

# US, USSR arranged attempted killing of Zahir Shah?

PESHAWAR (Pakistan), Nov 8: A spokesman for Afghanistan's Hizb-e-Islami guerrilla group speculated Tuesday that the United States and the Soviet Union had arranged the attempted assassination of former Afghan King Zahir Shah to "attract sympathy" for him.

But Nawab Salim, the spokesman here for Hezb leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, told AFP the attack may also have been "an internal family affair."

Salim also said the fundamentalist group had decided to boycott at least the early sessions of meetings set to go ahead this month between Moscow and the Afghan resistance.

"The Soviets are not sincere" about settling the Afghan conflict, he said.

## Huge explosion hits American Varsity of Beirut

BEIRUT, Nov 8: A huge explosion hit the American University of Beirut early today, destroying part of the administration block, witnesses said. Police said there were no injuries, reports Reuter.

The bomb blast at 3.36 am (0136 GMT) shook much of Beirut and shattered windows

deal with the United States just to get the release of its POWs (prisoners of war), said Salim. "The Soviets are not giving any impression of considering the Mujahideen as the only eligible interlocutors."

"We are not Contras, we are independent people."

A Mujahideen resistance delegation - including fundamentalist leaders Yunus Khalas and Rasul Sayyaf, as well as Gulbuddin - was expected to travel to Moscow this month.

But even if Gulbuddin does not make the trip, it is possible he will attend the "next stages of the talks", Salim said.

The Hezb spokesman said the attack against Zahir Shah, who was injured with a sharpened paper-knife by a man claiming to be a Portuguese at his villa in Rome, appeared to be "a drama staged by the Soviets and the United States since they want to impose a solution" to the conflict.

Police in Rome said, however, that they were convinced the attacker was not Portuguese, and had told them he was a Muslim who wanted to kill the former monarch to prevent him regaining the throne.

Zahir Shah, 77, was reported to be in satisfactory condition and was ready to assume his "moral duty" and serve the Afghan people, a spokesman for him said in the Italian capital after the assassination attempt.

## Politics of boundaries grip South Asia: Premadasa

# Wangchuk feared acts of subversion in Bhutan

NEW DELHI, Nov 8: The King of Bhutan King Jigme Wangchuk decided not to go to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting due to threat of "subversion" in his kingdom, the government said announcing the trip's cancellation, reports AFP.

The latest issue of the country's only newspaper, the weekly Kuensel published by the Ministry of Information, announced on its front page that it was not possible for the King to go to Colombo "because of threats by terrorists to carry out acts of sabotage and subversion in Bhutan during the summit period."

The terrorists to which the

paper referred are Nepalese militants who are demanding a change to a constitutional monarchy.

In the absence of the King, the SAARC members decided to postpone indefinitely their annual meeting, which was to take place from Thursday to Saturday.

Message from Colombo adds: Sri Lanka's President Ranasinghe Premadasa, snubbed by the collapse of a South Asian summit, Thursday went ahead with elaborate arrangements to receive three Islamic leaders from the region.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and

Maldive President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom arrived in Colombo on state visits after the sudden cancellation of the South Asian summit.

The three leaders were welcomed outside Premadasa's sea-front Secretariat with separate 21-gun salutes and military honour guards and later driven to the main conference hall where the summit was originally scheduled.

The visiting leaders were accorded a public reception at the conference hall spruced up for the aborted summit and later taken to a cultural program organised under Premadasa's personal supervision.

In a lengthy speech,

Premadasa told the three visiting leaders that it was unfortunate that the summit could not take off but was deeply touched by their gesture of goodwill in visiting Sri Lanka despite the cancellation.

The summit was originally scheduled for Thursday to Saturday.

Sharif, in a speech supporting Colombo, said Pakistan had "shared Sri Lanka anguish" over the indefinite postponement of the (SAARC) summit.

"Its postponement at the eleventh hour has been deeply disappointing. Pakistan will stand by you to ensure the eventual success of the summit," Sharif said in a speech broadcast on state television.

He said Pakistan would "never forget Sri Lanka's support on the Afghanistan issue," adding: "We shall link arms with you in peace and adversity."

India and Nepal kept away after the summit collapsed with the withdrawal of the King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan who cited "subversion and terrorism" in the southern part of his Himalayan kingdom as his reasons for staying away.

Premadasa said politics of boundaries had plagued South Asia, aroused hostilities, sponsored lawlessness and threatened the territorial integrity of countries in the region.

Opposition political parties Friday blamed the government for the last-minute cancellation of a seven-nation regional summit, reports AP.

"We believe that Sri Lanka had to suffer this humiliation of a last-minute cancellation due to the absence of a coherent, intelligent and consistent foreign policy," said acting opposition leader, Anura Bandaranaike.



