

12 Y'slav envoys declare loyalty to Croatia

ZAGREB (Yugoslavia), Sept 26: Croatia said on Wednesday 12 Yugoslav ambassadors around the world had declared loyalty to the breakaway republic, reports Reuter.

The office of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman issued a statement saying the envoys declared readiness to withdraw from the Yugoslav diplomatic service.

They were Yugoslavia's ambassadors to the Soviet Union, Austria, France, the Vatican, Egypt, Malaysia, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Chile, Argentina and Uganda.

Tanjung news agency quoted diplomatic sources as saying the envoys took their stands in telephone conversations

UN team collects data on Iraq's N-plan

LONDON, Sept 26: The United Nations team of nuclear inspectors detained in Iraq has collected detailed data on countries and companies helping Baghdad develop nuclear weapons, the leader of the group said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

David Kay, in charge of the 44-member team, told British television by satellite phone from Iraq that he held comprehensive information on Baghdad's nuclear programme, from the people involved to how it was supplied and funded.

"It's very sensitive and vital data," he told channel four news.

The UN team, in Iraq to monitor compliance with terms of the Gulf war ceasefire requiring Baghdad to scrap its weapons of mass destruction, is being held in a Baghdad courtyard by Iraqi officials and security forces.

Iraq accuses the inspectors of spying and demands they hand over the documents and videotapes they have gathered. Detailing the kind of infor-

mation the team has collected, Kay said: "The personnel, the numbers — we have the names of the people involved in the Iraqi nuclear programme."

He continued: "Secondly, financial information on procurement and sources of procurement, both domestic and foreign, for this programme."

The documents also prove that certain facilities which Iraq had denied were part of a nuclear programme were indeed involved in it, Kay said.

Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, accused Kay on Tuesday of being a US intelligence agent. He said the files collected by the team would be passed to the Israeli secret service Mossad for use against Iraqi workers and their families.

Another report adds: The leader of a United Nations monitoring team which has been confined in Baghdad broke off a British television interview on Wednesday saying a confrontation had developed with Iraqi guards.

Architect of Allied air offensive due in Riyadh

US beefing up firepower in Saudi Arabia : 200 fighters still stationed

WASHINGTON, Sept 26: US Air Force General Charles Horner, the architect of last January's allied air offensive against Iraq may return to Saudi Arabia soon, a source in the administration of President George Bush said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The general who currently commands Shaw Air Force Base in south Carolina, would almost certainly make the trip if Iraq failed to adhere to its written commitment to allow UN inspectors to travel freely in their own helicopters, the source said.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater had said Wednesday that the issue of helicopter overflight seemed to have been resolved by Baghdad's promise, presented to the United Nations late Tuesday, he added, that it remained to be seen whether Baghdad would hold to its pledge.

Last week the White House threatened to dispatch air force jets to Iran to escort the UN helicopter missions if Baghdad continued to put conditions on their movements.

AP from Dhahran adds: Saudi officials are welcoming US plans to send Patriot anti-ballistic missiles to the desert kingdom as tensions rose again in the Gulf region.

4 killed in Bucharest riot

BUCHAREST, Sept 26: Four people were reported killed in Bucharest's worst riots for 15 months and fierce battles raged through the night between troops and striking miners backed by local youths, reports Reuter.

Wednesday's riots were led by at least 7,000 coalminers from the western Jiu Valley who hijacked trains to reach the capital where they urged the government to resign for inflicting economic misery on the 23 million Romanians.

Local media said thousands more miners were heading for the capital today to join the fray — some of 52,000 Jiu Valley miners who stopped work on Tuesday after failing to win pay rises.

A formal US decision came Tuesday, and the first two Patriot batteries were deployed Wednesday from Germany to Saudi Arabia, the Defense Department said.

The action came after Iraqi troops for a second time detained 44 UN inspectors searching for evidence of nuclear weapons in that country.

US President Bush condemned Baghdad's "unacceptable behaviour" and the UN Security Council de-

manded release of the inspectors.

A Saudi official on Tuesday welcomed plans to send 1,300 troops and about 100 Patriots and said the missiles fit into their plans. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the troops and material should provide sufficient defence should Saddam plot any new aggression.

The Saudis took an unprecedented step in August 1990 by inviting US forces in

after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

About 200 US Air Force jet fighters and spy planes are still based in Saudi Arabia — an array that includes A-10 attack planes, F-15 and F-16 fighters, F-117A Stealth fighter-bombers, airborne AWACS and U-2 spy planes.

