

# Soviet, Baltic states agree on collective defence

MOSCOW, Sept 13: Officials of the Baltic states and 12 remaining Soviet republics have agreed to maintain a collective defence over the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, a newspaper reported Thursday, reports AP.

The now-sovereign Baltics agreed that they are bound by all the international treaties signed by the Soviet Union, including those on arms reduction, the daily Komsomolskaya Pravda reported.

Many republics recently have moved to form their own defence forces, undermining the central authority and raising fears over the future of the Soviet nuclear arsenal.

Komsomolskaya Pravda said the decision followed a one-

and-half day meeting in Moscow between Soviet Defence Minister Yevgeny Shaposhtnikov and the republic representatives.

These included defence ministers from the Baltics and the other republics, the daily said.

There were few details of the meeting itself, which began Tuesday at the Defence Ministry's headquarters. Defence Ministry spokesmen were not available for comment.

The discussion in Moscow has been described as the first meeting in a series of deliberations on the future shape of the Soviet military.

The republics, however, continue to make their own

security decisions. The Ukrainian Parliament has banned any troop movements on its territory unless it is authorised by the government of the republic.

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia began pushing for the removal of Soviet troops from their territory.

Moldavia and Georgia have formed their own defence ministries, and some Byelorussian legislators want to follow suit.

Nuclear weapons present a special problem. Western leaders and experts have voiced concerns that part of the arsenal might fall into the hands of separate republics, some of which are torn by ethnic strife.

Russian President Boris N.

Yeltsin has suggested moving all Soviet strategic nuclear weapons into his territory, where most of them already are located.

President Leonid Kravchuk of the Ukraine wants his republic, the second most-populous, to be a nuclear-free zone. According to Soviet and US sources, some of Soviet long-range SS-24 missiles are based on trains that move through the Ukraine.

About 15 to 20 per cent of the strategic nuclear arsenal are located in the republic of Kazakhstan. Its president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, also wants nuclear weapons to be moved to Russia, and has banned testing of nuclear weapons at the Semipalatinsk

## Iraqi Shi'ites to form govt-in-exile

DAMASCUS, Sept 13: An Iraqi opposition leader said Thursday that exile groups planned government-in-exile and predicted this would lead to the overthrow of President Saddam Hussein before the end of the year, reports AP.

The establishment of such a government "will create an impetus for the military to overthrow Saddam," Brian Jaber, head of the Damascus-based Supreme Shi'ite Revolutionary Council of Iraq, said in an interview.

He said the coalition grouping eight Iraqi opposition groups formed last February in Beirut, Lebanon, has been revived and expanded to 14 members.

The original coalition also planned a government-in-exile.

# 221 Burmese opposition MPs quit parallel govt

RANGOON, Sept 13: Burma's state press says 221 opposition parliamentarians have dissociated themselves from a rival government set up by colleagues after the military junta refused to honour their election victory, reports Reuters.

The official Working People's Daily newspaper said today that 221 members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) had signed a statement saying the parallel government was illegal as it was linked with an outlawed insurgent group.

State radio said this showed the rival administration was deceiving the people by saying it had the support of 200 NLD parliamentarians.

The NLD won 392 of 485 parliamentary seats in the May, 1990 general election. But the junta, which seized power by crushing a nationwide uprising for democracy in 1988, has refused to give up power.

Last Sunday, a senior junta member said the military might stay in power for 10 more years.

Since the election it has jailed or forced into exile all opposition leaders who have not bowed to its will. The NLD's General Secretary, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been held under house arrest in Rangoon since July 1989, while its Chairman Tin Oo is in jail.

Leaders of the parallel government, which was set up at the headquarters of the ethnic

Karen rebels on Burma's border with Thailand late last year, were in Britain this week seeking international support and recognition ahead of the next United Nations General Assembly session.

Diplomats say the Rangoon government is anxious to deflect growing international criticism at the assembly.

## USSR, US agree to halt arms supply to Kabul

MOSCOW, Sept 13: The Soviet Union and the United States agreed today to halt all weapons supplies to Afghanistan to allow for the staging of free elections for a broad-based government in the country, reports Reuters.

A joint statement read by Secretary of State James Baker and Foreign Minister Boris Yeltsin said both sides would cease weapons deliveries by January 1992.

The statement said both sides recognised the need for a cessation of hostilities between the Soviet-backed government and Muslim rebels in the round-up to a free poll.

It called for both sides to launch talks with the aim of finding broad consensus and supported UN efforts of promote dialogue.

The Soviet Union sent tens of thousands of troops to Afghanistan in 1979 to prop up a leftist regime sympathetic to Moscow.

Moscow pulled the troops out 10 years later in a deal brokered by the United Nations, and Soviet leaders have since denounced the decision to send in the troops.

