

Bush cancels trip to Asia

WASHINGTON, Nov 6: President George Bush, under fire for spending too much time on foreign policy has postponed a trip to Japan, south Korea, Singapore and Australia that had been scheduled to begin later this month, the White House said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"The President regrets this decision, but believes that uncertainty over the congressional calendar requires this change," spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said.

He said Bush wanted to remain in Washington during the final days of the congressional session because of expected action on an unemployment benefits extension and possible votes on an economic growth package.

"At this point, where the economy is sluggish and we've got important economic legislation coming through at the end of this session—that's what it is we want to be here

to deal with," Fitzwater said.

Bush's Asian trip, which had been scheduled to begin on November 27, would have been his third foreign journey this month. He was in Madrid last week for the start of the Middle East peace conference and departs on Wednesday for NATO summit in Rome.

The republican President's political opponents have moved to exploit his travels just as he begins his 1992 re-election campaign on the eve of Bush's departure for Italy, the democratic national committee began selling T-shirts that say "George Bush went to Rome and all I got was this lousy recession."

On the back of the T-shirt is the legend: George Bush—anywhere but America tour, followed by a list of his trips this year.



MANILA: Former Philippine first lady Imelda Marcos shakes hand with crowds at the suburban Quezon city hall after posting 75,000 pesos bail money for the three cases of tax evasion filed by state prosecutors. —AFP/UNB photo

Senate confirms Gates' appointment

WASHINGTON, Nov 6: The US Senate confirmed Robert Gates on Tuesday to be the Central Intelligence Agency's 15th director, reports Reuter.

Gates, 48, easily won the Senate majority needed for confirmation midway through the vote.

Opponents said they still had doubts that Gates had told all he knew about the 1986 Iran-contra Director and accused him of slanting intelligence to support cold war policies of former president Ronald Reagan.

But supporters said they were confident Gates is innocent of those allegations and said he has the experience needed to reorganise US intelligence agencies in response to the break up of the Soviet Union.

Off the Record

KGB steals Sakharov's Nobel gold medal

OSLO: The widow of Soviet Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov said on Tuesday the KGB had stolen his 1985 prize winner's gold medal, reports Reuter.

Yelena Bonner also said the Norwegian Nobel Institute had turned down a request she made in January to delete Sakharov's name from the list of winners to protest at the 1990 award to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The 1985 prize was awarded to Sakharov for his work as a dissident physicist and human rights campaigner.

Bonner asked for her husband's name to be deleted in January after 14 people died in Soviet military actions in Lithuania. But she said she would not make any further protest during a visit to Oslo this week.

"I can't give the medal back—the KGB stole the medal and the diploma long ago," she told reporters. The winner's gold medal, named after Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite, weighs 200 grams.

She also said she would not try to return the prize money. The 1985 prize was worth 6,300,000 Swedish crowns (1,05,100 dollars at current exchange rates). Some of the money remained, but much of it had been used on medical bills or given to charity.

"The fact that Sakharov won the prize is a historical fact," said Geir Lundestad, head of the Nobel Institute, reiterating comments made in January. His name cannot be deleted.

No Nobel laureate has ever returned the Peace Prize, although late Vietnamese communist leader Le Duc Tho turned down the 1973 award which he won jointly with US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for efforts to end the Vietnam war.

A friend of Israel indeed

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir expressed deep sorrow Tuesday over the death of British billionaire Robert Maxwell, describing him as a friend who had offered to put his foreign contacts at Israel's service, reports AP.

"With great sorrow, I heard about the untimely death of Robert Maxwell, God bless his memory," Shamir said.

"I knew him, especially in recent times, as a person who was greatly interested in the Israeli economy, invested money in Israel and offered to put his wide contacts on the international arena at Israel's service."

"Maxwell was a passionate friend of Israel and we are sorry about this heavy tragedy," Shamir said in a statement.

Former Premier Shimon Peres, of the opposition Labour Party, also sent a telegram of condolences at the death of Maxwell "was one man but actually a whole empire of thoughts, deeds and enterprises."

Maxwell had large financial holdings in Israel, was active in Jewish immigration issues and had close ties with many of the country's leaders. News of his death dominated Israeli radio and television.

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported in his recent book "The Samson Option" that Maxwell had close links with the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. Maxwell and the Mirror Group newspapers filed libel suits against Hersh and his publisher, Faber and Faber, who in turn countersued.

1,12,000 Jews settled in WB, Gaza so far: mild US scolding for Israel

Bandits kill two in Sind

KARACHI, Nov 6: Bandits killed two people and kidnapped 29 in a series of attacks in southern Pakistan, police said today, reports AP.

