

Iran won't renew diplomatic ties with Egypt

TEHRAN, July 29: Iran will not renew diplomatic ties with Egypt and has decided to re-orient its relations with Cairo to "cultural relations," a senior official said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Presidential adviser for international affairs Ali-Reza Moayyeri, in an address to students in the northeastern city of Mashhad, said the Iranian embassy in Cairo would not be reopened.

Iran will restrict its links to "cultural relations" because of Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, he said, quoted by the official news agency IRNA.

Tehran severed relations after the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat agreed to give political asylum to the deposed Shah of Iran in May 1979, a few months after the Islamic revolution.

US war games in Kuwait from Monday US ready to hit Iraq if necessary

WASHINGTON, July 29: The United States said on Tuesday it planned no "imminent" strike against Iraq but remained ready to do so if necessary — apparently with the backing of a US public itching to smash Saddam Hussein, reports Reuter.

"I sense people are ratcheting this up a little bit more than it deserves in the sense that there is some sort of imminent action that is not the case," Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said after congressional leaders gave President George Bush a vote of confidence in the confrontation with Iraq.

A double message to Saddam seemed to be emerging from Washington—tensions have been eased but you are not off the hook—after a weekend compromise that allowed UN weapons inspectors to resume enforcement of Gulf War ceasefire terms.

The Defence Department announced on Tuesday that US troops next Monday will commence war games in Kuwait, whose invasion by Iraq touched off the Gulf War.

There are also some 40 US warships deployed in the Gulf or Gulf-Support regions. But top defence officials, who asked not to be identified, said the navy would not send a third aircraft carrier, the John F Kennedy, to the area as planned.

"All of the tensions have not been defused," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said. He said Saddam had "pushed the matter to the brink on inspections and a number of other issues" including abuse of Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim and Kurds.

US-Iraqi animosity, revived to vitriolic intensity reminiscent of feelings leading up to the 1991 Gulf War, had dragged foreign policy at its most bellicose level into a US presidential campaign dominated by the domestic concerns.

A Cable News Network/ Gallup Poll released on Tuesday suggested the US public was, if anything, even more belligerent towards Saddam than Bush and that US officials might

have good reason to damp down public emotions. The Poll said Americans favoured military action against Iraq by 70 to 24 per cent, sixty-seven per cent favoured overthrowing Saddam, with only 28 per cent opposed.

The touchy issue of whether any new strike should target Saddam personally came up—and reportedly was discouraged—at a morning White House meeting between Bush and congressional leaders of both the republican and democratic parties.

Senate Republican leader Bob Dole said Bush himself stressed that any effort to get Saddam could come with too high a human price tag.

Dole and other congressional leaders said their contingent had given Bush a strong vote of support for whatever course he thinks necessary so long as he co-ordinates with congress and with US allies from the Gulf War coalition.

Meanwhile, a military strike on Iraq would play right into Leader Saddam Hussein's hands and make the allies look like enemies of the Iraqi people, two Iraqi opposition leaders said on Tuesday.

"Attacking buildings or sensitive sites within Iraq would not harm Saddam Hussein, it plays into the hands of Saddam Hussein and he turns out to be victorious or a beneficiary and the allies turn out to be the ones who are attacking Iraq and its people," said Laith Kubbak, one of six Iraqi opposition leaders due to meet US Secretary of State James Baker on Wednesday.

"An isolated military action (against Iraq) is useless, because it will never end the goal the Iraqi people are struggling for: to overthrow the Iraqi dictator and replace it with a democratic system," said Jalal Talabani, a Kurdish leader also scheduled to meet Baker. Talabani and Kubba spoke in a joint interview on Cable News Network.

Emergency in region around St Petersburg

MOSCOW, July 29: A state of emergency was declared Tuesday in the region around Saint Petersburg because of forest fires which have been burning for the past few days. Itar-Tass reported, says AFP.

The city authorities have full powers to requisition all the men and equipment needed in order to fight the fires.

The fires are the results of a prolonged drought. More than 800 hectares (1,976 acres) have been destroyed in the regions of Pritozersk, 200 kilometres (124 miles) to the north, in Luga, 150 kilometres (93 miles) to the south and on islands in the gulf of Finland, but there have been no victims.

Russian weather forecasts say it will rain at the end of the week which should help put the fires out, Tass said.

