

India, US to expand military cooperation

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: India and the United States have agreed to forge greater military cooperation involving all the three branches of the armed forces, a national newspaper said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The agreement emerged last week during a five-day official visit here by Admiral Chuck Larson, Commander-in-Chief of the US forces in the Pacific, the Hindu said in a front-page report.

During a visit to the United States by Indian Army chief General S F Rodrigues in August, New Delhi agreed to expand the cooperation between the armies of the two countries.

But 'the Hindu' quoted "knowledgeable sources" here as saying that the latest US "offer" to extend such cooperation to the air force and navy had received "a positive response" from the Indian side during Admiral Larson's visit.

Details are expected to be worked out during the sched-

16 Soviets scale Himalaya

KATHMANDU, Oct 24: A 16-member Soviet Himalayan expedition team has reached the summit of 8,201-metre (26,905-foot) mount Cho-Oyu via the west ridge route, the Tourism Ministry announced Wednesday, reports AFP.

The team led by Sergey Efimov, a 47-year-old scientist from Sperskoyevsk, reached the summit of Cho-Oyu in two groups Sunday, the announcement said.

Bid to kill Bush?

OXNARD (California), Oct 24: A man arrested with a stockpile of automatic weapons was being investigated by the US Secret Service on Wednesday for allegedly threatening to assassinate President George Bush, an agency spokesman said, reports Reuters.

Thomas Ward, 45, was arrested by Ventura county sheriff's deputies on Sunday after they found a cache of 12 automatic weapons, including an Uzi submachine gun and several AK-47 assault rifles in his Oxnard, California, apartment.

Officers also found 27,000 rounds of ammunition.

Sheriff's Lieutenant Vince France said Ward told a police informant he had been scouting the area around the Ronald

Reagan presidential library just outside Los Angeles for a good vantage point to shoot Bush when he attends the inauguration of the library on November 4.

Secret Service agent Steve Coll said, "we are in the preliminary stages of our investigation, trying to determine Ward's intent."

Coll said no charges had yet been made in connection with the alleged plot. "We will decide whether or not to press charges after we have fully investigated the matter. We have plenty of time. He is locked up," he added.

Ward is being held without bail after appearing before a magistrate in Los Angeles on firearms charges.

Coll would not say if Ward was the only person being investigated for making threats against Bush or Reagan, or against former Presidents Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon, who are also attending the ceremonies.

"We don't publicise things like that... we don't want to give anyone ideas," Coll said.

Lady Bird Johnson, widow of former President Lyndon Johnson, will also be present, as will Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

Secret Service agent Douglas Carver said Ward initially denied making threats against Bush, but later told investigators if he did threaten Bush he regretted making such statements.

Bill providing amnesty for Soviet deserters submitted

MOSCOW, Oct 24: Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has submitted a bill to parliament providing for an amnesty for deserters and soldiers gone absent without leave, Soviet television reported Wednesday, says AFP.

The two groups of soldiers would be amnestied if they returned to their barracks or reported back to a military district within a month after the new legislation has become effective.

The new Soviet parliament is still to discuss the issue.

Riots break out in Zaire

KINSHASA, Oct 24: Fresh rioting broke out in Zaire's capital Kinshasa today after President Mobutu Sese Seko named a replacement for dismissed Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, witnesses said, reports Reuters.

Protesters set fire to buses and put up barricades to stop traffic in the city of four million people which last month was hit by the most damaging riots in its history.

Armoured personnel carrier could be seen moving into strategic positions and there were some reports of gunfire.

Fierce fighting on in Cambodia despite truce

ARANYAPRATHET (Thailand), Oct 24: Heavy artillery shelling reverted early today in northwest Cambodia where clashes between Phnom Penh forces and government guerrillas continued despite the signing of Cambodia's peace treaty in Paris, reports AFP.

The fighting was concentrated mainly east and south-east of the government-held forward position of Svay chek, about 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the Thai border, Cambodian guerrilla and Thai military sources said in this Thai border town.

The Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), one of two small non-communist factions allies to the powerful Marxist Khmer Rouge to fight the Phnom Penh, charged in a statement that government forces were continuing an offensive launched Sunday.

The world is celebrating the signing of the peace-treaty in Cambodia. But on the battlefield, the killings continue," the statement said.

According to the statement, thousands of civilians had been fleeing artillery attacks by government forces. It had no indication of casualties on the guerrilla side, but said a battalion commander on the government side had been killed in action.

Thai military officers stationed here reported that KPNLF units had overrun several villages during the night.

Foreign aid worker also reported heavy shelling in Cambodia, saying that the sound of big guns could be clearly heard here Tuesday morning.

