

BRIEFLY

Kuwait recovers six planes: Kuwait has recovered six Airbus planes stored at Iranian airports by Iraq during the Gulf crisis, Kuwaiti Finance Minister Nasser Al-Rawdan announced Monday, AFP says from Kuwait City. Rawdan, quoted by the Kuwaiti news agency Kuna, said the six planes had landed Monday in Abu Dhabi for servicing. Three others were also there for maintenance, while the remaining two were being checked in France. Praising the "positive attitude" of the Iranian authorities, Rawdan said the return of the aircraft "puts an end to one of the episodes of Iraqi hijacking that was without precedent in modern history." Kuwait and Iran recently reached agreement on the return of the planes, delayed by an Iranian demand for nearly 90 million dollars in parking fees for the craft.

Goulding to visit El Salvador: President Alfredo Cristiani said on Monday that UN peace-keeping Chief Marrack Goulding will visit El Salvador this week to push for solutions to a crisis blocking the country's peace process, reports Reuter from San Salvador. Cristiani told reporters Goulding, who is responsible for UN peace-keeping forces worldwide, would arrive in El Salvador on Thursday.

It will be the second time the British negotiator has stepped in to help resolve disputes in the complex Salvadoran peace process. Goulding defuses a bitter dispute in march over land ownership in areas worst hit by the civil war. This time the rebel Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) has suspended the demobilisation of its 8,000 guerrillas, accusing the government of violating the UN mediated peace accords that ended 12 years of civil war in January.

Eliasson to start talks in Baghdad: UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Eliasson will begin talks in Baghdad on August 17 on completing a new memorandum of understanding with Iraq covering the status of UN aid workers and guards operating in that country, a UN spokeswoman said on Monday, reports Reuter from United Nations. The last memorandum expired on June 30 and the United Nations has been pressing since May for its renewal.

The number of aid workers and guards, originally totalling about 1,100, has been reduced as their contracts have expired. Some of those still in Iraq have also run into difficulties.

Hezb-i-Islami captures 100 trucks: The Afghan hardline Mujahideen group, the Hezb-i-Islami, captured over 100 military trucks and oil tankers from the militia of General Rashid Dostum in Bagram district of Afghanistan's Parwan province Tuesday, reports Xinhua from Islamabad.

The trucks and oil tankers carrying logistic materials and oil to Kabul came under a sudden attack of Hezb-i-Islami forces led by Commander Karim Abid when they reached Bagram district, the Afghan news agency reported.

The whole caravan and the talks in escort were captured and the personnel were taken captives, the reports said. It is the second time that the militia convoy was attacked fiercely by the Mujahideen of Hezb-i-Islami.

Gastroenteritis kills 188 in Nepal: A total of 188 people in far western region of Nepal died of Gastroenteritis between mid April and mid July, Radio Nepal broadcast Tuesday, says Xinhua from Kathmandu.

The epidemic, which usually outbreaks due to unhygienic food and drinking water, has been brought under control in region. In Nepal, hundreds of people die of gastroenteritis every monsoon season.

Iran-Contra scandal

Defence seeks CIA Director's testimony

WASHINGTON, Aug 11: The Justice Department asked a federal judge Monday to reject a defence subpoena seeking CIA Director Robert Gates' testimony in former spy master Clair George's criminal trial, reports AP. It was not immediately clear what the defence hopes to gain from Gates' testimony. Defence lawyer Richard Hibey did not return a telephone call Monday evening.

The Justice Department said in court papers filed on behalf of the CIA late Monday that George's lawyers have not adequately shown what testimony they seek from Gates and why it is needed.

Without such a showing, "the subpoena amounts to interference with the work of an Executive Branch agency at its highest levels without legitimate cause," the Justice Department maintained.

US District Judge Royce C Lamberth was expected to hear arguments on the matter Tuesday afternoon.

George, the former No 3 CIA official in charge of all overseas spy operations, is charged with covering up his knowledge of the Iran-Contra affair during testimony before Congress.

Gates was the deputy director of central intelligence during much of the period covered by the charges against George. Gates' role in the Iran-Contra scandal underwent intensive scrutiny during his Senate confirmation hearings last year. George's lawyers have said they want to introduce congressional testimony by Gates in the Iran-Contra scandal, to show that the CIA knew little about North's operation. Lamberth has said that in order to delve into those statements, the defence would have to call Gates as a witness.