TEHRAN BRIEFLY

Tehran signs MOU with Kabul:

Afghanistan and Iran have signed a memorandum of understanding to promote political, cultural and economic relations, reports Xinhua from Islamabad.

The document was signed in Kabul on Tuesday by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Borudjerdi and acting Afghan Foreign Minister Syed Cilani.

According to reports reaching here from Kabul today, several joint committees will be set up to work out concrete proposals for increasing bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister left Kabul Tuesday after a three-day official visit to Afghanistan.

During his stay in Kabul, Borudjerdi held a series of talks with Afghan officials and met with interim president Burhanuddin Rabbani and prime minister Abdul Saboor Farid.

Rabbani has accepted an invitation to visit Iran, yet the date of his visit has not been decided.

Election in Peru Nov 22:

President Alberto Fujimori, who dissolved congress and imposed a state of emergency in April, announced Tuesday that the government would hold elections November 22 for an 80-member constituent assembly, reports AP from Lima.

Under Fujimori's proposal, which he first disclosed in May, the assembly would take office Jan 2 and any constitutional amendments it proposes would be put before the voters in a referendum.

But the proposal contains a major catch: Only people who agree not to run for political office for 10 years will be permitted to run for the assembly.

Peres wants European role:

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres advocates granting Europe a more active role in Arab-Israeli arms control talks, Israel television and radio reported Tuesday, AP says from Jerusalem.

Peres voiced his position in a discussion with Defence Ministry director David Ivri, who heads the Israeli delegation on regional arms control, the reports said. Ivri agreed with the Foreign Minister, they added.

Peres proposes that the European Community play a greater role in regional peace negotiations, mainly those dealing with Mideast arms control, Israel television said.

Jovan Raskovic dead:

Jovan Raskovic, a former Serbian leader in Croatia, died Tuesday at the age of 63, the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency reported, says AP from Belgrade.

Raskovic led the Serb rebellion against Croatian authorities that began in 1990 after the centre-right government of President Franjo Tudjman came to power in the first free elections in the state since 1945.

The Serbs accused the newly elected authorities of discriminating against them. Under Raskovic's leadership, they voted for autonomy in a referendum in August 1990. Croatian authorities declared the referendum illegal.

Raskovic at first advocated peaceful resistance to Croatian authorities, but later approved the arming of Serbs in Croatia.

US to sell copters to ROK:

The United States will sell South Korea Apache attack helicopters and related equipment the Defence Department announced Tuesday, AFP reports from Washington.

The agreement includes 37 AH-64 attack helicopters, 775 Hellfire missiles, 30 mm ammunition, night vision systems, eight spare engines and other spare parts and support equipment, the Pentagon said in a statement.

This sale "will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a friendly country," the statement said.

Robbery at Thai Minister's home:

Burglars sneaked past police and dogs guarding the home of Thai Interior Minister Pow Sarasin and stole audio gear and valuables worth one million Baht (US 40,000 dollars) from five cars parked in his compound, reports Reuter from Bangkok.

Police Commissioner Narong Rienthong described Monday night's robbery as an affront to the Bangkok police.

Pow is in charge of the country's police.

Kenya allows refugees' entry:

The Kenyan government on Tuesday allowed a ship carrying 283 Somalia refugees to dock after a six-day standoff and also gave permission to a second vessel which arrived overnight with 200 fugitives clearance to disembark, Reuter reports from Nairobi.

"I have some good news for a change," said Panos Moutzias, spokesman for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, who was involved in six days of talks to secure Kenyan permission for the first vessel to dock.

The Kenyan government has allowed Sanaa-1 to dock. The 283 refugees on it were taken off overnight and are on their way to a camp," he told Reuter.

Yeltsin to meet Kravchuk

MOSCOW, July 29: President Boris Yeltsin of Russia has agreed to meet with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk on August 3 at the Crimean resort of Yalta, a news service reported Tuesday, says AP.

The meeting is expected to focus on a thorny issue largely bypassed at their last summit June 23: the Black Sea Fleet, the Interfax news agency reported.

The months-long tug-of-war between the two former Soviet republics intensified last week when a Black Sea Fleet ship bolted from a training exercise, hoisted the Ukrainian flag and raced to the Ukrainian port of Odessa.