The two died in an attack on Tuesday in Sukkur, 225 miles (360 km) northeast of Karachi, and 29 were abducted in five towns in the rural interior of Sindh province.

Bandits also shot and wounded three people when they stopped a bus at Ghotki, 40 miles (64 km) northeast of Sukkur, and robbed the passengers.

Police say they have killed more than 500 bandits in the past year in operations against their hideouts in forests along the Indus river.

JERUSALEM, Nov 6: Some 20,000 Jews settled in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in the first nine months of this year, raising the number of Jews living among the 1.75 million Palestinians there to about 1,12,000, reports Reuter.

A statement released on Tuesday by the International Relations Task Force said, a similar growth rate was expected in the coming year. The figures did not include Jerusalem.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon has spearheaded a building boom for Jews in the occupied territories since

Washington began a drive after the Gulf war for a Middle East peace it hoped would be based on Israel trading land for peace.

The Israeli government is adamantly opposed to giving up the occupied lands which it sees as vital to security and says belongs to the Jewish people by biblical right.

US Secretary of State James Baker scolded Israel on Tuesday for launching for a new settlement on the disputed Golan Heights less than a day after holding a first round of direct peace talks with Syria.

Israel captured the heights from Syria, the Gaza strip from Egypt and Arab east Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East war. It annexed East Jerusalem immediately after the war and the Heights in 1981.

A Washington report says: US Secretary of State James Baker gave Israel a mild scolding on Tuesday for launching a new settlement on the disputed Golan Heights less than a day after winding up the first round of direct

peace talks with Syria.

"What I think is needed now, more than anything else, are steps that would create a positive environment for these talks," Baker said at a White House news conference.

"It's hard for us to see how inaugurating a new settlement now can help the negotiating process."

Baker's comment came in response to a question about the settling of 70 Soviet immigrants in prefabricated houses at Kela, which is perched in a rocky area of the Golan Heights captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war. The move underscored

Israel's determination to hang on to the territory despite Damascus's insistence that the Golan must be returned.

Israel says permanent control of the strategic plateau is Galilee region to the west were frequently shelled by Syria.

Steps or actions that are provocative, or unilateral steps that can be seen by one side or the other as provocative—whether they are provocative or not—are hardly likely I think to build the kind of climate that would serve the cause of peace, Baker said.

The Secretary's low-key criticism came at a question and answer session that focused mainly on President George Bush's visit to Rome for the November 7-8 NATO summit.

Baker was generally upbeat about prospects for progress in the Middle East peace talks which ended on Sunday without accord on a time or place for a next round of bargaining.

Pak Army Chief in Iran for defence cooperation

CYPRUS, Nov 6: Iran's President Hashemi Rafsanjani met with Pakistan's Army Chief of Staff Gen. Asif Nawaz in Tehran Tuesday, Tehran radio reported, reports AP.

The broadcast, monitored in Nicosia, said Mohsen Rezaei, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, was also present at the meeting.

Rafsanjani told Nawaz that "one of the reasons for sincerity in relations between Iran and Pakistan is (frequent) meetings of military officials of both countries, and their discussions in various fields."

He added that "with respect to the many technical and research facilities in Iran and Pakistan, the two countries can have more cooperation."

Nawaz, who was in Beijing shortly before going to Tehran, gave Rafsanjani a report of his talks with Iran's military officials, the radio said.

His visit comes at a time when US military officials have expressed concern about a "military axis" involving Iran, Pakistan and China.

Nawaz's trip follows a weekend visit by Chinese President Yang Shangkun

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Cairo denounces new Jews settlement

CAIRO, Nov 6: Egypt on Tuesday denounced Israel's inauguration the previous day of a new Jewish settlement in the formerly Golan Heights and described the move as an obstacle to the current peace process, reports AFP.

A Foreign Ministry statement also urged Israel "not to undermine the chances for peace in the Middle East."

"The creation by Israel of this new settlement constitutes a flagrant violation of the U.N Security Council resolutions and the fourth Geneva Convention," the statement said.

"Egypt denounces all measures aimed at changing the demographic status of the occupied territories and believes that such measures counter the Madrid peace conference."

Croatian troops shell Serbian town

BELGRADE, Nov 6: Croatian forces shelled the Serbian town of Apatin late Tuesday in their second reported attack on Serbian territory in 24 hours, the official Tanjug news agency said today, reports AP.