COLOMBO, Nov 8: Leaders of the aborted SAARC summit are pictured from left: Pak PM Nawaz Sharif, Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Bangladesh PM Begum Khaleda Zia and Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa. —AFP/UNB photo

## Crackdown on illegal workers in Singapore

SINGAPORE, Nov 8: More than 100 illegal, mainly Malaysian, workers were nabbed at a construction site here in a joint operation by Labour Ministry inspectors, police and immigration officers, reports AFP.

A Labour Ministry statement Wednesday said that the 112 illegal workers were caught last week and that investigations were underway to identify the employers and subcontractors who would be brought to court if found guilty of hiring the workers.

The ministry's labour in-

spectors have conducted a series of raids on construction sites and other work places to check on illegal workers since here in a joint operation by Labour Ministry inspectors, police and immigration officers, reports AFP.

They have arrested nearly 1,800 illegal workers and have checked 623 work places and sites, the ministry said.

The statement said that 111 employers have been convicted and fined more than 1.5 million dollars (887,000 US dollars).

A first offence under the tougher act will result in a minimum fine equivalent to two years of the foreign workers levy and a maximum fine of equivalent to four years of the levy or imprisonment up to one year or both.

This means that errant employers will have to pay a fine of 8,400 dollars (4,970 US) per illegal worker employed based on the current levy rate of 350 dollar (207 US) per month.

The ministry reminded employers that subsequent offences carry a mandatory jail term of one to 12 months in

addition to the fines.

"As illegal employment is still rampant, no leniency has been given to errant employers. The ministry would therefore like to advise employers again not to employ illegal foreign workers," it warned.

Singapore is host to about 300,000 foreign workers employed in the various sectors of the economy due to the tight domestic labour market. They come from Malaysia, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and South Korea.

## Arrest of police general, 7 officers ordered

# \$20m jewellery of Saudi prince stolen in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Nov 8: Thailand said on Thursday it was seeking the arrest of a police general and seven officers linked to the theft of 20 million dollars of jewellery belonging to a Saudi Prince, reports Reuter.

Lieutenant General Thanoo Hombhual, Commissioner of the Central Investigation Bureau, said police wanted to question the officers and three civilians implicated in embezzling some of the jewellery stolen by a Thai from Riyadh in early 1990.

Riyadh complained that some of the pieces of jewellery returned by Thai police were

cheap copies.

Thanoo said Lieutenant General Charlot Kerdtith and the others accused faced charges of embezzling stolen goods after they recovered the jewellery brought to Thailand by Kriangkrai Tejamong, a Thai who had worked in the Saudi Prince's palace.

The Prince was not identified.

Thanoo told a news conference the policemen, also accused of taking bribes, extortion and abuse of power, could face up to 20 years in jail if found guilty of all the charges.

The jewellery scandal and the unresolved murders of

three Saudi diplomats in central Bangkok in February 1990 have embarrassed the Thai government and strained relations between Thailand and Saudi Arabia.

"I feel very uneasy about this case as I know Charlot Kerdtith well. He is my colleague but I have to do my duty."

The Chief Investigator said accounts from 20 witnesses and other strong evidence showed that the accused officers had breached normal police procedures when they confiscated the jewellery from Kriangkrai Tejamong.

## Pakistan, US to discuss nuclear issue

ISLAMABAD, Nov 8: Senior Pakistani and US diplomats will discuss nuclear proliferation in southern Asia later this month, a government spokesman said Wednesday, reports AP.

Reginald Bartholomew, the US Undersecretary of State for international security affairs, will visit Pakistan on November 19-21, said a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

"Bartholomew and senior Pakistani leaders will discuss the whole range of bilateral issues, including also the progress achieved in nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia," the spokesman said.

Washington cut off military and economic assistance to Pakistan on October 1, 1990

## Underwater pipeline to carry sweet water from Iran to Qatar

ABU DHABI, Nov 8: Iran will supply sweet water to Qatar in a major pipeline project reflecting improving relations between the two Gulf states, Gulf-based Iranian diplomats said, reports AFP.

They confirmed a local press report that Qatar's Crown Prince, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani would discuss the project during his visit to Tehran which began Thursday.

The report by the United Arab Emirates daily Al-Khaleej is correct, one source said. The Qatar leader will discuss details of the venture which was considered several years ago.

The project, the cost of which is not known includes building a 1,800 kilometre (1,125 mile) pipeline across the sea separating the two countries.

southern Iranian river, the Karoun, and pass through the fertile province of Khuzistan up to the Gulf coastline where it will be extended underwater to Qatar.

Both governments will finance the project but the sources said they expected Qatar to pay more given Iran's financial problems.

Technical details of the project have been worked out by experts from the two states but have yet to be revealed, the sources said.

Apart from its economic significance, the project illustrates the great improvement in ties between Iran and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, according to an Iranian diplomat.