Serbia's govt trying to ensure absolute control of media

BELGRADE, July 29: Serbia's government under President Slobodan Milosevic is trying to take control of Belgrade's oldest newspaper, but is faced with threats of a strike and opposition protests if it succeeds, reports AP.

The republic's parliament, dominated by Milosevic's Socialist Party, is to vote Wednesday on the proposal to give the government control of Politika.

The government says it is only trying to end the hazy ownership status the paper and its publishing house have had for years. Opponents say it is another effort to ensure absolute control of the media.

"We want to transform the economic status of Politika. It is a publishing house of the greatest national interest, and we want to protect its assets and to improve them," Milivoje Pavlovic, Serbia's Information Minister, told The Associate Press. Founded in 1904 by a group of shareholders, the paper was "socialized" under the

Communists after World War II. Rather than state-owned, Yugoslav companies were largely self-managed by employees.

In the post-Communist era, it has been unclear who owned Politika.

If Parliament approves the proposal, the government would have complete control over the Politika publishing house, which puts out 16 newspapers and magazines, and runs a radio and a TV station.

During two days of debate last week, the opposition blocked voting on the motion by filibuster. They could attempt to do the same Wednesday.

However, if it does come to a vote, the motion is likely to pass as Socialists hold of the 250 seats in the Serbian Parliament.

The hardline government of Premier Radoman Bozovic has threatened to ban Belgrade's independent B92 radio station and has refused to allow the capital's NTV television station, which is considered close to the

opposition, to broadcast throughout Serbia.

Vuk Draskovic, leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement, Serbia's largest opposition party, condemned attempts to seize Politika. He told reporters that if government efforts to "muzzle" other media continue, the opposition would organize much larger demonstrations than those of up to 100,000 people last month.

After World War II, Serbia's media came under direct political control of the ruling Communist Party. But Politika managed to remain relatively independent and was considered among Europe's most liberal newspapers.

But after Milosevic came to power in 1987, Politika became a virtual government mouthpiece.

Opposition parties claimed Politika's biased reporting was largely responsible for the Socialist victory in the first multi-party elections in Serbia in December 1990.

But in recent weeks, the publishing house replaced the editors of its two main dailies,

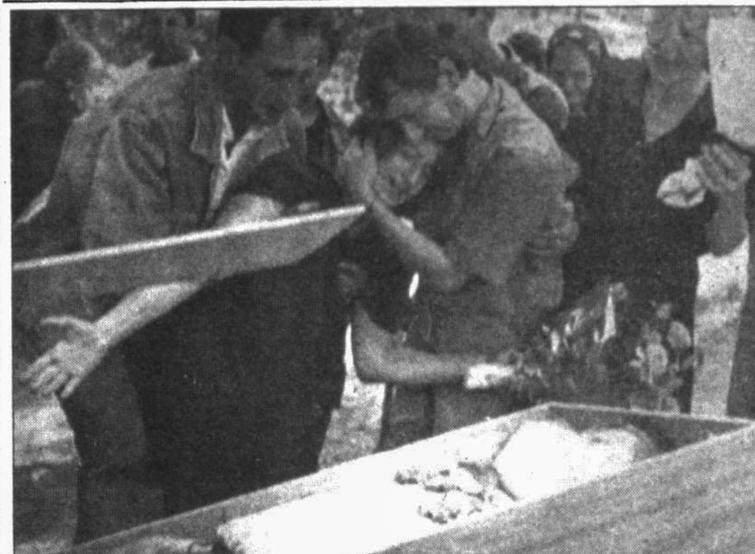
Politika and Politika Express. Their coverage of politics in Serbia, where new parliamentary and presidential elections are tentatively scheduled for November, has become far more objective.

"If (Milosevic's) commissars ever try to enter Politika, the opposition will boycott the coming elections," Draskovic said.

Pavlovic denied that the government wants to influence the election.

The Serbian Orthodox Church, The Writers' Association and other influential institutions that have recently criticized Milosevic's leadership support Politika.

The new government of Yugoslavia, the two-republic federation dominated by Serbia, also opposes the takeover. Premier Milan Panic, a Belgrade-born California businessman with US citizenship, and several of his ministers have affirmed support of free and privately-owned media.