But despite self-congratulation, doubts remained whether the accord would be respected — especially by the Khmer Rouge, which could easily hide arms in its jungle power base. Relief workers fear the war-hardened guerrillas will not disarm.

Mitterrand said the accord had turned a dark page in the history of Cambodia. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, Co-Chairman of the conference, spoke of "a new era of relationships in southeast Asia."

Diplomats involved in smuggling

BEIJING: An official report Wednesday accused unidentified foreign diplomats of abusing their tax-free privileges to import cars, video cameras and other appliances and resell them for huge profits, reports AP.

The report in the Beijing Daily gave no other details of what it called smuggling by "a small number of diplomats and staff from the foreign embassies." It said the accusation was made by the city's customs office.

The customs office, contacted by telephone, refused to immediately answer questions.

China imposes high duties on many luxury imports, including taxes of more than 200 per cent on cars, which also fall under tight quotas. Diplomats, however, are allowed to bring cars in duty-free and there is an active black market in used cars with diplomatic plates.

The Beijing Daily said customs officials are fighting increased smuggling activity not just on the part of diplomats. Smugglers bring in name-brand cigarettes, liquor and appliances and take out Chinese antiques.

Japan emperor's first grandchild born

TOKYO: Princess Kiko, wife of Emperor Akihito's second son, gave birth Wednesday night to the emperor's first grandchild, a girl, the Imperial Household Agency reported, reports AP.

Both mother and child were reported in good condition, it said.

Kiko, a 24-year-old commoner, married Prince Akihitano on June 29 last year.

Off the Record

Bush sick, tired of CIA criticism

WASHINGTON: President Bush said Wednesday night he's "sick and tired" of charges that the CIA failed to foresee momentous events in the Soviet Union, reports AP.

At the same time, Bush used a speech to veterans of the CIA's forerunner agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), to put in a fresh plug for Senate confirmation of Robert Gates, 48, as the CIA's new director.

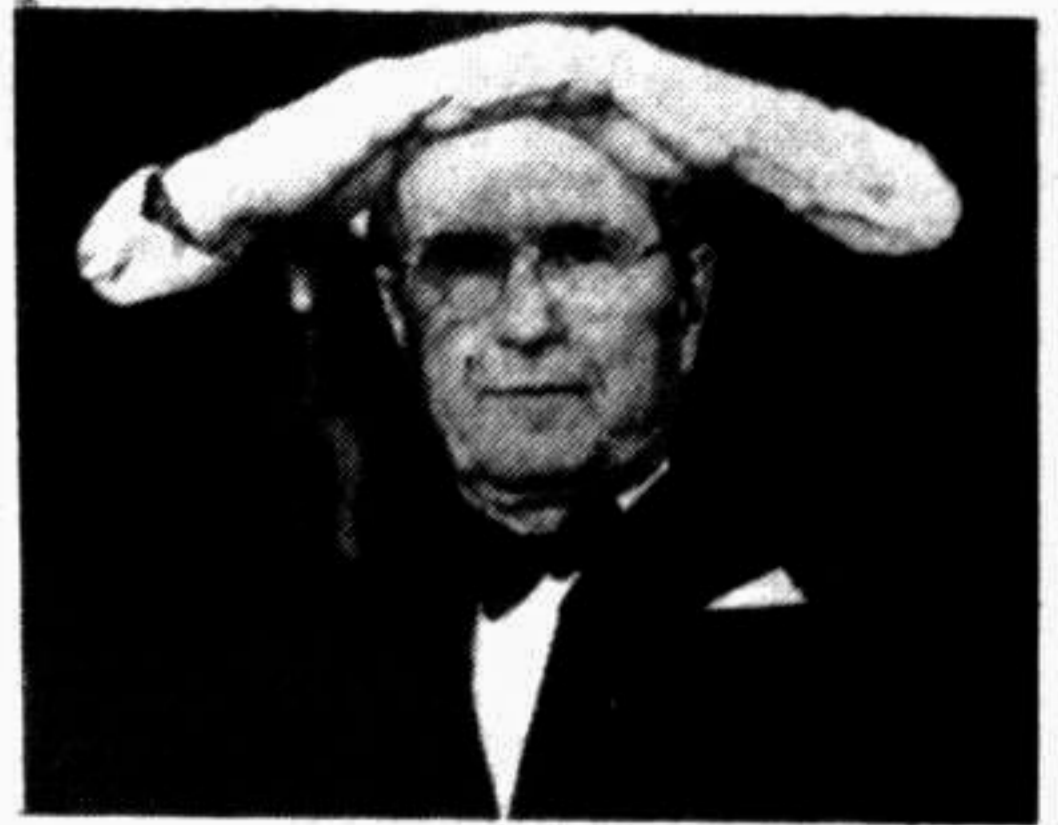
Gates' opponents had charged during his confirmation hearings, among other things, that the career intelligence analyst and Sovietologist had failed to predict the upheaval in the Kremlin.

