of Kosovo, when "Yugoslav border guards were attacked by a group of Albanians," the report said.

The Yugoslavs opened fire after an unspecified number of Albanians used hand grenades in their attempt to cross into Yugoslavia illegally, the TV report said.

About 90 per cent of Kosovo's population are ethnic Albanians.

Serbia last year placed the province under direct rule and keeps order with thousands of security forces.

At least 60 ethnic Albanians, pressing for autonomy and possible union with Albania, have been killed in clashes with Serbian forces over the last two years.

Albania, claiming clashes could escalate, placed its border troops on higher alert last Wednesday.

Kaifu arrives in Mongolia:

Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu arrived in the Mongolian capital, Ulan Bator, Tuesday for a 26-hour visit, reports Reuter from Ulan Bator.

Kaifu is the first head of government from a non-communist country to visit Mongolia since it was founded as an independent state in 1924.

He was expected to announce a package of aid for Mongolia's battered economy, hard hit by a cut in aid and supplies from the Soviet Union, its long-time mentor.

August violence claims 200 lives in Peru:

Two hundred people have been killed in political violence in Peru so far this August, making it one of the bloodiest months this year, the head of the United Nations Human Rights Commission said Monday, AP reports from Lima.

Sen. Enrique Bernales, who also heads the Peruvian Senate commission on violence, told reporters at least 30 members of Peru's armed forces have been killed in four guerrilla ambushes this past two weeks.

"We're very worried by this past week, which really constitutes a savagery in the amount of violence produced," Bernales said.

Floods kill 456 in China

BELING: Aug 13: Five days of heavy rains and severe flooding have killed more than 400 people in the southwestern province of Sichuan, an official report said Tuesday, reports AP.

Downpours hit 36 counties near the Yangtze River and its tributaries last week, causing 456 deaths and damage to 650 million kilograms (1.4 billion pounds) of grain, the Farmer's Daily reported.

That raised the nationwide death toll to 2,460 in this year's unusually heavy storms and flooding. That figure is based on information from local governments.

10-yr-old Indian girl forced to marry elderly Saudi

NEW DELHI, Aug 13: An elderly Saudi Arabian man accused at the weekend of buying a 10-year-old Indian girl and forcing her to marry him may be part of a big racket in child-brides, members of parliament said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Yahya Mohammad al-Saghr, 60, will be put on trial in Delhi today on charges that he bought Amina Begum from her parents in the southern city of Hyderabad for 5,000 rupees (240 dollars).

Police say he married her against her will and was trying to smuggle her out of the country.

Madan Lal Khurana of the Bharatiya Janata Party said the case was part of a large-scale racket in which young girls from India were sent abroad, mainly to the Middle East, for immoral purpose.

He demanded a statement from the Home Ministry and immediate steps to end the alleged traffic in child-brides.

Amina's plight was uncovered when an Indian Airlines flight attendant grew suspicious when the girl cried uncontrollably during the flight from Hyderabad to New Delhi. Challenged by the air host-

ess, the Saudi produced a marriage certificate identifying Amina as a 32-year-old woman. The airline crew called the Delhi Airport Controltower, which in turn alerted police.

Delhi police said the Saudi man had a passport and marriage certificate for another young woman and pictures of four other girls in his possession at the time of his arrest.

Police have ordered Amina to undergo a medical examination. The results will be sent to the court as evidence, a police spokesman said.

Manoranjan Bhakta of the ruling Congress Party said the child-bride racket was not just confined to Hyderabad but "was rampant in many other states, too."

He said reporters of similar cases have appeared in newspapers for years but no government had ever taken action.

Child marriages were common in India before independence in 1947 as a way of providing protection to un-

wanted girl children in poor families.

The child Marriage Restraint Act of 1978 prescribes 18 as the marriage age for girls and 21 for boys, but the law is not enforced effectively, sociologists say.

On Monday, a New Delhi court ordered Amina should be kept at a women's home for another day, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency said.

The child, still dazed, sat through the 15-minute court proceedings, PTI said.

Full details of the charges Al-Saghr will face have not yet been disclosed, though PTI said he was accused of "wrongful confinement and alleged sexual harassment."

Al-Saghr's passport had been impounded and he was remanded in police custody till today, PTI said.

Curious onlookers thronged the court room to glimpse the "child bride" and armed police threw a cordon around her outside the court.



BELING: Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu (L) watches as Chinese President Yang Shangkun (C) greets the Japanese Premier's wife Sachiyo prior to a banquet August 12. Japan will press China to work with the international community on conventional weapons reduction and human rights.