## Pro-base Filipino Senators vow to press for approval

MANILA, Sept 13: Senate supporters of a continued US military presence rejected a compromise Friday and stood by their plan to grant a new lease on the Subic Bay naval base, despite lacking the votes needed for approval, reports AP.

The Senate resumed debate Friday on the pact, under which the United States would give up volcano-damaged Clark Air Base next year and keep the Subic Bay base for 10 more years in return for \$1.3 billion a year in aid.

Government officials have warned that the country can't turn down the aid at a time when the economy suffers from record unemployment and the devastating eruption of Mount Pinatubo in June.

Two-thirds of the 23 Senators must ratify the agreement before the current lease expires Monday.



UNITED NATIONS: Representatives of the Baltic states talk to the media after a United Nations Security Council meeting recommended their admissions to the General Assembly September 12. L-R: Stasys Lozoraitis and Arincetas Simutis of Lithuania, Anadols Dinbergs of Latvia and Ernst Jaakson of Estonia. —AFP/UNB photo

## 13,000 Iraqi POWs refuse to go home

MANAMA (Bahrain), Sept 13: About 13,000 Iraqi soldiers captured by US-led forces during the Gulf war have refused to go home, the International Red Cross (ICRC) said on Thursday.

ICRC spokesman Arnold Luethold told Reuters by telephone from Riyadh that Saudi Arabia had granted refugee status to all soldiers who refused to be repatriated. But they were not allowed to leave desert camps where they were initially held as prisoners.

There are about 13,000 Iraqi soldiers who refused to return to their country after we made final calls for their repatriation," Luethold said.

"Saudi Arabia has granted them protection and issued a declaration saying they are considered refugees, but they must remain interned in their camps in the desert."

## Fierce fighting continues: 500 killed in Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 13: More than 500 Tamil separatist rebels and government soldiers have been killed in two weeks of heavy fighting in northeastern Sri Lanka, a military spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

He said 100 rebels, including two leaders and a base commander, and six soldiers were killed in Thursday's fighting in Mullaitivu district, raising the death toll to 497 rebels and 41 soldiers. Sixteen soldiers, including two officers, were wounded.

There was no independent confirmation of casualty figures. "Advancing troops are meeting with fierce resistance," the spokesman said.

A military spokesman told reporters on Thursday that 397 rebels and 35 soldiers had died in clashes since August 29. The army called it "the biggest ever jungle battle" between the Liberation Tigers of

Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and government troops.

The LTTE is fighting for a separate homeland for the minority Tamil community in the north and east.

The spokesman said the operation, called Lighting Strikes, was directed against about 15 bases containing up to 1,000 rebels in the Mullaitivu jungles.

The bases, including factories producing mine, grenades, mortar bombs and ammunition, were the main operation headquarters of the LTTE, he said.

The air force was bombing any moving target in the jungle and the navy was attacking rebel positions on the coast.

In eastern Batticaloa district, two policemen were killed and 12 wounded when Tigers attacked a police post on Wednesday, military sources said.

# BRIEFLY

**Israeli troops capture 2 militias:** Two anti-Israeli fighters have been taken prisoner after an attack on a joint patrol of Israeli troops and allied militiamen in south Lebanon, a Palestinian Muslim fundamentalist group said Thursday, reports AFP from Beirut.

Hezbollah-Palestine said its fighters had launched a strike late Wednesday near the Israeli border, in the Meiseh Al-Jabal area of Israel's self-declared "security zone" in the south.

The patrol captured two of the guerrillas, Rizk Hamid Sidoud and Ramez Ahmad Ghadid, said the group, formerly known as Islamic Jihad-Bait Al-Makdess. The others returned to base.

**Discovery blasts off:** Space shuttle Discovery blasted off last night with five astronauts and a research satellite that will study earth's upper atmosphere, reports Xinhua from Washington.

Discovery thundered away from its launchpad at 7:11 pm. Local time at Kennedy Space Centre, Cape Canaveral, Florida, with flames spewing from its twin booster rockets. The 100-ton spaceship pierced a hazy sky as it darted out over the Atlantic Ocean and up the east coast.

The 14,500-pound satellite carried by the shuttle is to measure the ozone, stratospheric winds, chemicals and other conditions for "at least one and a half years". It will be able to peer at 98 per cent of the globe as it circles the world.

**203,869 flee Croatia:** Fighting in the breakaway republic of Croatia has forced 203,869 people to flee their homes, the Tanjug news agency, quoting the Yugoslav Red Cross, reported Thursday, reports AFP from Belgrade.

More than 94,000 of the refugees sought shelter in Serbia, while Croatia took care of 75,324, the agency said.

The remainder were divided among the other four republics, Bosnia-Herzegovina (30,000), Montenegro (1,700), Slovenia (2,317) and Macedonia (145), according to information provided by each of the republics' Red Cross organisations, Tanjug added.