SARAJEVO: The mother of a 15-year old Bosnian cries over her son's corpse at his funeral at Sarajevo's Koseu cemetery July 27. The boy was killed by mortar fire and buried in the cemetery which holds Serb, Croat and Muslim Slav victims. —AFP/UNB photo

'China's repressions force 1.3 lakh Tibetans into exile'

WASHINGTON, July 29: Increasing numbers of exiles are fleeing torture and religious repression in Tibet, where China's "Cultural genocide" has reduced the few remaining monasteries to tourist attractions, a senate panel heard Tuesday, reports AFP.

Actor Richard Gere, who heads an organisation for preserving Tibetan culture, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the years of repression since Chinese troops entered Tibet in 1951 had destroyed most of the 6,000 Buddhist monasteries and forced some 130,000 Tibetans into exile.

"It is time to stop helping

the totalitarian communist regime of China in the name of "quiet diplomacy," said Gere, who urged the administration to cancel China's most favoured nation (MFN) trade status.

President George Bush has renewed China's MFN every year it has come up for debate, arguing that giving the country the lowest tariffs on exports would keep the lines of communication open and provide greater influence on Beijing's human rights policies.

Desaix and Erson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asian Affairs, said US efforts had been successful in influencing China's policy on Tibet.

"Once having supported Tibetan independence, State Department officials now say that Tibet is part of China."

Russian deputies oppose return of Kuril islands

MOSCOW, July 29: Russian legislators on Tuesday warned against returning the Kuril islands to Japan and charged a committee with submitting recommendations on the future of the disputed archipelago to President Boris Yeltsin, Russian television announced, reports AFP.

Deputies, at a closed-door meeting on Russian-Japanese relations, said the four disputed Kuril Islands were of "national interest" to Russia and their return to Japan consequently "inadmissible."

There was no "legal base" for territorial claims by Japan to the island, they added.

Recommendations to be put forward by the committee are to help Yeltsin prepare his official visit to Japan, due in September.

Oleg Rummyantsev, head of

the parliament's constitutional commission, said deputies were undecided on whether to put off the visit altogether or ask for guarantees that no "unexpected and unpleasant surprise" will come from Yeltsin's trip.

Rummyantsev, whose report on the Kurils was discussed at the closed-door meeting, warned that a hasty peace treaty with Japan could provoke a coup against the Yeltsin government.

If a visit to Tokyo by Yeltsin "is prepared in haste... then I fear that the September visit will be followed by great October," he said on Russian television, referring to the 1971 Bolshevik revolution.

Communist hardliners were also behind the August 19-21 coup against then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev last year.

Japan has long demanded the return of the Kuril islands, claiming they were illegally occupied by the Soviet Union in the closing days of World War II.

Japan has also said the dispute must be settled before it can contribute its share of the 24 billion dollar air package from the west.

Itar-Tass news agency said unnamed defence ministry officials who presented a report to the closed-door hearings said they maintained that a 1965 treaty in which Japan handed over two of the four islands is "valid and legal".

Returning the Kuril Islands to Japan at this point could provoke "a chain reaction" from other states who have territorial claims and could weaken Russia's position in its border dispute with China.

Rabin to meet Bush Aug 10

WASHINGTON, July 29: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will meet President George Bush at the president's summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, August 10-11 to discuss accelerating the Middle East peace process, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Rabin's visit to Maine had already been announced but no dates had been given.

The President looks forward to this early opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister to discuss ways to strengthen the bilateral relationship and accelerate the process of making peace in the Middle East, Fitzwater said.

In Jerusalem, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Israel agreed to attend a new round of bilateral talks with the Arabs in Washington but was still awaiting an official invitation to discuss the date.

"We are waiting for an official invitation before giving our response on the date that suits us," the spokesman said.

He said Rabin's visit to the United States the key sponsor of the Middle East peace initiative and his meeting with Bush would come before the next round of talks.

The head of the Palestinian peace team, Haidar Abdel Shafi, said Monday they accepted a US proposal to reconvene the negotiations on August 10.

Secretary of State James Baker went to the Middle East last week in an effort to revigorate the stalled talks following Rabin's victory and the ouster of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of the conservative Likud Party.

Jakarta lifts ban on 13 foreign newsmen

JAKARTA (Indonesia), July 29: The government has lifted a ban against 13 foreign journalists who were barred from entering Indonesia in the last year, a spokesman for the immigration office said Wednesday, reports AP.

