

Emergence of Muslim republics worries Israel

JERUSALEM, Aug 29: Israel's Chief of Staff said on Wednesday it would not be in Israel's interests if independent Muslim republics emerged from the Soviet Union, reports Reuter.

"New Muslim republics in Asia don't seem to me to be something that will add to our health, at least in the long term," Lieutenant General Ehud Barak told Israel Television.

Some 50 million Muslims live in the Soviet Union's Central Asian republics. One of them, Uzbekistan, said on Wednesday it was drawing up a declaration of independence and some 30,000 people demonstrated for independence in Azerbaijan.

Barak also said the victory of "people power" in the Soviet Union had not ended its role as a world arms supplier.

"We've seen the tanks withdrawn from the squares of Moscow, but we don't know if the tanks crated up for shipment to Syria have been withdrawn," he said.

Barak made his remarks while being interviewed on a tug-of-war between Israel's defence establishment and Finance Ministry over next year's budget.

He said the army needed an increase of 425 million dollars for missile programmes and a spy satellite, adding that Iraq's conventional ballistic missile attacks on Israel in the Gulf war had proved the need for high-tech weapons.

The Finance Ministry wants to cut the defence budget by 213 million dollars to reduce a massive deficit and to support an influx of more than 300,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants since 1989.

Lenin's remains may be removed from Red Square Soviet N-arms to stay under central control: Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Aug 29: Russian leader Boris Yeltsin said on Wednesday that new steps were being taken on safeguard and maintain central control over the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, reports Reuter.

He told a meeting of Russian emigres he had discussed this issue with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev after the collapse of last week's coup by hardline communists, top army officers and members of the security services.

A decision was taken to have the country's security council and leaders of all republics examine the problem, he said.

"In view of the fact that the Ukraine has declared itself a nuclear free Republic, its nuclear weapons will be moved to the Russian Federation," Yeltsin said.

He did not suggest that Russia, the biggest Soviet

Republic, was assuming control over any of the country's nuclear arsenal. Soviet authorities have already moved weapons from separatist and other areas regarded as unsafe.

About 85 per cent of Soviet nuclear weapons are on Russian territory, with the remainder in Kazakhstan, the Ukraine and Byelorussia — until recent events considered safe havens of central control.

Western leaders expressed concern over the control of the Soviet nuclear arsenal during the coup when Gorbachev was held incommunicado by KGB agents for three days at his holiday home in the Crimea.

The political turmoil that has swept the Soviet Union the aftermath of the coup, with the Ukraine and other republics declaring independence, has raised further worries about who controls the nuclear trigger.

But new Defence Minister

Yevgeny Shaposhnikov has given repeated assurances that there was no danger of control over nuclear weapons being lost during or after the coup. He replaced Marshal Dmitry Yazov, arrested for his role in the plot.

Moscow Mayor Gavrill Popov said on Wednesday the remains of Vladimir Lenin, founder of the Soviet Union and fallen idol of communism, may be removed from Red Square mausoleum to his native provincial town.

Lenin's disappearance from the Kremlin pantheon for heroes of Soviet history would fit in with the anti-communist revolution sweeping the Soviet Union following last week's failed coup against President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"Some absolutely legitimate proposals are being forwarded under which Lenin would be buried beside his mother" in the Bolshevik revolutionary

leader's Russian hometown of Ulyanovsk, Popov told a news conference in Berlin.

Popov, a radical market reformer and close ally of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, said Lenin had asked to be buried beside his mother in his last testament.

He gave no other details on a possible burial of Lenin's embalmed body, which has been on display in his Red Square mausoleum since his death in 1924.

Thousands of Muscovites still devoted to communism have visited the mausoleum in recent days, fearing the long glorified architect of the Soviet state and towering theorist of state socialism could vanish into the ground.

Several monuments to the Bolshevik Revolution, including the statues of Soviet security police founder Felix Dzerzhinsky, have been felled in the jubilation over the collapse of the hardline coup.

Off the Record



Iron Lady victim of slump

LONDON: Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has fallen victim to the slump in Britain's housing market, her estate agents said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Thatcher, Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, has been forced to slash 80,000 pounds sterling (1,35,000 Dollars) off the price of a house she put on the market 10 weeks ago.

The housing slump has been caused by a policy of high interest rates she introduced during her last months in office.

"They were keen to sell the house and thought this was a more realistic price," a spokeswoman for Keith Cardale Groves estate agents said. "They have had no firm offers yet."