**14 militants shot dead in Srinagar:** Security forces shot dead 14 Muslim militants in the northern border state of Jammu and Kashmir late Wednesday and Friday, officials said, reports AFP from Srinagar.

Five security force troopers and six militants were also injured in the gunfire exchanges that took place in the state's Baramulla and Kupwara districts, they said.

The injured militants were in a group which attempted to loot a government treasury in Kupwara, state government officials said.

**Arafat, Jalloud discuss situation:** Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Yasser Arafat met in Tunis Thursday with Abdel-Salam Jalloud, Libya's second man in command, reports Xinhua from Tunis.

According to the Palestinian news agency, during the meeting, Arafat and Jalloud discussed the Arab situation, the Palestine issue and a unified Arab stand toward the challenges facing the Palestinian and Arab nation. They also examined the problem of supporting the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories, which has continued for nearly four years.

**North Korean diplomat defects:** A senior North Korean diplomat has defected to South Korea, government officials in Seoul said Friday, reports Reuters from Seoul.

The defector, who was not identified, is the most senior official from the communist North to defect to the South since the Korean Peninsula was divided in 1945, they said.

Further details were not available. Government officials said the defector was scheduled to give a news conference in Seoul later on Friday.

**Arab League vows to keep Somalia intact:** Arab League ministers vowed Thursday to try keep Somalia intact, warning that "very serious developments" there were a "direct threat" to regional and Arab security, reports AFP from Cairo.

They voiced "disquiet" at the situation, citing a unilateral declaration of independence by the rebel movement holding the north of the country, and continued fighting in the south.

Urging an end to factional warfare and peaceful settlement of disputes, the ministerial council called on other league countries to help fellow member Somalia with emergency supplies of food and medicine to combat a "disastrous humanitarian situation."

## Fourth consecutive night of riots in England

NEWCASTLE (England), Sept 13: Gangs of youths torched a post office, stoned police and set cars ablaze in a fourth consecutive night of urban violence and vandalism in northeastern England, reports Reuters.

Riot police moved in on Thursday night after an estimated 500 youths went on the rampage in the city of Newcastle in a repeat of the kind of mob destruction which turned part of the city into a blazing battleground the night before.

A resident said "they seem to have got hold of any vehicle they could lay their hands on. I've lived here all my life and I've never seen anything like it."

The gangs petrol-bombed a post office in the rundown West End district and burned several cars in the latest of a

## 29 killed in gas leakage in China

BELJING, Sept 13: Poison gas leaking from a chemical tanker killed 29 people in their sleep and injured more than 170 when it engulfed a village in eastern China, a local newspaper reported, reports AFP.

The accident occurred at 3:00 am on September 3 when the driver of a tanker carrying monomethylamine, a raw material for fertilizer, backed into a tree in Shaxi village in Jiangxi province's Shangyao county.

Poison gas leaked from a broken valve, killing people as they slept along with livestock, rice in the field and trees, according to the Liberation Daily received here Friday.

"Even mice and snakes could not escape death," the Shanghai-based newspaper's Thursday edition said.

As of Wednesday, it said, 29 villagers had died and more than 170 people were in hospitals.

## Perez asks Mujahideen to give peace a chance

TEHERAN, Sept 13: UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar appealed on Thursday at Afghan guerrillas not to attack Kabul and UN officials warned that an assault could start a bloodbath that would scupper chances for peace, reports Reuters.

Perez de Cuellar discussed his five-point Afghan peace plan with Mujahideen leaders based in Iran and Pakistan at a meeting during his current visit to Tehran.

"Through them I have made an appeal to all Mujahideen factions to refrain from military activity in order to give a chance to my efforts," he told reporters afterwards.

Referring to a rocket attack on Kabul on Wednesday, Perez de Cuellar said: "The people of

Kabul are terrorised. There is the possibility of the city being attacked not only by rockets but by military forces."

Two leaders of moderate Pakistani-based groups, Sibghatullah Mojaddidi and Syed Ahmad Gailani, joined representatives of Iran-based factions for the meeting.

Speaking to reporters, Mojaddidi accused elements in the Pakistani government of backing hardline guerrillas in a plot to storm Kabul, launch a coup there and end up sharing power with Afghan President Najibullah.

He said the plot was masterminded by guerrilla Chief Gulbuddin Hekmatiyar and Shahnawaz Tanai, who staged an unsuccessful coup in March last year when he was Najibullah's defence minister.



PHNOM PENH: A man rides past a collapsed government propaganda sign extolling the virtues of soldiers and workers and their socialist struggle to build a strong communist Cambodia on USSR Boulevard near the outskirts of the capital September 10. Many of these signs, put up in 1989 following the Vietnamese withdrawal, have fallen into disrepair. —AFP/UNB photo

# Off the Record

**Tributes to the Queen**

LONDON: Britain will thank Queen Elizabeth II for 40 years of service with celebrations and exhibition next year and a campaign to involve young people in improving the environment, reports AP.

