

Truce accord wrongly interpreted: Serbia

BELGRADE, Sept 16: Serbian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanovic rejected an appeal by Italy and Germany for the Yugoslav army to withdraw immediately from Croatia, saying they had wrongly interpreted the ceasefire agreement, reports AFP.

Speaking late Sunday on Belgrade television, Jovanovic said the agreement signed here under European Community (EC) sponsorship on September 1, provided for federal troops to return to barracks in Croatia, and not to leave the Republic altogether.

Italy and Germany made the appeal after their foreign ministers, Gianni de Michelis and Hans Dietrich Genscher held talks Saturday in Venice.

Jovanovic welcomed Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van den Broke's statement earlier that Croatia was responsible for the escalating violence in Yugoslavia saying the truth is beginning to come out as to who is responsible for ceasefire violations and provocations.

Van den Broke whose country holds the rotating EC presidency criticised Croatian authorities for cutting off water, electricity and telephone lines to army barracks in the rebellious republic and closing an oil pipeline that supplies Belgrade.

Washington loses its largest military facility abroad
Philippines Senate rejects base treaty

MANILA, Sept 16: The Philippine Senate voted today to reject a new military bases treaty with the United States.

The 23-member body voted 12-11 on second reading in favour of a resolution rejecting the ratification of the treaty extending the US lease on Subic Naval base by 10 years, reports AFP.

The third reading will only be a formality.

The Senate gallery broke out in applause when the vote took place by show of hands.

"The treaty is defeated," Senate President Jovito Salonga announced after casting his vote, which broke an 11-11 tie.

Even without Salonga's tie-breaker, the treaty would have been thrown out because ratification requires at least 16 votes.

With the Philippine Senate's rejection today of a new, 10-year military bases treaty with the United States, Washington stands to lose its largest military facilities abroad.

The loss of the deep water port at the strategically situated Subic Naval Base deprives the US 7th Fleet of its main supply and repair yard as it projects American power in the Pacific and Indian Oceans from its home base in Japan.

Its sphere of operations includes policing the vital straits of Malacca, Lombok and Sunda

near Malaysia and Indonesia, through which almost 50 per cent of Asia's crude oil and 80 per cent of other vital products pass.

The treaty also provides for the US 13th Air Force to depart by September 1992 from Clark Air Base, a former fighter facility which has been downgraded into a station for the Air Force's massive troop transports. The base was evacuated in the June when it was all but destroyed by a volcanic eruption.

Subic and Clark were extensively used to support US combat forces in the Korean,

Vietnam and Gulf Wars.

With Subic gone, Washington would have almost nothing between Okinawa in the Pacific and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean with which to guard the vital sea lanes.

US officials have said some of the functions of Subic would have to be assumed by facilities in the US administered Pacific territory of Guam.

But the territory is considered by some military analysts as too far away, adding up to three hours in flight for the P-3 Orion anti-submarine aircraft patrolling the wide expanses from their base at naval air

station at Subic.

For the naval Flotilla, it would mean several days of additional steaming time, they said.

In the meantime, Washington is said to be quietly approaching the Philippines' southeast Asian neighbors to provide facilities to replace Subic.

The 6,000-hectare (15,000-acre) Subic facility houses three floating dry docks and can accomplish any repair task that might be required by a naval vessel.

Aside from the anti-submarine air facility, Subic also operates an airfield for carrier-based strike forces. An adjacent installation, the San Miguel naval communications station, serves as a communication link for US Naval Forces in the Pacific.

The bases were the country's second largest employer, next only to the Philippine government, and Subic is manned by about 30,000 highly competent Filipino civilian workers and about 6,000 US servicemen and civilian personnel.

Subic and Clark directly spend more than 500 million dollars for supplies and other needs annually, making them unofficially the country's eight largest trading partner.

The Pentagon has said a US withdrawal from Subic would take a year to complete.