The neo-georgian, four-bedroom residence she bought as a retirement home is now on the market for 5,95,000 pounds (one million Dollars). Thatcher and her husband Denis have already moved into a new house in London's fashionable Belgravia area.

Arts summit to promote harmony

ROME: Writers, painters and other artists from some 25 countries meet in Venice on Thursday to plan an ambitious, four-yearly "arts olympics" festival aimed at promoting world harmony, reports Reuter.

Among the guests will be US author Susan Sontag, French actor Alain Delon, Paris fashion stylist Pierre Cardin and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra Music Director Lorin Maazel. Along with a host of painters, architects, musicians and arts administrators, they will discuss the role of the arts as an instrument for reducing world tension, organisers say.

Events this month in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union have underlined the importance of the initiative.

"It's an experiment, a leap in the dark," said Co-Chairman Gianni de Michelis, Italy's Foreign Minister and a prominent resident of Venice. "Let's see if it can give birth to more international cooperation."

The so-called arts summit is being financed by the World Arts Forum, an independent foundation set up a year ago in Geneva by Klaus Schwab, President of the World Economic Forum which hosts an annual meeting of world leaders in Davos, Switzerland. The estimated cost is 500,000 dollars.

East Germany's hospital horrors

BERLIN: Germans are riveted by accusations that former East Germany's top hospital tinkered with the hormones of young girls to make them super athletes and prepared donors for organ transplants before they were dead, reports AP.

"It sounds like a horror scene from Dr. Frankenstein's gruesome gallery," the Luebecker Nachrichten newspaper said in an editorial.

Nkvert Peleff, the head of a physicians group demanded a probe of doctors who worked under the old communist regime and said the reports evoke the hideous human experimentation of the Nazi era.

A wedding-out process is needed that is "analogous to the de-nazification" programmes carried out after World War II, Karsten Vilmar, president of the Federal Chamber of Physicians, said in an interview on Saarland state radio.

In recent days, scores of media reports have focused on allegations of medical abuse at the 2,000-bed Charite, which for four decades was the showplace of Communist medical technology.

The newsweekly Der Spiegel said in its latest edition that prospective organ donors — people critically injured in accidents, for example — were shuttled hundreds of miles (kilometers) to the hospital before they were clinically dead.

The magazine, citing hospital records and staff interviews, said four severely injured people died shortly after they were taken great distances to the hospital in 1988.



VILNIUS: Lithuanian soldiers guarding the parliament take a break with their girl friends in Vilnius Aug 28. — AFP/UNB photo

Victims of political police

RIO DE JANEIRO: At least 13 political prisoners taken during Brazil's 1964-1985 military rule were buried in a common grave in a poor section of Rio, a human rights organization reported Wednesday, says AFP.

Flora Abreu, President of "no more torture" told reporters that her private organization would press the government to open a mass grave in the Albuquerque cemetery immediately in order to identify the victims.

Since May, the group has been investigating records on corpses at the medical legal institute, Abreu said the records indicated that the 13 prisoners, most of them students belonging to leftwing organizations, had been arrested by the political police, shot and buried in a cemetery for the poor.

It was not exactly clear when the 13 were killed and buried. "Burying them as indigents was a way to hide their identity as political prisoners," she said, adding that many of the records had been destroyed or altered but that the word "subversive" appeared next to the names of four victims.

30 PPP activists arrested

KARACHI, Aug 29: Police arrested more than 30 activists of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Wednesday in a crackdown after the killing of a police official, a PPP spokesman said, reports Reuter.

But a police spokesman said only 18 PPP activists were detained after gunmen shot dead Sub-Inspector Malik Muhammad Ahsan on Tuesday. He was investigating cases against Bhutto's jailed husband Asif Ali Zardari.

The PPP spokesman put the number of arrests at 30. Police blame the killing on the clandestine Al-Zulfikar

Organisation which they say is led by Bhutto's exiled brother Murtaza.

Authorities of the lawless Sind province accuse Bhutto's followers for most crime in the area. The PPP denies the charge and accuses the authorities of a political vendetta.

Bhutto was sacked as Prime Minister by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in August 1990 on charges of abuse of power. Zardari was arrested in October on criminal charges, including conspiring to kill 30 people.

In June, a judge trying Zardari was killed by gunmen in Karachi, capital of Sind province.

BRIEFLY

Yugoslav troops kill newsman: A Croatian television cameraman was killed and a sound technician seriously injured on Wednesday when Yugoslav troops shot at them while they were covering fighting in the republic, Croatian television news said, reports Reuter from Zagreb.