Announcing the programme Thursday, the Royal Anniversary Trust said Albert Mum would mount an exhibition next summer about the Queen's role and duties, including rarely seen memorabilia from the royal personal collection.

In February, the British Broadcasting Corporation plans to film a documentary on the Queen's working life.

Elizabeth, who was 25 years old when she took the throne February 6, 1952, after the death of her father, King George VI, allowed a BBC team to begin filming last November.

**Genetic test to predict diabetes**

LIVERPOOL: A genetic test at birth may soon make it possible to predict the risk of getting diabetes, a British scientist said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Dr Anthony Barnett said in an interview that it may be possible in the next decade to spot diabetes-prone babies by the presence of a "genetic signature."

"The next decade should provide a greater understanding of diabetes. This... will allow better methods for prediction, prevention and treatment of diabetes and may be the most important advance since the discovery of insulin 70 years ago," he said.

Barnett said that if diabetes-prone babies could be identified they could be followed carefully and helped as soon as the early symptoms appeared.

Early prediction is important, because when symptoms begin to show, over 90 per cent of the cells producing insulin will have been destroyed.

**'British majority homosexual'**

PARIS: Britain's birth rate discredited comments attributed to French Prime Minister Edith Cresson that a high percentage of British men were homosexual, Prime Minister John Major said in Paris Thursday, reports AFP.

He told French television that he thought Cresson's controversial remarks were "misreported and misquoted."

The Prime Minister continued: "but in any event, it matches very strangely against the growth of the British population over the past 200 years."

**Contact lens can cause blindness**

LONDON: Contact lenses, especially the soft and extended-wear types, are by far the greatest factor leading to a potentially blinding eye disease, according to a British study released today, reports Reuters.

The study, by Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, found that people who choose to wear contact lenses rather than glasses are six times more likely to develop microbial keratitis than people who suffer eye accidents, the next most common cause.

Keratitis, usually the result of a bacterial infection causes tiny wounds on the cornea that are extremely painful can lead to blindness. Although a principal cause of blindness in countries with poor health care, Keratitis was rarely seen in the United States and Europe until the introduction of contact lenses.

# Israel to double Jewish population in held areas

JERUSALEM, Sept 13: An Israeli member of parliament said on Thursday the government planned to almost double the Jewish population of the occupied territories by 1992 by building twice as many houses as it has, reports Reuters.

Dedi Zucker, of the opposition Citizen's Rights Movement, said the building drive by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon was the reason US President George Bush wants to delay Israel's request for 10 billion dollars in loan guarantees.

The Israeli building in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has

angered Bush, who considers the settlements a major obstacle to the Middle East peace conference he has proposed.

Zucker's report said Sharon planned to build 25,000 new homes by the end of 1992, adding 91,000 settlers to 100,000 already living in the disputed territories.

In 1991 alone, Zucker said, Israel would build 10,000 units, three times the number, Sharon had reported. He estimated settlement housing would cost Israel at least 1.6 billion dollars in 1991 and 1992, excluding costs for roads and infrastructure.

He said Sharon gave an incomplete picture in March when he said he planned to build 13,000 housing units in occupied territory during 1991 and 1992.

Israel asked Washington last week to guarantee 10 billion dollars in loans over the next five years, allowing it to borrow on more favourable terms to finance settling immigrants.

Some 350,000 immigrants, most from the Soviet Union, have arrived in the Jewish state in the past two years and Israel expects a million by 1995.

The United States made a

previous housing loan guarantee of 400 million dollars conditional on a promise that Israel would not settle Soviet immigrants in occupied territory.

Zucker sent his report to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir this week and asked him to freeze settlement in the territories, home to 1.75 million Palestinians in revolt against Israeli rule.

The housing ministry refused to comment on Zucker's figures.

Another Xinhua report adds: An Israeli court today convicted peace activist Abie

Nathan for meeting with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in violation of an Israeli law that forbids such contacts.

Nathan, owner of the private Voice of Peace radio station, was accused of harming state security and would be sentenced next month, said Israeli Army radio, monitored in Cairo.

It was Nathan's second conviction in less than two years. In October 1989, he was sentenced to six months in prison for meeting with Arafat and other prominent Palestine Liberation Organisation members in 1988.

Nathan has met nine times with Arafat, the most recent being in July this year in Tunis.

A 1986 Israeli law forbids contacts with any Palestinian organisations, including the PLO, which the Jewish state regards as a "terrorist groups."

Nathan, 64, argued that his talks with the Palestinians were public and caused no damage to Israel's security. He charged that the law was undemocratic and vowed to fight it.

Nathan staged a 40-day hunger strike last April and May to protest the ban on meetings with PLO leaders.