Hario Subayou said the journalists were from the United States, Australia, England, Japan and Hong Kong. Fifteen other foreign journalists will continue to be blocked entrance to the country, he said.

Although the journalists were not identified, another immigration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said New York Times reporter Steven Erlanger was still on the blacklist.

Erlanger was banned from visiting Indonesia last November after writing an article the Indonesian government viewed as offensive to President Suharto. Titled "Suharto's Indonesia: A Family Toll Mahal", the report said Suharto's children had business ties to major government projects, including toll roads.

The story said the desire to protect those businesses would strongly influence Suharto's decision on whether to run for another term in 1993.

Off the Record

Bush has a long record of broken promises: Clinton

LAKE CHARLES, La: Bill Clinton, having recovered from questions of credibility and character, is painting himself as the candidate to trust, running against a man he says has a long record of broken promises, reports AP.

Both President Bush and his Democratic challenger have turned, at least temporarily, away from their arguments that they are the presidential candidates of change. Now both are insisting they are the most trustworthy when it comes to domestic or foreign policy.

"The flip side of change is trust," Bush said Monday in arguing that voters should rely on his experience to guide the nation's dealings with other countries.

Such comments have given Clinton his ammunition for the week.

"Trust? This is a guy who said 'read my lips' four years ago and he wants to be trusted," Clinton said Tuesday while campaigning in Chicago.

On Wednesday, the Democratic candidate was campaigning in Louisiana and booked rally at the Superdome in New Orleans—site of the Republican National Convention in 1988 where Bush said, "Read my lips: No new taxes," a pledge he later abandoned.

Even before the Superdome visit, Clinton was painting Bush as someone who couldn't be trusted.

Koran on auction

HONG KONG: What is claimed to be the world's smallest copy of The Koran will be sold at an international auction in China in October, it was reported Wednesday, says AFP.

The book measures just 2.7x1.9 millimetres (0.108x0.144 inches), and at 5.3 grams (0.186 ounces) is lighter than the previously known smallest copy of The Koran kept in Algiers the semi-official Hong Kong China News service said.

The agency said the book was owned by a Muslim Chinese named Zhang who lived in a suburb of Beijing, and that it had been in his family for six generations.

It has already been registered at an initial price of 100,000 US dollar for the auction, scheduled to be held from October 10-15 in Beijing.

7-year old boys can rape too

INDIANAPOLIS: One of two 7-year-old boys charged with delinquency in the alleged rape of a first-grade girl in a school rest room pleaded guilty Tuesday and agreed to testify against the other boy, reports AP.

Accompanied by his mother, the boy appeared scared but confidently answered questions at a hearing before Marion County Magistrate Susan Boatwright-Stonum, witnesses said.

The child, whose trial was to start Tuesday, admitted involvement in the March 26 attack. Sentencing was set for September 10.

After their arrests, the boys were allowed to stay home to await trial.

Under a plea agreement, the boy will be on probation for at least two years, get counseling and have no contact with the victim.

He also agreed to testify at the other boy's trial, set to begin September 10.

If the agreement is broken, the court could remove the child from his home, said Deputy Prosecutor Gary Chavers.

For slaying of 14 prostitutes

RIVERSIDE, Calif: A Texas parolee has been indicted in the serial slayings of 14 prostitutes whose strangled and stabbed bodies were found dumped throughout Riverside County, authorities said Tuesday, reports AP.

A county grand jury indicted William Lester Suff on 14 counts of murder, one count of attempted murder and one count of assault with intent to commit rape, Deputy District Attorney Paul Zellerbach said.

The indictment includes two killings for which Suff was previously charged and pleaded innocent.

Suff, a former Riverside County stock clerk, was being held without bail, and a September 14 arraignment was scheduled. Zellerbach said he would seek the death penalty.

Switzerland to take 1 lakh Y'slav refugees

BERN, July 29: Switzerland is preparing to accept up to 100,000 refugees fleeing civil war in former Yugoslavia, a spokeswoman for the Federal Office for Refugees (ODR) announced Tuesday, reports AP.

Cantonal and local authorities were informed of plans to provide shelter if an "extra ordinary" number of refugees should cross the Swiss border.

The situation would be extraordinary if 6,000 refugees entered the country each month, said ODR spokeswoman Vera Britsch.

The Foreign Ministry said 35,000 residents of the former Yugoslavia had sought refuge