It said a Yugoslav army armoured vehicle opened fire on the two men while they were filming negotiations between the Army and the Republic's National Guard near the eastern Croatian city of Ostjck.

Cameraman, Zarko Kajic was riddled with bullets and died immediately, it said. Sound engineer Dragan Kricka was in critical condition in hospital.

Kajic is the fifth journalist to be killed in Yugoslavia since ethnic warfare began after Croatia and Slovenia declared independence on June 25.

Colombian leftists kidnap 2 Japanese: Marxist guerrillas on Wednesday kidnapped two Japanese engineers helping to build a hydroelectric power station in central Colombia, police said, reports Reuter from Bogota.

About 10 guerrillas of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces burst into a camp housing workers building the hydroelectric plant at San Carlos, some 150 km (100 miles) northwest of the capital Bogota, early on Wednesday.

They seized two Japanese engineers, employed by Toshiba, who were advising on the installation of transformers at the plant police sources said.

A spokesman for the Japanese Embassy in Bogota named the two kidnapped engineers as Akyshi Nakayama and Toshihiro Korisch, who arrived in Colombia on July 29.

166 Muslim militants detained in Algeria: A total of 442 people have appeared in military courts in the wake of Muslim unrest in May and June, according to an official statement, reports AFP from Algiers on Thursday.

Of those 166 were detained and 62 were released on bail another 120 were transferred to non-military courts while 94 were judged none of whom were identified in the statement.

The statement recalled the course of justice can only be halted by an amnesty granted by parliament in what appeared to be an indirect response to calls from the opposition for the release of Muslim militants and eight leaders who they claim are held on political grounds.

Gaddafi ends 1st phase of water scheme: The Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, on Wednesday inaugurated the first phase of a 25-billion-dollar scheme to transport water from wells in southern Libya across the desert to cities along the Mediterranean coast, the Libyan news agency JANA reported.

Some 30 foreign heads of state or government attended the ceremony in Benghazi, which was followed by a fireworks display, JANA said.

The project will be completed in five phases by 1995, when a network of aqueducts will carry more than five million cubic meters of water a day 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) from south to north.

Already, nearly two million cubic meters a day are transported to northern Libya from the south via two aqueducts, 967 and 918 kilometers (598 and 573 miles) in length.

Lightning hurts 100 mourners: Lightning struck a funeral ceremony in northeast Hungary, injuring about 100 mourners, national radio said on Wednesday, reports Reuter from Budapest.

The lightning hit a pylon in a village cemetery 11 km (seven miles) south of Ozd on Tuesday, electric cables carried the current into the nearby mortuary where 20 mourners were knocked unconscious.

Seventy six people were treated in hospital for electric shocks or slight burns but most were released soon afterwards.

Mubarak meets Arafat in Libya: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met Wednesday afternoon in the Libyan city of Benghazi with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat for the first time since the Gulf crisis, the official MENA news agency reported.

The two men, who had not met since August 10, 1990, following an Arab summit in Cairo, were both attending ceremonies for the inauguration of a man-made river in Libya, MENA said but gave no details on the tenor of the talks.

Arafat, who supported Iraq during the Gulf crisis, had been boycotted by leaders of the anti-Iraqi coalition which ousted Baghdad's forces from Kuwait after a seven month occupation. Mubarak has repeatedly said the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinians in the diaspora should not be excluded from Middle East peace negotiations.

But last week he openly criticized Arafat.

'Iraqis land on Kuwaiti island'

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 29: Kuwait complained to the UN Security Council on Wednesday that about 80 Iraqis backed by 12 naval vessels had landed on Kuwait's strategic Bubiyan island in violation of the Gulf war ceasefire, reports Reuter.

The Kuwaiti coast guard and some aircraft destroyed seven of the vessels, according to an unofficial translation of Kuwait's letter to the Council and to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Kuwait's UN envoy Mohammad Abul Hasan said Kuwaiti forces captured 45 of the Iraqis and believed the remainder were still at large on the island.

He said the armed Iraqis, dressed in civilian clothes, came to Bubiyan in two vessels. They crossed the maritime border on Wednesday morning and were subsequently supported by 12 naval vessels from the nearby Iraqi island of Al-Faw.

Kuwaiti diplomats reported there was some shooting but believed there were no casualties.

There was no immediate word from Baghdad officials.

Bubiyan island, long claimed by Baghdad, was occupied by Iraqi troops who invaded Kuwait last August. Control of the island would give Iraq greater access to the Gulf.