Bush has made clear he would be willing to send even more warplanes to escort UN inspectors seeking to identify and dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction under terms of the Gulf War ceasefire.

Bush said last week that he would provide the Patriots to the Saudis for defensive purposes. The White House said Iraq still possessed "several hundred Scud missiles of the type used against Saudi Arabia during the Gulf war."

There were reports that the Saudis demanded the missiles in return for allowing the United States to stage protective cover flights for UN inspectors, but Defense Department officials declined comment on the reports Tuesday.

Meanwhile, in Dhahran, knowledgeable American officials told The Associated Press there were no apparent indications of imminent action against Iraq.

One officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it would take at least two weeks to attain a state of preparedness for action against Iraq.

At the height of the war there were 540,000 troops in the region. Now there are 33,000.

Although jet fighters streak more often through Dhahran skies nowadays, the atmosphere is hardly that of a place that might soon turn into a base for a fresh military strike.

General Khaled quits military service

NICOSIA, Sept 26: Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has granted his nephew and Gulf war commander his request to quit active military service, reports Reuter.

The official Saudi news agency SPA said yesterday King Fahd, in a decree issued on Tuesday, also promoted Prince Khaled bin Sultan to full General from the rank of Lieutenant-General.

Prince Khaled, a 41-year-old Sandhurst graduate, is the son of Defence Minister Prince Sultan who, SPA said, had informed the Saudi ruler of his son's wish to leave active military service.

The agency did not say why the tall and burly Prince wanted to leave his job. Diplomats in the kingdom said he would now pursue business interests.

He was the Arab counterpart of US Army General Norman Schwarzkopf, who commanded a 28-nation force which defeated Iraq and evicted its forces from Kuwait in February.

3 killed in Hyderabad communal riots

Indian students threaten mass suicides against job quota

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: Student protesters fanned out across New Delhi on Wednesday, hijacked buses and threatened large-scale suicides after the government announced a plan to reserve jobs for India's underprivileged, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's Congress issued an order on Wednesday reserving 27 per cent of all new jobs in government service for a category of "socially and educationally backward classes" embracing lower-caste Hindus and some Muslims.

Scores of students com-

mandered buses, while others gathered in Kukherjee Nagar, near the university campus, for an all-night vigil.

The atmosphere is highly charged. Students are gathering in all parts of the city, a police spokesman said. "If not checked in time, the protest could surpass the earlier demonstrations, both in death and damage (to public property)," an official said.

Bloody riots swept northern India last year after then Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh announced a plan to reserve nearly half of all government jobs for low-caste Hin-

Indus. Scores of upper-caste students committed suicide, many by setting themselves ablaze. The issue helped bring down Singh's government in November.

There is fierce competition in India for government jobs, which provide high status and a rare degree of job security in a country where 850 million people scramble for scarce resources.

Wednesday's official order also set aside 10 per cent of government jobs for members of the upper-caste Hindus — the first time the upper castes

have been included in such an order.

Since the 1950s, India has reserved 22.5 per cent of all government jobs for the so-called outcastes or untouchables occupying the very bottom rungs of the social ladder — below the "socially and educationally backward classes."

AFP from Hyderabad adds: At least three people were killed and 10 injured in renewed Hindu-Muslim violence in the old walled city of Hyderabad Wednesday, police said.

An indefinite curfew was imposed in 23 localities of the city after the violence erupted after a day's break, taking the death toll to four.

Violence erupted again after the bodies of a slain woman and her daughter were found lying in a local graveyard Wednesday.

In another incident, a 22-year-old man was stabbed to death at Rein Bazar, one of the affected localities. Police opened fire to disperse a crowd when it tried to storm a police station in this capital city of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

Ten more people were injured in separate incidents, the police said.

The disturbances in old Hyderabad began Sunday during a Hindu religious festival, leaving some 20 injured in violence and clashes with police.

Earlier this week, similar communal violence was reported from parts of Karnataka, adjoining Andhra Pradesh, and the state of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Muslims, totalling some 100 million, form the single largest religious minority in India, where 85 per cent of the population are Hindus.



LAHORE: The Princess of Wales is presented with a shawl and a copy of the Quran by the Imam of the Badshahi Mosque while she toured the 17th century mosque in Lahore September 25 on the third day of her five-day visit to Pakistan. —AFP/UNB photo

US deplores amputation of 2 brothers for robbery in Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Sept 26: The United States plans to tell Pakistan amputation is too harsh a sentence for two US brothers charged with robbing 3,365 dollars from a bank near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, a State Department official said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The brothers Daniel and Charles Boyd of Florida, deny committing the robbery and have only one week to appeal the sentence — amputation each of one hand and one foot before the harsh punishment is

carried out. After the amputation the brothers also have to serve five to 10 years in jail after which they will be deported.