The Justice brief said it appeared the defence wanted Gates' testimony on his "entire knowledge of events related to the Iran-Contra affair regardless of whether his understanding of events has any bearing on the various counts of the indictment (against George) or may be cumulative other testimony." Earlier Monday, CIA operative George Cave testified that George expressed concern about Richard Secord's role in US arms sales to Iran in 1986, months before George denied knowing what that role was.

Egyptian Gen to head UN peace-keepers in Sarajevo

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 11: An Egyptian General Hussein Ali Abdelrazik, has been named to head the UN peacekeeping force in Sarajevo, a UN official said Monday, reports AP.

General Abdelrazik, a former joint commander of the UN verification mission in Angola, will take over the command in Sarajevo on August 20, said Nadia Younes, a spokeswoman for UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The United Nations has been working to keep the airport open in the Bosnian capital to allow in UN relief flights supplying the population with food and medicine despite a Serbian siege.

Israeli plan will help boost ME peace process: Ashrawi

JERUSALEM, Aug 11: An Israeli plan to lift a ban on contacts with the PLO will boost the Middle East peace process and is another positive gesture from the new Israeli government, the Palestinian peace team spokeswoman said Monday, reports AP.

"It will certainly help the peace process," said spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, who is still officially under investigation for meeting Palestine Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat in Amman in June.

PLO officials in exile in Tunis, though welcoming the offer, called for Israel to go further and begin negotiating directly with their organisation rather than with Palestinians from the occupied territories.

WASHINGTON, Aug 11: The United States called Monday for an end to factional fighting in Afghanistan, although Washington's diplomatic influence there is limited because it has not reopened its embassy in Kabul for security reasons, reports AP.

"We are increasingly concerned by the continuing fighting in Kabul," said State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher, referring to the latest round of fighting to erupt in the Afghan capital since April.

when the US-backed Islamic resistance ousted Soviet-backed President Najibullah.

"We deplore the loss of human life and we call on all sides to stop the fighting," Boucher said.

We think that the Afghan people have achieved their freedom with the ousting of Najibullah and the formation of an interim government in April," Boucher said, adding that it would be "tragic if this victory was (denied) by continuous internal fighting."

Thousands of people fled Kabul on Monday after forces of hardline Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar began pounding the city of 1.2 million people with intense rocket and artillery fire.

Hekmatyar has vowed to oust northern Afghan troops, including the Uzbek militia, from Kabul.

Government forces of Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Massoud and Uzbek General Abdoul Rachid Dostam responded to the attack.

Witnesses said hundreds of people were killed and injured.

The United States had provided financial and military support to the Afghan resistance coalition which eventually toppled Najibullah.

Reuter from United Nations adds: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali condemned on Monday renewed fighting among Afghan guerrilla groups in Kabul and called on all parties to lay down their arms and begin a dialogue.

Expressing sorrow that two Afghan UN staff members were killed in a rocket attack on Sunday, he said it was highly regrettable that after 14 years of war in that devastated country the people of Afghanistan were still experiencing death, destruction and suffering.

"The Secretary-General calls upon all parties involved to exercise restraint," he said in a statement issued through a spokeswoman. "It is crucial that the parties to the conflict lay down their arms and begin a dialogue at once, so as to find a solution that would bring peace and security to their war-torn country."

Boutros-Ghali said if the United Nations was to continue its humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, the Secretary-General would expect that the safety and protection of UN personnel, property and premises were assured.



NEW YORK: Democratic Presidential nominee Gov. Bill Clinton (2nd R) and his running mate Al Gore (R) arrive at CBS TV studios for "CBS This Morning", a live question and answer show, August 10. The show's hosts are Paula Zahn (L) and Harry Smith (2nd L). — AFP/UNB photo

Bosnia to shut detention centres

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Aug 11: Leaders of Serb-held territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina say they are closing two notorious detention centres which sparked world outrage over "concentration camps" in war-ravaged former Yugoslavia.

Omarika prison, the Bosnian Serbs' main interrogation centre, would be shut "within a few days", Vellibor Ostojic, Information Minister of the Maverick Serb state, told Reuters.

Another camp, a former ceramics factory in neighbouring Prijedor, would also close, he said.

Prisoners from the two camps, where several thousand people have been held, have told of beatings and starvation rations.

The closures appeared to be part of a concerted effort by the Bosnian Serb authorities to clean up their disastrous international image.

"I do not doubt that there have been some irregularities (in the treatment of prisoners) on the Serb side," President Radovic Karadzic of the Bosnian Serbs told Reuters on Monday. "We must work to overcome the antagonisms that caused this."

Aid workers and former prisoners said the attention focused on the camps was misleading.