US backs Corazon's referendum proposal

MANILA, Sept 16: The US government today backed President Corazon Aquino's proposal for a referendum on the American military presence in the Philippines as the Senate here rejected a new 10-year bases treaty, says AFP.

Backtracking from earlier statement that US troops will start the withdrawal process if no treaty was in place by today, the US embassy in Manila said the Aquino proposal put the issue in a "new context" as indicated Washington might wait for the referendum.

A presidential spokesman, Horacio Paredes, said the referendum might be held in December.

"President Aquino has indicated that she will submit the issue to the people by means of a referendum if the Senate fails to act positively," US Embassy spokesman Stanley Schrage said.

"We admire her determination and warmly reciprocate her support for the friendship between our two countries," he said. "We support the President in her continuing ef-

orts to put in place the new treaty."

Asked if this meant that Washington had departed from its earlier vow to start withdrawal procedures if no treaty was in place by the deadline, he told AFP that it was "because the President has indicated that she will seek a referendum."

"This puts the issue into a new context," he said.

Twelve of the Philippines' 23 Senators voted against the treaty today.

The treaty provides for a 10-year extension of the US lease on Subic naval base and a full American withdrawal in a year's time from Clark Air Base, which was devastated by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo volcano last June.

Benazir in US for medical checkup

ISLAMABAD, Sept 16: Pakistan's opposition leader Benazir Bhutto left Sunday for the United States for a medical checkup and other engagements, the central secretariat of her party said, reports AFP.

The former Prime Minister "has not been keeping good health for the last month," the announcement by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said, adding that Bhutto would undergo medical tests in Los Angeles.

The party did not say how long she would stay in the United States, where she is to address a Fernhill College symposium along with former President Ronald Reagan and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Bhutto will also visit Washington to meet members of the US House of Representatives and administration officials, and travel to New York to receive an international award, PPP said.

Earlier Sunday, the opposition leader sent a medical certificate to a special court in Lahore where she was to appear in a case involving charges of abuse of power during her 20-month rule, court sources said.

The court, accepting the medical plea, asked her counsel to obtain Bhutto's answers to prepared questions and to submit a statement to the court on September 21.

Bhutto is being tried by special courts at Karachi and Lahore in half a dozen cases filed against her by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan after he sacked her in August 1990 on charges of corruption and mismanagement.

The tribunal in Lahore, which is handling charges of wrongful allotment of liquified gas distribution agencies, rejected a respondent's petition that the President, Prime Minister and heads of concerned departments and banks be called as witnesses.

Swedish PM resigns

STOCKHOLM, Sept 16: Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson handed in his resignation to the speaker of parliament today (Monday) following a resounding defeat for his ruling social democrats in Sunday's general election, Swedish radio reported, says Reuter.

Speaker Thage Peterson accepted Carlsson's resignation, the radio added.

Peterson was expected to ask Carlsson to continue as caretaker Prime Minister while he consulted leaders of the seven parties represented in parliament about the formation of a new government.

BRIEFLY

Sabah to start US tour Thursday: Kuwait ruler Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah is due to visit the United States from next Thursday, as part of a tour at saying thank you to some of the countries that helped free Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, officials said in Kuwait on Sunday, reports AFP.

They said the Sheikh was due to begin his tour with a trip to Cairo on Wednesday for a 24-hour visit. He would stay in the United States from Thursday September 19 to October 1, and was also due to go to Oman and Syria, they added.

During his US visit, Sheikh Jaber will meet with President George Bush, the officials said. He will also address the General Assembly session of the United Nations in New York.

19 Polish seamen plucked to safety: Nineteen Polish seamen were plucked to safety from the waters of the Atlantic on Sunday, after their cargo vessel collided with a South Korean container ship off the northwestern Spanish region of Galicia, rescue officials said in Madrid, AFP reports.

There were no casualties in the crash, which seriously damaged the Polish vessel, the Kosciuszyn, causing its 19 crew members to jump into the water.

Fifteen of the seamen were picked up by the crew of the Korean ship, the engine Singapore, and the others were taken later from a life-raft by Spanish rescue services.