We would expect to raise our concern about the severity of the sentence with the Pakistan, the State Department official said.

He said the cable instructing the US embassy in Islamabad to take the matter up with the Pakistani government had not yet gone out.

The two Americans were charged with robbing a

bank of about 3,365 dollars last June in the north western Pakistani town of Peshawar which is near the famed Khyber Pass and about 40 miles (100 km) from the Afghan border.

The court found them guilty and ordered the amputation of their right hands from the wrist and left feet from the ankle, a court statement said.

The State Department in a written statement said that US consular officials have visited the men on two occasions. In addition a US diplomat met

with the superintendent of prisons prior to the sentencing to rely US government interest in the case.

The department said restrictions imposed by the US Privacy Act prevented release of further details in the case.

But it said that in all such cases consular officers make regular visits to monitor the welfare of detainees to offer lists of attorneys to relay messages back home to make certain there has been no mistreatment and to provide other assistance when needed.

Off the Record

Bush's good-wishes for Yeltsin

WASHINGTON: President Bush spoke with Russian President Boris Yeltsin for 10 minutes on Wednesday and was assured the 60-year-old leader who suffered heart trouble last week was feeling fine, spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said, reports Reuter.

Bush asked Yeltsin how he was feeling in light of the accounts of a few days ago, the White House spokesman said.

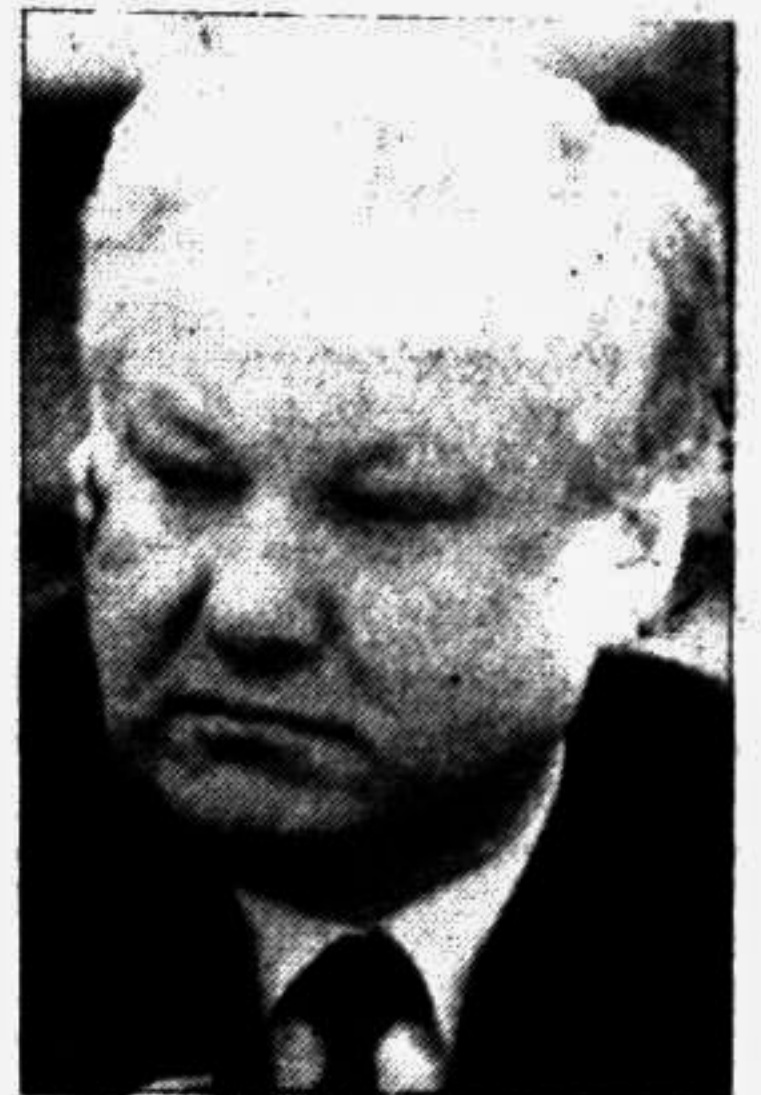
Referring to the fact the Russian leader took two days off because of heart trouble last week, President Yeltsin said he was feeling fine, but he was going to take a couple of weeks for rest, Fitzwater said.