1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. But relations improved after Tehran opposed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait last year, a trend culminating in the resumption of Iran-Saudi diplomatic ties.

The Iranian sources said the pipeline to Qatar could be extended at a later stage to other GCC states.

The have been offered piped water by Turkey but they have not responded. The Iranian project could be a substitute, one source explained.

The Turkish project proposed in 1988, envisages a 21-billion dollar dual pipeline to carry water from two Turkish rivers to Syria, Jordan and the GCC states Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE.

explain the project. But GCC nations have shown no enthusiasm. UAE Electricity and Water Minister Humaid Al-Owais said last year that GCC governments had decided to shelve the project after it was found that its cost had risen to 25 billion dollars.

This makes the water from that pipeline more expensive than our desalinated water, he said.

Desalination plants provide GCC states with nearly 70 per cent of their drinking water.

But such facilities are sapping billions of dollars every year from GCC coffers for operations and maintenance.

## Off the Record

### Lady Ghislaine the luxury yacht

LONDON: The luxury yacht Lady Ghislaine from where British press magnate Robert Maxwell disappeared on Tuesday, had been turned into a billionaire's floating headquarters that could be used for pleasure cruises or top-level negotiations, reports AFP.

Maxwell bought the 430-ton white vessel five years ago via a subsidiary of his Mirror group newspapers, Marine and Aviation Ltd, for an estimated 15 million pounds (26 million dollars). The singer Frank Sinatra and the brother of Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi had also been prospective buyers.

Designed in Britain by naval architect Jone Banenberg, the Lady Ghislaine was built in the Netherlands. It briefly belonged to the Heron Corporation before being sold to Maxwell.

The yacht, with a 13-person crew, boasts state-of-the-art communications links capable of transmitting the front pages of Maxwell's newspapers to him before they had been printed. Maxwell used the yacht to negotiate business contracts. He notably invited trade union representatives to the boat as he prepared to buy the New York Daily News at the beginning of the year.

Maxwell baptised the yacht Ghislaine after his daughter. The name is emblazoned in thick gold letters on the hull.



The Princess meets a patient, Mr Jerry Comba, during her visit to the heart unit on the last day of her visit.

## Heart hospital uses bogus patients for Diana's visit

OTTAWA: A hospital in Canada asked eight healthy former patients to fill empty beds and pose as sick cases for a visit by the Princess of Wales.

The Princess flew home unaware that she had taken part in the charade on the last day of her official visit with the Prince.

Unknown to her and Mrs Misa Mulroney, wife of Canada's Prime Minister, eight of the 11 "patients" at the royal opening of a £500,000 day unit at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute were not really sick. The Toronto Star newspaper described what happened as a "fraud".

When the Princess and Mrs Mulroney walked in, the "patients" were sitting up in bed with name tags on their wrists. Two were linked to heart monitors and most had brand new slippers neatly tucked under their beds.

Although the eight had heart surgery in the past and returned occasionally for checks, it was not necessary for them to be there.

Dr Don Beauland, head of cardiology, said: "They have all been former patients and we just telephoned them, asking them to come because the Princess was visiting."

A doctor who introduced each patient to the Princess said: "Pretty much everyone is real except the patients. We did not have enough to meet the Princess because the unit only opened this morning and we couldn't get the real patients here on time."

One of the eight, Mrs Aileen Baulieu, 41, had a heart attack 15 years ago when she was pregnant. Doctors saved her and daughter Connie.

She said: "I got a phone call last week asking me to come in because the Princess was visiting. They said: 'We want you to sit in bed.' I immediately went out and bought a new pink nightie and matching slippers."

The Princess wanted to know what was wrong with me, and told her I came into hospital twice a week for rehabilitation.

"This is definitely one of the more treasurable hospital visits I have had to make. You don't get called in every day to meet a princess."

Mr Dick Kemp, 57, a salesman who had a triple by-pass operation in November 1988, was the last of the eight to meet her. As soon as she had gone, he put his suit back on.

Mrs Gerry Bailey, 45, said: "I'm not a patient, I was a year ago, but I'm fine now." She also received a telephone call asking her to be a patient. "I thought it was a joke. I couldn't believe," she said.

## Saddam axes son-in-law

NICOSIA: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein fired his son-in-law as defence minister on Wednesday and turned the portfolio over to the interior minister who ruthlessly suppressed the Kuwaitis during the Iraqi occupation, reports AP.

The official Iraqi News Agency, monitored in Nicosia, reported that Lt Gen Hussein Kamel Hassan had been relieved of all his duties as defence minister.

In his place, Ali Hassan Al-Majid, the interior minister, will become acting interior minister and take on defence, according to a series of presidential decrees, INA said.

There was no immediate indication on the reason for the move, but evidently it reflected a spat within the close-knit Tikrit clan that Saddam heads.