"We've heard too much of failure in recent weeks," Bush said, "and too little of CIA's crucial part in this victory for freedom. We've heard too little of the sacrifice you and those you trained made to advance democracy."

"I am sick and tired of those in the political arena or in the media who do nothing but carp, criticize and second-guess," he said. "Measuring intentions is a difficult task, and no one can expect every (intelligence) estimate to turn out 100 per cent correct."

Bush said he was gratified by the Senate Intelligence Committee's 11-4 vote favourably recommending Gates' confirmation by the full Senate, which could vote on the nomination as early as next week.

"Let no one mistake our confidence and goodwill for weakness," Bush said in an address prepared for delivery to the OSS veterans. "We're not about to dismantle the intelligence capabilities we've worked so hard to rebuild. But we must adapt them to new realities."



A historic judgement

LONDON: The House of Lords, the highest court in England and Wales, confirmed in an historic judgment Wednesday that a man can be held guilty of raping his wife, reports AP.

Men were already liable for prosecution for raping their wives in Scotland, which has a separate judicial system.

Five senior judges sitting in the House of Lords changed the law in England and Wales Wednesday when they dismissed a final appeal by a man jailed for three years in July for assaulting and attempting to rape his estranged wife.

Women's rights campaigners immediately hailed the ruling as "a fantastic day for women everywhere."

"The judges have finally nailed a legal lie which has somehow survived for three centuries," said Claire Glasman, a spokeswoman for Women Against Rape.

In that judgment, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lane, criticized the centuries-old principle of English common law that a woman implied permanent consent to sexual intercourse with her husband by the act of marriage.

Lane called the principle an "anachronistic and offensive fiction," declaring that "a rapist remains a rapist and is subject to the criminal law, irrespective of his relationship with his victim."

Five law lords, Britain's most senior judges, agreed Wednesday with his ruling, confirming a wife's right to say "no" to sex with her husband.

Lord Keith, one of the law lords, said the principle that a wife gave up this right irrevocably on the day she married was "quite unacceptable" in modern times.

It was established in English common law in 1736 by a ruling by Lord Chief Justice Hale.

Keith said this had reflected the state of affairs at the time, but the common law had to change and evolve.

"Since then the status of women, particularly of married women, has changed out of all recognition," he said.

"Marriage in modern times is regarded as a partnership of equals and no longer one in which the wife must be the subservient chattel of the husband," Keith said.

Soviet fighters in British sky!

MOSCOW: Soviet aerobatic teams on SU-27 fighter planes paid a friendly visit to Great Britain in September 1991. The military pilots from Kubinka base near Moscow took part in an air show which was timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, says Novosti.

Only two or three years ago it would have been almost impossible even to imagine that such a visit of SU-27 combat fighters could have been made to a NATO member-country. But the political situation in the USSR and abroad, too, is changing so rapidly that exchanges of military delegations have become something quite commonplace today.



Nikolai Antoshkin

"The friendly visit of Soviet military pilots to England is not only a good sign of the time, but a revival of glorious traditions, combat friendship cemented by blood in joint battles against the fascist aggressors during the Second World War, a tradition that I regret to say was lost until recently," said Lieutenant General of the Air Force Nikolai Antoshkin, Hero of the Soviet Union, Air Force commander of the Moscow military district, who headed the delegation.

Aerobatic teams "Red Arrows" (Britain), "Blue Lightning" (USA), as well as teams from France and Canada took part in the air-show. The greatest interest was drawn to the performance by the Soviet group called "Russian Vityazi" (Russian Warriors). These pilots who were entrusted with representing the Soviet Union's Air Force in England were not pilots from some special unit, but from a usual fighter aviation regiment, with the only difference that apart from flying routine and combat missions, they have to prepare for demonstration flights.

BRIEFLY

Burmese troops kill 42 Karen rebels: Burma's state radio said government troops killed 42 Karen guerrillas in clashes over the past week at a new battlefield southwest of Rangoon, reports Reuters from Bangkok.

Army, navy, and air force units were stepping up operations in the Irrawaddy Delta region to crush guerrillas, said the report broadcast on Tuesday evening. A transcript was seen in Bangkok Wednesday.