Yeltsin cancelled a meeting with German Finance Minister Thew Walgel Wednesday to take a sudden holiday, speaking fresh speculation over his health.

Fitzwater said Bush also discussed the progress of economic reform during the brief exchange.

In Moscow, Tass news agency also reported the call from Bush to Yeltsin saying the two men "discussed the situation in the Soviet Union and the Russian republic."

They also touched upon other issues, Tass said.



And now skyphone

SINGAPORE: Singapore Airlines (SIA) opened a new era in airborne telecommunications Wednesday by launching what it called the world's first global skyphone service for international commercial flights, reports AFP.

SIA said it fitted a long-haul Boeing 747 with its "celestial" system that allows almost instantaneous connection to ANZ point on the globe, and would install phones in 20 other Jumbo jets over the next three years.

The airline said it also planned to introduce in-flight faxes and data transmission services on its long-haul services next year, eventually providing real-time news for travellers and "business centres in the sky."

"SIA is proud to have played a role in pioneering passenger telecommunications," Managing Director Cheong Choong Kong said in a statement bailing the services as a major technological breakthrough.

Money in lavatory

MANILA: Customs inspectors searching a Philippines airlines plane at Manila Airport on Wednesday discovered 11 bundles of money hidden above a lavatory ceiling, an official said, reports Reuter.

"We suspect this is the work of a smuggling syndicate," said Customs Officer Fidel Camanang. The packets contained a variety of foreign currencies with a total value of about 290,000 Dollars.

The hoard was found during a routine inspection of the Hong Kong-bound just before boarding time.

Norwegian seaweed against diabetes

OSLO: With the help of scientists from the Norwegian Institute of Technology (NTI) in Trondheim, six American dogs with diabetes are now able to live normal lives, without daily shots of insulin. The wonder pill which makes this possible, will now be tried out on humans. The pill is made with seaweed from the coast of Trondelag in mid Norway. It contains living cells which produce insulin, reports Norinform.

In animals and humans who suffer from diabetes, these cells do not function. However, with such a capsule implanted in the abdominal cavity, production of the sugar digesting hormone, insulin continues as normal. The operation is a simple one, and is carried out using a hypodermic and under a local anesthetic. Diabetic dogs have managed for five month periods before needing a new capsule.

International research has tried for years to transplant cells or encapsulated cells against diabetes, but the result has been that the cells have either been rejected, or infections have killed the cells. The great amount of basic research carried out in this area at the university in Trondheim probably accounts for Norwegian scientists being able to solve this problem first.

Since there is a shortage of human donors of insulin cells, the pig may become a major future source, says biotechnologist Gudmund Skjak-Brack at the NTI. This is because the pig is closest to humans in biochemical terms.

Akihito's bid to brighten Japan's image in S-E Asia

TOKYO, Sept 26: Emperor Akihito set out today on a landmark tour of southeast Asia, seeking to project the image of a friendly, peace-loving Japan nearly half a century after its brutal military rule over the region collapsed, reports Reuter.

Akihito, accompanied by Empress Michiko, left Tokyo's Haneda Airport aboard a special plane bound for Bangkok.

It is the first stop on an 11-day trip which is to take him on to Malaysia and Indonesia.

"I should be happy if the present attitude of a Japan aspiring for peace were understood and relations of mutual trust deepened," Akihito told reporters earlier.

Officials say the trip — the first by a Japanese Emperor to the region and only the third overseas — indicates the importance Japan attaches to southeast Asia.

The Asian tour signifies the fact that we attach great importance to this area in general and to those three countries in particular," Yoshiko Karita, the palace's vice grand master of ceremonies, said this week.

Akihito is venturing abroad for the first time since ascending the throne in January 1989 on the death of his father, Hirohito.

An Asian tour was considered too controversial for Hirohito. He is still remembered as the god-emperor in whose name Japan thrust into China and across Asia up to and dur-

Curfew in Zaire

KINSHASA, Sept 26: The Zairean government has ordered a curfew in Zaire to take effect from 8:00 pm (1900 GMT) today until 8:00 am (0400 GMT) Friday, national television announced late Wednesday, quoting an official statement, reports AFP.

The decision was announced following a cabinet meeting. The government of President Mobutu Sese Selo also called for a resumption of the national conference on the country's political future and pushed back the date of the beginning of the school year from September 30 to November 4.