They said most Muslim and Croats detained since the Bosnian conflict erupted four months ago had been held in scores of small makeshift jails which were often beyond the control of Karadzic's breakaway government.

They said the treatment of inmates held in sports halls, factories and schools, ranged from mild to brutal.

Freed Croat prisoners described having been held with hundreds of others in a sports hall and a discotheque near Doboj, a town close to the border with Croatia, and in a cement factory near Zanski most in northwest Bosnia.

"I was held at four different places in two months. We were often beaten, especially when the Serbs had suffered casualties on the war front," the 59-year-old man held near Doboj said.

"Two prisoners I was with were beaten to death, one died of a broken neck and the other because blood filled his lungs."

In one detention centre, he said, prisoner were fed only every third day. "No records were kept. When I was released, they made me sign myself out again."

The second man said he had been held near Zanski most with 400 others for 12 days and had been beaten daily for the first five days, sometimes with clubs and chains.

He too, said two fellow prisoners had died in detention.

Both men said that they had been rounded up with Croat and Muslim neighbours while Serb police searched their homes for weapons, they said on weapons were ever found.

Catholic and Muslim charities said many small local detention centres had been set up by local warlords and paramilitary groups who paid little heed even to the Bosnian Serb government, let alone to international protests.

Ostojic insisted that worse atrocities were being committed against Serbs held on the other side of the battle lines.

"We are defending Christian Europe against Islamic fundamentalism. Why is the West attacking us for this? Why is there no criticism of camps on the Muslim side?"

British Liberal Democrat Party leader Paddy Ashdown visited Majaca prison camp on Monday and later said safe havens should be set up in Bosnia.

All parties to attend ME peace talks

WASHINGTON, Aug 11: The United States has received positive responses from all the parties to the bilateral negotiations in the Arab Israeli peace process to attend a sixth round of talks that will begin in Washington August 24, a senior administration official announced August 10, reports AP. The United States and Russia, as co-sponsors of the talks, welcome this opportunity "for the parties to engage in substantive negotiations and to make real progress during this round," the official told reporters in Kennebunkport, Maine, where President Bush met August 10 with Israeli Prime Minister Rabin.

The United States "is prepared to continue to play it role as a driving force, a catalyst, an honest broker," to promote progress.

S Africa to accept more UN violence monitors

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 11: South Africa's political players appear prepared to accept proposals made by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for more violence monitors and a probe of various armed forces, reports AP. Sources within the White-minority government said on Monday that an investigation into the police and defence force would not be opposed, nor would Boutros-Ghali's proposal for 30 permanent UN violence monitors.

In return for this President Frederik De Klerk is likely to propose an amnesty for members of the security forces involved in crimes against anti-apartheid campaigners and organisations.

Political observers believe the government is willing to expose its dirty tricks of he

King Hassan dissolves cabinet

RABAT, Aug 11: King Hassan of Morocco dismissed his government on Monday to make way for a new administration which will supervise the country's first elections in eight years.

A senior government source told Reuters the King would designate a new Prime Minister within 24 hours to form a government to organise elections later this year. The source said ministers representing political parties asked the King at the weekend to relieve them of their duties so that they could devote themselves to the electoral campaign.

The officials new agency map said King Hassan told ministers in a letter of thanks for their services that Morocco was on the eve of important developments including a referendum on a new constitution

Court martial underway for romantic advances

PENSACOLA, Fla: Women testified at a court-martial Monday that a Marine drill instructor made romantic advances while they were Navy officer trainees. One said he put his hand down her pants, reports AP.

Gunnery Sgt. Michael E Wallace is one of two drill instructors at the Pensacola Naval Air Station charged with verbal assault, physical assault and fraternization. Gunnery Sgt. Clifford Ford is scheduled for trial August 17.

During a hearing before his trial, Wallace denied having an affair with Ensign Traci Fischer, a flight student. Proceedings continue Tuesday.

Ms Fischer has been accused of perjury and fraternization, the military term for socializing between officers and enlisted personnel. Such socializing is banned.

A Navy spokesman said Ms. Fischer's commanding officer is awaiting a report before deciding if any disciplinary action should be taken.

Ensign Elizabeth Zardeskas testified that Wallace put his hand down her pants and put a piece of ice on her buttocks at a party.

UN experts leave Baghdad for outside inspection

MANAMA, Aug 11: UN weapons inspectors, still unusually secretive about their work, left Baghdad on Tuesday for a three-day mission outside the Iraqi capital, according to Gulf region radio reports, AP.