The Polish vessel was reported to have almost sunk as a result of the crash. The South Korean ship was not seriously damaged.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known.

NATO Secy General meets Kaifu today: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Secretary General Manfred Wornier will meet Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu and Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama today (Tuesday) Foreign Ministry officials in Tokyo said, reports AFP.

Wornier, who arrived Sunday as the first head of NATO to make an official trip to Japan, will also meet defence agency chief Yukitshiko Ikeda and Emperor Akihito.

GCC backs US move for ME peace confce: Gulf Foreign Ministers on Sunday backed US efforts to convene a Middle East peace conference and expressed a desire for Iran to have a regional security role, AFP reports from Jeddah.

But at the same time, ministers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar renewed their support for the Damascus Declaration.

The declaration drafted in the Syrian capital in the aftermath of the Gulf war, called for Egyptian and Syrian troops to form the nucleus of a Gulf security force.

The proposal which has yet to be implemented triggered sharp criticism in Iran, as Tehran opposes the presence of non-Gulf forces such as Egypt and Syria — in any regional security scheme.

IAEA team in Baghdad: A team from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has begun a mission to Iraq to determine the country's nuclear potential, reports AFP.

The head of the mission Leslie Thorn in Baghdad said agency inspectors on Sunday visited a nuclear research facility near Baghdad but he did not disclose its location.

The current 14-person team is the fifth from the IAEA to visit Iraq since the formation last April of a United Nations committee to oversee the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction following the Gulf war.

Iraqi authorities on Friday criticised a report from the head of the fourth team, David Kay, charging that he had obscured several explanations that they had supplied.

Shamir requests US for loan again: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir repeated Israel's request for 10 billion dollars in US loan guarantees on Sunday, despite President George Bush's wish that they should be delayed to further Middle East peace efforts, reports Reuter.

"We believe our request is just and completely humanitarian based," Shamir said in Jerusalem in a speech to the Israeli Bar Association.

Despite his uncompromising stance on the eve of a visit by US Secretary of State James Baker, Shamir said Israel had no quarrel with its guardian ally.

But he sounded a conciliatory note in the wake of comments by hardliner Rehavam Zeevi, a minister without portfolio who called Bush a liar.

Zeevi said Israel should refuse to attend a Middle East peace conference until Israel received the loan guarantees.

Iraq to ask UN council to condemn US: Iraq is to ask the United Nations Security Council to condemn the United States following revelations that US army tanks and bulldozers buried thousands of Iraqi troops some still alive at the start of the Gulf war, reports AFP.

Given the atrocity of the crime, the Iraqi foreign ministry is preparing urgent memoranda for several international bodies including the Security Council to secure the condemnation of this ignominious act, Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein al-Khadair told the Iraqi news agency in Baghdad.

The Iraqi ministry will also ask the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the US government, to provide Iraq with information on the location of this cowardly crime perpetrated by US forces he said.



ZAGREB: Croatian soldiers attack a federal army barracks Monday in Zagreb suburb. An offensive by federal forces pressed ahead with support of Serbian separatists. — UNB/ AFP photo

Nawaz Sharif's olive branch to opposition

ISLAMABAD, Sept 16: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in conciliatory remarks contrasting with weeks of political mudslinging, on Sunday offered peace talks with the opposition provided the other side showed it was willing, reports Reuter.

"I am ready to take a practical initiative but I think there should be a similar realisation on the other side as well," he told reporters.

His statement, after opening a symposium of scientists, contrasted with a series of acrimonious exchanges in recent weeks between his Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) and the main opposition alliance of former prime minister—Benazir Bhutto.

Sharif threatened in a speech last month to break Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) into pieces while the opposition accuses his 10-month-old government of misrule and wants a neutral caretaker administration to hold fresh elections.

"If I get indications the other side is also ready (for conciliation talks) then we can sit together and talk about it," Sharif said.