The Belgrade-based news agency said a dozen shells landed shortly before midnight on Apatin, situated along the Danube river in Vojvodina province some 220 kilometers (130 miles) northwest of Belgrade and about 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of the besieged Croatian city of Osijek.

It gave no casualty figures from the attack, which came hours after the latest European Community-sponsored peace meeting on Yugoslavia broke up in failure in the Hague. The meeting had yielded another ceasefire agreement between Croatia and the Serb-dominated federal army, but the truce was quickly broken.

Maxwell falls from yacht near Canary islands, dies

LONDON, Nov 6: Robert Maxwell, who escaped the Holocaust and immigrated to Britain in 1940, personally ran the empire. His death has raised questions about the future of his debt-burdened holdings, which include New York's Daily News.

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The Czechoslovak-born "He was larger than life,"

British Conservative Party lawmaker Anthony Beaumont-Dark said. "If you wrote a film about his life it would be rejected as unrealistic."

British Prime Minister John Major called Maxwell "a great character who will be missed."

Maxwell's body was found 32 kilometers (20 miles) northwest of Grand Canary island after an extensive air-and-sea search, said Fernando Cano, spokesman at the rescue center in Madrid.

The body was taken by helicopter to the Gando air base on Grand Canary island.

The cause of death was not immediately known, but an autopsy was planned for Wednesday.

Maxwell was last seen alive on the deck of his yacht at 4:45 a.m. (0445 GMT), said Johan Campi, a Daily News spokesman.

Several hours later, a business call arrived from New York and the crew discovered Maxwell was not on board. The captain, Gus Rankin, radioed a distress call, said Campi.

In London, Charles Wilson, director of Maxwell's mirror Group Newspapers, said there had been no suggestion of foul play. "We can only assume that Maxwell slipped and fell overboard," he said.

"Everyone is extremely shocked," said David Shaffer, president and chief operating officer of most of Maxwell Communication Corps US operations, based in Greenwich, Conn.



File photo dated March '87 shows media magnate Robert Maxwell, 68, who is reported missing from his yacht 'Lady Ghislaine' off Tenerife. —AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Labour leads in opinion poll: The latest British opinion poll gives Labour a lead of more than five points over the ruling Tories, reports AFP from London.

The evening Standard's monthly compilation of the findings published in the major papers during October showed Labour higher at 44.4 per cent to 39.2 per cent for 6th conservatives.

The previous tallies had the Tories a whisker in front at 40.2 per cent to Labour's 39.4.

Troops overrun LTTE bases: Sri Lankan troops overran three Tamil rebel bases in the island's east, a military spokesman said Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Troops recovered large stocks of explosives and ammunition from the bases in the thick jungles of the Amparai district on Tuesday, he said.

In the eastern Batticaloa district, troops shot dead one rebel during a cordon and search operation in Tuesday.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are fighting for a homeland in the island's north and east.

54 killed in China bus mishap: Fifty-four people were killed when an overcrowded bus plunged 75 metres (250 feet) down a cliff into a river in south China's Guizhou province, a local newspaper said, reports Reuter from Beijing.

Rescuers saved four injured passengers after the accident on October 30, said Saturday's Guizhou daily, received in Beijing on Wednesday.

Police have arrested the driver who tried to escape the scene of the province's worst traffic accident, the newspaper said.

The newspaper said the bus was "severely overcrowded." Authorities are investigating the cause of the accident.

Sikh militants kill 6 policemen: Sikh militants killed six auxiliary policemen and their regular officer while most of them were unconscious from eating a substance slipped into their food by a colleague, Indian police said today, reports Reuter from Amritsar.

Police reconstructing the deaths of the seven men guarding the Punjab village of Wadala Kalan, some 50 km (30 miles) south of the holy Sikh city of Amritsa, said six of them were unconscious when shot.

The other, the inspector in charge of the group, was apparently semi-conscious when he saw four militants and one of his own colleagues stealing their weapons.

The inspector opened fire, killing the colleague, and the militants sprayed the area with bullets, killing the officer and six auxiliaries, they said.

Police said the colleague, Shivraj Singh, appeared to have slipped something into food he supplied to mark Tuesday's festival of lights celebrations marking the Hindu new year, which nearly all Indians mark whether Hindu or not.

90 bandits killed in Pakistan: Pakistani commandos killed about 90 bandits in raids on hideouts in southern forests, official sources said today, reports Reuter from Karachi.

"Numerous bodies of bandits are scattered in the forests," one source said.

He said about 90 were killed in three days along the river Indus during an operation codenamed "forest storm."