Abul Hasan speculated that the Iraqis were trying to retrieve weapons abandoned by

Iraqi troops but said this would still be a violation of the Gulf ceasefire and he wanted the Security Council to take steps to prevent any recurrence.

Some US officials speculated the Iraqis were scrap metal merchants.

UN officials said they were still waiting for a report from the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) set up to deter and observe any potentially hostile actions along the border.



KIEV, Ukraine: Alexander Rutskoi (C, top) Russian Vice-President and Anatoly Sapchuk (C, lower) Mayor of Leningrad, members of a Russian delegation, address a crowd of thousands of pro-independence demonstrators in Kiev Aug 28. They spoke about future relations between Russia and Ukraine. — AFP/UNB photo.

Delhi lodges protest

India keen to be a world power: German diplomat

NEW DELHI, Aug 29: India expressed annoyance Wednesday at a German diplomat's remarks that New Delhi had over-armed itself and was hankering for recognition as a world power that it had not yet become, reports AFP.

A spokesman for the External Affairs Ministry said the government had taken objection to the remarks by Georg Juergens, Deputy Consul-General in Bombay, and had protested informally to the German Embassy here.

He said the embassy clarified that Juergens's views were his own and did not represent the official position of Bonn, which hosts Indian Prime

Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao next month on his first official overseas visit.

Juergens shocked the audience at a seminar in the western city of Pune Wednesday when he accused India of over-arming and of taking a hegemonic approach toward its neighbours.

"India's potential is in its neighbourhood. Instead of realising this potential, it has scared away its neighbours by a hegemonic regional policy and a policy of over-arming," newspapers quoted him as saying. He reportedly said New Delhi was hankering to be recognised as a leading world power which it had not yet become, and also took a dig at

close Indian ally Moscow. "India is still suffering from birth defects — it came into independence to big, to heavy, too significant, too overrated," he was quoted as saying.

"The Soviet Union has protected India in the past 20 years in this position. It has thus stopped India from undertaking the necessary reflections and new orientations in its policy."

He said India's foreign policy had neglected the west and left the country isolated.

Early in September, Rao travels to Bonn for a visit during which he will open a festival of Indian culture and hold talks with German leaders in a bid to boost relations.

Serbians remove Tito's statue

BELGRADE, Aug 29: Despite protests from veterans of his partisan forces, Josip Broz Tito's gigantic statue on the town square in the Serbian town of Uzice came down Wednesday, reports AFP.

The five-metre (16.4-foot) high bronze statue, put up in 1961, was carted off to a museum, the official Tanjug news agency said.

Uzice had already lost Tito as part of its name. That happened last month, as it did to two other towns, Titova Mitrovica in Kosovo Province which reverted to Kosovska Mitrovica and Titov Vrbas in the Vojvodina which is once again plain Vrbas. The changes followed amendments to the Serbian Constitution.

Khmer Rouge opts for political victory

PATTAYA (Thailand), Aug 29: Ousted more than a decade ago and denounced as one of the bloodiest regimes in recent times, Khmer Rouge is now ensured a major role in Cambodia's political future, reports AP.

The Khmer Rouge has abandoned for the time being its quest to regain power through guerrilla warfare in favour of building political support that will guarantee it representation in an elected government, according to Khmer Rouge documents and other sources.

Peace talks brokered by the United Nations and major world powers have made progress in recent days, and the four warring factions are due to assemble in Phnom Penh in November.

A UN plan provides for the Khmer Rouge to share power with their enemies and allies in an interim period prior to UN-supervised elections.

"Our army is not going to defeat the enemy by fighting them," Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot said in a major speech to his officials.

"These days our army goes in to the interior to build up

popular strength," he said. "Such popular strength is the genesis of state power."

Architect of a reign of terror in the mid-1970s, the secretive Pol Pot spoke of going on the offensive with our themes of reasonableness, openness, and all-inclusiveness.

A copy of the 1988 speech was recently made available to the Associated Press. It was authenticated by several prominent Cambodia scholars and diplomats in Bangkok who say its contents remain valid today.

Since being overthrown in a late 1978 Vietnamese invasion,

the Khmer Rouge has gained significant popular following and built a strong army. It has forced its enemies — both within Cambodia and the world to include the guerrillas in any effective peace settlement.

In the 68-page speech, Pol Pot outlined a strategy designed to protect the Khmer Rouge organisation from efforts to eliminate it by focus while pushing for power through elections. He said the Khmer Rouge could not hold exclusive power because of both domestic and international circumstances.