## Yeltsin terminates CP operations

MOSCOW, Nov 8: Russian President Boris Yeltsin on Wednesday terminated all activities of the Soviet and Russian Communist parties on Russian territory and formally dissolved their organisational structures, Tass news agency reported, says AFP.

Yeltsin abolished both sections of the party in a decree which also stated that no Russian government body would be permitted to carry out any persecution of Russian citizens for their membership in the party.

The decree also contained provisions for all property within the Russian Federation formerly owned by either the Soviet or Russian party organisations to be turned over to the Russian government and made state property.

lions of rank-and-file party members, who had nothing to do with the arbitrary rule and violence, made on their behalf, and to introduce bans on professions, are inadmissible. Yeltsin's decree stated.

However, attempts to reanimate the giant mechanism of the Communist Party machine and give it a chance to crush down the sprouts of Russian democracy, are equally inadmissible," it added.

The move by Yeltsin Wednesday comes after the Russian government suspended all activities of the Soviet Communist Party on Russian soil shortly after the August putsch pending an investigation into the party's role in the failed coup.

## BRIEFLY

**Kuwaiti Emir puts out last oil fire:** Kuwaiti head of State Emir Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah pressed a remote control button Friday putting out Kuwait's last oil fire, reports AFP from Kuwait.

At almost the same time, firefighters extinguished two lingering well blazes in the north, ending the tragic legacy of the sabotage of 751 wells set on fire by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's troops at the end of the Gulf war, Kuwaiti officials said.

Well 118 in the southern Burgan Field had already been controlled and capped.

In the Sabriya field in northern Kuwait near the border with Iraq, Canadian firefighters failed late Tuesday in a desperate effort to put out Kuwait's last out-of-control oil fire.

**Manila to ask UN members for aid:** The Philippines will ask UN members for humanitarian aid to cope with the devastating landslides that killed more than 3,000 people this week, officials said Thursday, reports AP from Manila.

At the Vatican, Pope John Paul II offered prayers for the victims and comfort to the injured and homeless. He called on the international community to offer "prompt and effective assistance."

More than 85 per cent of the 60 million Filipinos are Roman Catholics.

The government said UN Ambassador Sedfrey Ordonez had asked President Corazon Aquino for a full assessment of damage to use as a basis of seeking international help after Tuesday's calamity.

**One Irish soldier killed:** A soldier was killed and another seriously injured in northern Ireland on Wednesday when their vehicle was hit in a rocket attack, police said, reports Reuter from Belfast.

The soldiers were travelling through the village of Bellaghy, a nationalist area in the northern country of Londonderry, when they were ambushed.

Security forces said the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was almost certainly responsible.

Some 3,000 people have been killed since 1969 in the IRA's battle to oust Britain from Northern Ireland and unite it with the Irish Republic.

**Soviet aircraft with 34 disappears:** A Soviet aircraft with 34 passengers and crew disappeared over the Caucasus mountains on Thursday, Tass news agency said.

Air traffic control lost contact with the Yak 40 plane 30 minutes after it took off from Elista in southern Russia on a flight to Makhachkala on the Caspian Sea coast, Tass said. It disappeared from monitoring screens.

It said a search for the aircraft was being hindered by conditions in the rocky Caucasus a towering range of mountains already covered with snow.

**US to deploy missile-warning satellite:** The US space agency said on Thursday the US space shuttle Atlantis will take off on November 19 on a 10-day mission with six astronauts who will deploy a missile-warning satellite, reports Reuter from Cape Canaveral.

The sixth in a series of flights of the year, and the 44th since 1981, will be carrying a 300 million-dollar satellite designed to detect and report on missile launches and nuclear detonations.

There are already 15 other such satellites in orbit. During the mission, Army Chief Warrant Officer Tom Hennen will peer down at points on the earth to test high-powered binoculars and a filmless computerised camera.

**One of twins killed in blast:** A car bomb believed rigged by Basque separatists exploded Thursday, killing the two-year-old son of a paramilitary civil guard, a police spokesman said, reports AP from Spain.

Civil guard Antonio Moreno Chico was with his twins, Fabio and Alexander, when his car exploded in this northern town six kilometers (4 miles) from Bilbao, Juan Carlos Salinas said.

Moreno and his surviving son, Alexander, were hospitalised with minor injuries, Salinas said.

He said no group immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing but said it appeared to be the work of the Basque separatist group ETA.

**Tories lose two Commons seats:** The Conservatives lost two parliamentary seats in Thursday by-elections, an ominous omen for the party as it tries to restore its popularity before general elections next year, reports AP from London.

The opposition Labour and Liberal Democrat parties each won one of the seats and Labour retained its hold on a third seat. The three seats had been left vacant when their holders died.

The elections were seen as an indication of how the Conservatives would be likely to fare in national elections that must be called by July.