It said that from October 17 until October 22, 42 Karen National Union (KNU) fighters were killed and weapons and ammunition seized.

The fighting took place in the townships of Ngaputaw and Bogale, the radio said. Guerrilla arms caches were also found in Myaungmya, Wakema and Moulmeingun townships, it said.

Both sides have reported an outbreak of fighting in the past month following infiltration of the Delta region by the Karen. It is the first unrest there in nearly 20 years.

US opposes Ukrainian army: The United States has criticised plans by the Ukraine to build an independent army of nearly half a million soldiers saying the proposal is a potential obstacle to military cutbacks in Europe, reports AP from Washington.

Also Wednesday, the State Department praised the Ukrainian parliament for renouncing nuclear weapons and resolving to make the second strongest Soviet republic nuclear-free by 1995.

"The plans to create a large Ukrainian army, however, appear to run counter to the efforts of all the nations of Europe and North America to reduce military forces and enhance stability," said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher.

"We do not believe any useful purpose would be served by the creation of large independent armies, and we are concerned about the economic impact of supporting an army of such size," he said.

The Ukraine's Moscow representative, Vladimir Kryzhanivsky, said Wednesday the planned Ukrainian armed forces of about 400,000 to 450,000 men would be used solely for self-defence.

Pakistan welcomes ME confce: Pakistan welcomed Wednesday the coming conference in Madrid on the Middle East, reiterating its commitment to the peaceful settlement of international disputes, reports AFP from Islamabad.

"Since the majority of the brotherly Arab countries have decided to attend the conference, Pakistan welcomes this attempt at solving the Middle East problem," said the Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Akram Zaki.

In a statement, Zaki said Pakistan was watching with interest the evolution of events regarding the holding of the conference.

Nine blacks killed in S. Africa: Assassants shot and stabbed terrified commuters at two train stations Wednesday morning, killing nine blacks and injuring 36, police said, reports AP.

The attacks in the Soweto township outside Johannesburg were the latest in a series of massacres that have undermined a recent peace treaty signed by the government and leading black groups.

More than 150 blacks have died in the five weeks since the accord was reached.

Police Col Tiene Hargryn said the killings at the Nancefield and Orlando train stations appeared to be revenge attacks for the death of a Zulu-speaking person in the same area earlier Wednesday morning.

The two stations are on the same train line near the Nancefield migrant workers hostel, which is dominated by Zulus who support the Inkatha Freedom Party.

Witnesses said hostel dwellers launched the attack with guns, knives and spears as hundreds of commuters waited to catch morning trains into Johannesburg.

US rejects Czech bid to join NATO: The Bush administration is rejecting an effort by former Communist countries in Eastern Europe to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as associate members, reports AP from Washington.

The administration told Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel on Tuesday that the United States can support only a liaison relationship for Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary with NATO, a spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the administration signed a new investment treaty to mark Havel's second visit to the United States since wresting power from the Communists in December 1989.

Bush said the pact would assure "an attractive investment climate for American firms" in Czechoslovakia, which is suffering economic hardships because of a collapse in its exports, particularly to the Soviet Union.

Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Niles said Havel, during an hour-long meeting with Bush, sought a more institutionalised relationship between his country and NATO to provide for increased security.

Pak judges for banning crime films: Three superior court judges urged the Pakistan government Wednesday to ban erotic and crime films because of their bad impact on morals, an official report said, reports AFP from Islamabad.

Justice Naimuddin of the Supreme Court and Justices Raja Afrasib Khan and Rashid Aziz Khan of the Lahore High Court also asked the government to set up a commission to probe the causes of the increasing crime rate.

The judges, who make up an appeal court, made the proposals in writing at a sitting in Lahore, emphasising that eminent psychologists, doctors, lawyers, jurists and police officers be associated with the probe.

First balloon flight over Everest: Balloonists have succeeded in making the first hot air balloon flight over Mount Everest, the world's highest summit, the chief organiser of the expedition said Wednesday, reports AFP from Kathmandu.



PARIS: Participants at the Paris peace conference on Cambodia pose prior to the signing of the agreement, from L-R are: US Secretary of State J Baker, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, French Foreign Minister Ronald Dumas, Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Philippine Foreign Secretary Manglapus.

Khmers to sleep in Thailand, says Sihanouk

Future Cambodian rulers fear assassination

PARIS, Oct 24: Nineteen countries have signed a UN-brokered peace accord for Cambodia, but the men who will rule together appear to fear assassination by one another, reports Reuters.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who will head the interim Supreme National Council (SNC) which will initially rule Cambodia in tandem with the UN, said after the Wednesday signing that Khmer Rouge delegates to the SNC were refusing to go to Phnom Penh on security grounds.