But he said the opposition activities and its statements calling legislative assemblies as

bogus made it difficult for him to make a formal offer of talks.

"I think there must be a manifestation (of readiness) from the other side to discuss a blueprint we have to strengthen democracy and maintain democratic institutions.

Sharif's Government has come under severe criticism in recent weeks for a crime wave and a multi-million dollars scandal involving financial cooperatives run by IDA members.

Bhutto blames her party's crushing defeat in last October's elections on what she calls massive vote-rigging by an IDA-led caretaker government installed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan after he sacked her 20-month-old cabinet for abuse of power.

The government denied the charge of voting fraud.

Bhutto and several of her former cabinet ministers are facing corruption trials by special tribunals empowered to disqualify them from parliament for seven years.

Her jailed husband Saif Ali Zardari is undergoing trial on several criminal charges, which he denies, including extortion and conspiracy to murder.

Australia to ban import of bull terriers

SYDNEY, Australia, Sept 16: The federal government said Monday it plans to ban the import of bull terriers after a 2-month-old boy was killed by his family's pet dog, reports AP.

Police said the bull terrier grabbed the baby by the head from a bassinets in the back yard of a home in suburban Sydney on Sunday. The mother, aged in her 20s, tried frantically to rescue the child, but the dog would not let go until she beat it with a garden rake.

The family rushed the child to a hospital, but he died shortly after arrival from severe head and neck injuries. Police have not released the name of the family.

Resources Minister Alan Griffiths said he will recommend the ban to the federal Cabinet. He said it could take effect immediately.

He said he will also seek new powers to ban other aggressive dogs and will ask state governments to impose tougher penalties on owners who fail to control their pets.

Current law requires imported dogs to spend several weeks in quarantine to determine whether they are carrying any diseases.

LTTE offering stiff resistance

COLOMBO, Sept 16: Heavy bloodletting continued in northeast Sri Lanka today with Tamil guerrillas offering stiff resistance to thousands of government troops advancing on a key rebel base, the military said, reports AFP.

Hundreds of Guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were resisting the Sri Lankan army's biggest ever jungle offensive to overrun a strategic base in Mullaitivu, a military spokesman here said.

He said an officer and 14 soldiers were wounded and many Tigers killed in overnight fighting just outside the guerrilla camp condemned Michael by the LTTE. The toll

in two weeks of battles has hit nearly 550 dead.

There is still fierce resistance from them. But they are also continuing to suffer heavy casualties. We don't have exact figures but we know many Tigers were killed in the past 24 hours, the spokesman said.

Officials said teenaged LTTE guerrillas were firing rockets and rocket-propelled grenades at advancing troops a short distance from the camp's perimeter.

The area is heavily mined. Our men not only have to search and destroy the pressure mines but also keep a lookout for enemy sniper fire, the spokesman said.

An estimated 59 soldiers and 485 LTTE cadres have been killed since security forces backed by air and naval support launched their offensive against a dozen LTTE hideouts in Mullaitivu two weeks ago.

The Tiger leadership has thrown the bulk of its men and material into the latest battle because the LTTE main command and control centre for attacks against security forces is located in the Mullaitivu district, officials said.

The LTTE also allegedly used the area as a transit point for smuggling arms.

The battle zone in Mullaitivu continued to be un-

der an indefinite curfew and any suspected guerrilla movement is attacked and destroyed by helicopters, officials said.

The fighting in Mullaitivu is the worst since the army defeated the LTTE in a major battle in the northern Elephant Pass last month, killing an estimated 2,000 guerrillas and losing 1986 of their own men.

Some 10,600 people have died in fighting since June last year when the LTTE ended 14 months of peace talks with Colombo to resume its military campaign for a separate state called Eelam for Sri Lanka's two million Tamil minority.