Kuwait no longer blacklists US companies

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 13: Kuwait's UN Mission said Monday that because of its urgent need for post-war reconstruction, the Kuwaiti government no longer blacklists American companies that trade with Israel, reports AP.

"The fact is that during reconstruction, we have traded with companies that have made other agreements with the Israeli government," said Masoud F M al-Fehaid, press officer of Kuwait's UN Mission.

Sharif a product of rigged elections, says Nasrullah

LAHORE, Pakistan, Aug 13: Pakistani opposition parties holding a one-day conference on Monday demanded fresh national elections under a neutral caretaker government, reports Reuter.

A so-called "All-Parties Conference" convened by veteran politician Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan alleged in a statement that the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was the product of "rigged elections" last October.

It called for the formation of a "neutral caretaker government" to hold fresh elections within 90 days.

The conference was at-

USSR favours Mujahideen talks with Afghan govt

ISLAMABAD, Aug 13: A senior Soviet envoy ended two days of talks with Pakistani authorities and Afghan Mujahideen on Monday, insisting the warring parties talk to each other to end the 13-year-old Afghan conflict, reports Reuter.

Soviet Ambassador-at-large Nikolai Kozzyrev and Pakistani officials agreed to continue the talks to try to reach a consensus on a recent United Nations five-point peace plan for Afghanistan, a Pakistani spokesman said.

The Soviet side stressed it was for the Afghans to "meet among themselves and decide their future," Foreign Ministry Secretary, Shaharyar Mohammad Khan told a news conference.

Pakistan told the Soviet delegation that the Mujahideen

Trail of Bakhtiar's assassins leads police to French alps

PARIS, Aug 13: Police picked up the trail Monday of two of the three men suspected of assassinating former Iranian Premier Shahpour Bakhtiar at his home outside Paris last week, reports AP.

Bakhtiar, 76, was found dead last Thursday, his throat slit. Police believe he was killed two days earlier by his last known visitors, three Iranian men.

A taxi driver in Savoy, along France's Alpine borders with Switzerland and Italy, spotted two of the suspects Wednesday, a day after the killing, the Interior Ministry said in a communique Monday.

The driver took them from the ski resort of Anney to Sallanches, from where they would have been able to cross the frontier to Italy or Switzerland, the communique said.

The men, identified as Mohammed Azadi, 31, and Ali Rad Vakili, 32, were carrying Turkish passports, the communique said.

The Interior Ministry said that the driver recognized his passengers as wanted men after photographs of Bakhtiar's three visitors were distributed

Saturday to news media.

There was no word of the third suspect, Farouq Boyer Ahmadi, whose car was found in central Paris Thursday. Traces of blood, not yet identified, were found in the car.

Ahmadi, a long-time friend of Bakhtiar's family and a fellow exile, was one of only 20 people admitted to his guarded home at Suresnes without invitation.

Police officers guarding the home searched Ahmadi and the others before allowing them to enter the house Tuesday. Police said knives from Bakhtiar's kitchen were used to cut his throat and stab to death his secretary, Fouroush Katbeh.

Iranian opposition figures, including former President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr and Reza Pahlavi, son of the former Shah of Iran, have blamed the killings on the Islamic fundamentalist regime in Tehran.

Iran has blamed the killings on rivalry between opposition groups, or as a plot to undermine Tehran's improving relations with the West, particularly France.

Iran on Monday officially denied involvement in the

5 members of a Sinhalese family hacked to death

COLOMBO, Aug 13: Tamil separatist rebels hacked to death five members of a Sinhalese family, including a pregnant woman, in Eastern Sri Lanka, police said today, reports Reuter.

About 30 rebel dragged a couple and their three children out of their home in Amparar district on Monday night and killed them, they said.

Police had no motive for the murders.

Iraq shows supergun to UN team

BAGHDAD, Aug 13: Iraq has shown its Supergun to the UN arms control team sent to destroy it. Its barrel is 52.2 metres (172 feet) long and 350 mm (14 inches) across.

Wolfgang Butler, head of a UN Ballistics team monitoring Iraqi compliance with Gulf War ceasefire terms, told Reuter on Monday they saw the giant cannon in mountains north of Baghdad on Sunday and found it "assembled but not operational."

President Saddam Hussein's attempts to build giant artillery pieces, including one which might have been able to bombard Israel, antagonised the west last year and helped set the stage for the Gulf War.

A big racket in child-brides unearthed