Kieu Samphan, head of the Khmer Rouge delegation to the Paris talks, had requested that a Vatican-like enclave be created in Phnom Penh under UN protection with a guarded corridor to government buildings, Sihanouk said.

The enclave would house SNC delegates from guerrilla groups hitherto opposed to the Vietnamese-backed Cambodian government which still effectively controls Phnom Penh.

But Sihanouk said it seemed the Khmer Rouge would in fact sleep in Thailand during SNC meetings and commute daily for the meetings on a special Singapore government aircraft.

The SNC will include the present Phnom Penh government plus the three guerrilla factions which have been fighting against it, including the notorious Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge, who killed a million people when they ruled from April 1975 to January 1979, are feared and hated by the Phnom Penh authorities, who were installed by Vietnamese troops and whose Prime Minister, Hun Sen, is a Khmer Rouge defector.

Sihanouk made little reference to his own security, but one report at the conference said he had asked for a significant group of French soldiers to be added to the expected UN monitoring force to ensure

his own protection. He is due in Cambodia on November 12.

Sihanouk said Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front (PNLF) was also unhappy with security arrangement which they felt would make them prisoners in their own capital.

Singing of the "agreement on a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict" at the one-day conference launched the UN's most ambitious peacekeeping operation.

French President Francois

Mitterrand said the accord had turned a dark page in the history of Cambodia. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, Co-Chairman of the conference, spoke of "a new era of relationships in southeast Asia."

But despite self-congratulation, doubts remained whether the accord would be respected — especially by the Khmer Rouge, which could easily hide arms in its jungle power base. Relief workers fear the war-hardened guerrillas will not disarm.

Janata Dal merger with Congress (I) ruled out

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: The Janata Dal leader and former Prime Minister VP Singh yesterday categorically ruled out any question of either merger of a coalition arrangement with the Congress (I), reports PTI.

Answering questions at a news conference Singh said the Dal executive had already gone into the matter in details and had ruled out merger of

the JD with the Congress (I). "I firmly reiterate what has been already resolved by the executive. The party line is clear that there will be no merger or any coalition arrangement with the Congress (I)," he said.

When it was pointed out that some leaders of the party continued to talk about a merger Singh said, these leaders should not make any statement contrary to what the executive has stated. "Anyway we will sort this out among ourselves."

Another PTI reports says: Two prominent Jan Morcha leaders yesterday urged the Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao to call an all party meeting to discuss the Ayodhya issue and help defuse the volatile situation.

A former Union Minister of State, Satpal Malik and Dinesh Trivedi, MP in a statement asked the Janata Dal leader, VP Singh to clarify his stand on the meeting between Sayed Shahabuddin, a Janata Dal MP and Shiromani Akali Dal leader, Simranjeet Singh on the Ayodhya issue and also for forging unity among the minorities.



I sacrificed my government to save the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya —VP Singh

Arabs for separate ME talks on peace, borders

DAMASCUS, Oct 24: Arab foreign ministers met on Wednesday to coordinate plans for Middle East talks in which the main delegations will face Israel separately on the key issues — peace and borders, reports Reuters.

The meeting began with ministers from Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, the Arab states which border Israel, and the PLO, which is barred from the conference table but will play a backstage role directing a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

After an afternoon break they were joined by the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Morocco, representing six Gulf and five North African states.

The peace conference, called by the United States and the Soviet Union, opens in Madrid next Wednesday.

After a ceremonial opening of the central questions, on which the Arabs seek a land-of-peace settlement, will be tackled in bilateral meetings due to start on November 2.

Palestinians are anxious that Arab states do not make separate deals with Israel if the Jewish state stonewalls on Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sixteen of the Arab leagues 21 members were represented directly or indirectly at the Damascus meeting.

The main absentee was Iraq, whose defeat by a US-led alliance in this year's war over Kuwait set the stage for a historic push to end 43 years of Arab-Israeli conflict. Also unrepresented were Yemen, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has condemned the

Madrid conference. The decision to send a representative of the Arab Maghreb Union, Morocco's Abdellatif Filali, to Damascus was apparently taken by a majority of the North African bloc.

Palestinians radicals and Islamic fundamentalists also oppose the Palestine Liberation Organisation's decision to sanction participation in Madrid by delegates from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal represented the oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council in Damascus.

The Gulf and North African groups will be observers at the Madrid opening and the bilateral talks to follow but would participate in multilateral negotiations on secondary issues like regional water sharing and arms control.