A Defence Ministry spokesman confirmed the paramilitary Mehran force commando raids which ended on Saturday, but gave no figures for those killed.

The sources said more than 7,000 security personnel took part in the operation, blocking escape routes and storming hideouts used by the heavily-armed bandits that have long terrorised parts of rural Sindh.



LONDON: Elizabeth Taylor waves when she and her new husband Larry Fortensky arrive at London's newly opened Mirabelle Restaurant. The actress is on a fund-raising trip to the UK in aid of the AIDS Crisis Trust. —AFP/UNB photo

Muscovites battle over crumbs of bread

MOSCOW: Angry shouting shoppers battled over bread Tuesday in a city growing increasingly irritated over declining food supplies and looming price increases, reports AP.

"Don't you see there's a line? Get in line! Get in line!" shouted an elderly woman standing in front of a swarm of shoppers who pushed and fought their way to get the last loaf of white bread at a store in central Moscow.

Moscow's bakeries are turning out 2,500 metric tons of the usually plentiful Soviet staple daily — as much or more than last year. But panic buying following predictions of an inadequate grain harvest and long lines have drawn the attention of President Mikhail S. Gorbachev and other government leaders.

"The supply of bread in Moscow, despite the fact that the production of bread was increased, does not satisfy the demand. Lines in the city are really huge," said presidential spokesman Andrei Grachev.

Grachev told reporters that the bread shortage was one of the topics discussed at Monday's meeting of the governing State Council. He did not say whether any decisions were made.

Last week, the government reported the 1991 Soviet grain harvest will be about a third smaller than last year. About 165 million metric tons has been gathered this year, compared with 237 million metric tons last year, according to the State Statistics Committee.

Bureaucrats seek hard currency from journalists for divulging news

MOSCOW, Nov 6: Bureaucrats in the cash-starved Soviet and Russian governments are discovering a way to turn a quick profit from the glare of world news for a price, reports AP.

Foreign journalists, and some of their Soviet counterparts, say officials increasingly are demanding hard currency for information or access to public facilities they administer. The result, they fear, will be more expensive and less accessible news.

While so-called "checkbook

journalism" exists in some other countries, it was rare in the Soviet Union until the breakdown of political and economic control after the August putsch.

That breakdown, combined with low pay, inflation and a blurred line between public service and private enterprise, has led some Soviet officials to use their positions for profit.

French and American television networks say they've paid for Soviet-made video clips inside Lenin's tomb, the Russian republic's chief prosec-

utor's office admits charging for "creative work," and foreign journalists say they are routinely asked to pay for access to news.

Talk of other fees abounds, but instances are hard to prove.

"It's certainly going to have a dampening effect" on news-gathering, said Stephen Handelman, who is vice president of the Foreign Correspondents Association in Moscow and correspondent for the Toronto Star.

The reformist newspaper

Kuranty last month listed fees charged by Soviet and local officials: Dirs 1,000 to interview a prison inmate on death row and Dirs 1,000 for a ride in a Soviet police car on patrol.

Payments are required in foreign currency, preferably US dollars. Until the rouble becomes more valuable or convertible on world markets, Soviet journalists fear they may be at a disadvantage covering their own country.

"If you start charging for information, even the right to

be at a certain place, then you're immediately raising questions about the information, and that creates a credibility gap," said Handelman.

When the Moscow bureau of British Broadcasting Corp Television News asked last month for an interview with Russian chief prosecutor Valentin Stepanov, a staff member said the session would cost US \$250.

BBC-TV correspondent Ben Brown said he did not agree to the payment but received the interview anyway and never

paid.

During a meeting last week with Soviet and foreign journalists, a Stepanov spokesman confirmed his office charges Dirs 250 for what it calls "creative work" by Stepanov. He did not say what Stepanov does with the money.

At the same meeting, representatives from the Soviet Interior and Defence ministries said they require foreign television companies to sign contracts for "joint video production" that include fees

for transportation to the site of a news event and use of facilities.

Ministry officials said fees depend on the amount of time required by journalists, and added they disapproved of the charges demanded by Stepanov, said Jonathan Steele, president of the Foreign Correspondents Association.

The practice is growing outside government also.

The Associated Press earlier this month was approached by the editor of a

Soviet newspaper and offered exclusive photographs of the interior of Lenin's Mausoleum for Dirs 5,000. The AP declined the offer.

The Lenin photographs later were published in the daily newspaper Pravda, and Soviet-made video clips from the inside of the tomb were shown this week on France's TF1 and America's ABC television networks. Spokesmen for the two television companies said they paid for the footage, which have not been shown on Soviet television.