Off the Record



GROZNEY, Checheno-Ingushetia, USSR: Said Ali Osmayev (c) 74 shows off his 1910 Mauser gun during an Ingush demonstration for independence and against the republic's government which supported the coup last month. Thousands of Ingush were deported by Stalin during World War II to Kazakhstan and are now returning to demand their homeland. — UNB/AFP photo

Rushdie reappears

LONDON: Salman Rushdie, the British author ordered to die by Iran for blaspheming Islam, emerged from hiding on Sunday to accept a literary award in London, reports Reuter.

Flanked by police guards, the Indian-born writer made a brief surprise appearance at London's Dorchester Hotel to be honoured by the Writer's Guild of Great Britain for his children's novel "Haroun and The Sea of Stories."

Appearing close to tears, he told an audience of fellow writers and other guests: "I wanted to be here so much because of the hatred I have endured."

"I would like to apologise for the unusual manner of my appearance here... I would like to have been here for most of the evening, but in this free country I am not a free man. I have hit a rather problematical reef," Rushdie said.

Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a religious decree against Rushdie in February 1989 demanding he be killed for blaspheming Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses."

Rushdie 44, wrote "Haroun and The Sea of Stories" in hiding and said he did so "to tell myself as much as anybody else that I would not be silenced and would continue."

Who have I been talking to?

LONDON: A grieving son who has spent two months talking to ashes he thought were those of his dead mother has been told her remains are still at the crematorium, reports Reuter.

"Who have I been talking to for the past seven weeks if it wasn't my mum?" bachelor Len Farhall, 51 was quoted as saying in The Sun newspaper today.

The Sun said the crematorium told Farhall the ashes of his late mother Ivy would be scattered unless he claimed them. They have not revealed whose remains he received by mistake.

"Some people have told me just to dump them on the roses, but I can't do that," said Farhall.

Volcanic flow sparks fire

TOKYO: Flows of superheated rock and gas from a volcano in southern Japan sparked fires that destroyed more than 100 buildings, authorities said Monday. No injuries were reported, says AP.

About 110 buildings, including an elementary school and 26 houses, were destroyed in Fukae-cho, a small town 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) southeast of the volcano, by fires sparked by a series of major pyroclastic flows late Sunday at Mt Unzen, town officials said.

The residents of the affected areas had long since evacuated the area after the volcano near Nagasaki erupted in June, killing 41 people.

The pilot of a Ground Self-Defense Forces helicopter flying over Fukae-cho Monday morning spotted the destroyed structures, a town official said.

Television broadcast videotape shot from the helicopter showing the ash-coloured concrete school building and the smoldering debris of other buildings nearby. The windowpanes of the school building were blown out and the desks inside burned.

Television also showed a few small fires and white smoke coming up from destroyed buildings, which included warehouses of farming homes, huts and other houses.

Pro-democrats sweep Hong Kong polls

HONG KONG, Sept 16: Pro-democracy candidates swept to victory Monday over Chinese Communist-backed candidates in Hong Kong's first direct legislative election in 150 years of British colonial rule, reports AP.

But fewer than 40 per cent of Hong Kong's registered voters cast ballots in the landmark vote and the low turnout appeared more a victory for apathy than activism.

Liberal candidates took 16 out of 18 seats in the voting that ended Sunday.

Hong Kong's leading democracy activist, 53-year-old lawyer Martin Lee, garnered the most votes, more than 76,000. He and his running mate, Man Sai-cheong, beat out a candidate backed by the Communist Chinese.

"It's been pretty close to a tidal wave for democracy," said

Don McMillen, an American historian who is studying Hong Kong.

Pro-Beijing candidates lost every race. China resumes control of Hong Kong in six years.

The two remaining seats were taken by a conservative, pro-business candidate and a moderate.

The vote was widely seen as a chance for the colony to tell the hard-line Communist government in Beijing it wants more freedom.

Those who voted apparently support such freedom. "Still, the low turnout seemed to indicate that most people in this bustling capitalist enclave of 5.9 million either don't care or are resigned to their fate under China's aging leaders.

Only 39.15 per cent, or 750,467, of Hong Kong's 1.9 million registered voters cast ballots in the landmark vote.