A spokesman for the team leader, Nikita Smidovich, was quoted by radio stations in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia saying the 22-member team would work outside the Iraqi capital and complete its trip before the Muslim Sabbath on Friday.

Smidovich had disclosed previously that while in Baghdad in June he quietly launched a permanent two-to-three-member squad that uses helicopters to scan continuously all parts of the country and report anything suspicious to ground teams.

The experts are trying to track down hidden Iraqi nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, particularly long-range Scud missiles.

UN teams have supervised destruction of about 150 of the long-range missiles declared by Iraq but remain unsatisfied with the accounting Iraq gave of for the rest of the 819 Scuds supplied by the Soviet Union, its main former arms supplier.

The team, the 42nd sent to Iraq under the UN mandate ending the Gulf War, began its inspections Sunday and is scheduled to leave Aug 17.

Smidovich and executive officers of the supervising UN Special Commission in Baghdad at the regional headquarters in Bahrain have kept confidential the sites the team has visited.

All that is known is that the sites were in Baghdad or its vicinity because the teams left their hotel in the morning and returned before sunset.

Iraq has barred Associated Press reporters from Baghdad. But there is no indication the UN team has been sharing information with journalists in Iraq.

On Tuesday, UN officers in Baghdad, reached by satellite telephone, and those in Bahrain said only the team leader — now in the field — could talk to reporters.

It is an uncharacteristic silence that appeared possibly geared to get better cooperation from the Iraqis.

Iraq had said the experts would be free to continue hunting for traces of weapons operations, provided they did not try to enter government ministries.

Six feared dead in temple stampede

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Six people were feared killed and 50 injured Tuesday in a stampede in a Hindu temple in a northern state in India, a news agency reported, said AP.

United News of India said a dozen people were hospitalized in serious condition after crowds milled at the Hanuman Garhi temple in Ayodhya during a religious festival, about 500 miles (800 kilometers) east of New Delhi.

No official confirmation of the casualties was available, it said.

Off the Record

Depressed Oscar winner

ALIBU, Calif: When the acting offers didn't come after Louis Gossett Jr won an oscar for the 1982 film "An Officer and a Gentleman," anger and depression set in, reports AP.

"I went on a personal search, and I grabbed at everything I could to help me," Gossett said in a recent interview at his home. "The big mistake was thinking that I would find the answers outside myself."

I bought a Rolls-Royce, I hung out with pretty women. I bought nice homes, went to the right church and studied with all the right gurus. But those were all outside things, and this was an inside job."

It's taken nearly a decade for Gossett, 55, to overcome the depression. He plays a boxer-con man in the movie "Diggstown," which opens Friday.

"Resentment is self-destructive," he said. "Even if what you're resentful about is true, it'll only get worse if you carry it around."

They cried with Lata

BOMBAY: Melody Queen Lata Mangeshkar today brought tears to the gathering at the golden jubilee fete of the Quit India movement, as she rendered "ae mere vatan ke logo" in remembrance of the martyrs, reports PTT.

The famous song of lyricist Pradeep was sung by Lata after the Chinese aggression of 1962 before an audience at Delhi that included then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who had responded with deep emotion.

Lata's song at the August Kranti Maidan sounded a fitting and sombre finale to the function. Lata herself was overcome with emotion as she sang it, and people dabbed handkerchiefs to their eyes as she narrated in song the spectacle of soldiers valiantly facing bullets for safeguarding the country's territorial integrity so that their fellow countrymen enjoyed freedom and safety of their homes.

Court martial underway for romantic advances

PENSACOLA, Fla: Women testified at a court-martial Monday that a Marine drill instructor made romantic advances while they were Navy officer trainees. One said he put his hand down her pants, reports AP.

Gunnery Sgt. Michael E Wallace is one of two drill instructors at the Pensacola Naval Air Station charged with verbal assault, physical assault and fraternization. Gunnery Sgt. Clifford Ford is scheduled for trial August 17.

During a hearing before his trial, Wallace denied having an affair with Ensign Traci Fischer, a flight student. Proceedings continue Tuesday.

Ms Fischer has been accused of perjury and fraternization, the military term for socializing between officers and enlisted personnel. Such socializing is banned.

A Navy spokesman said Ms. Fischer's commanding officer is awaiting a report before deciding if any disciplinary action should be taken.

Ensign Elizabeth Zardeskas testified that Wallace put his hand down her pants and put a piece of ice on her buttocks at a party.



MOSCOW: A group of technicians prepare the biggest plane in the world, called Atlant, August 10 for the Moscow airshow, just outside the capital. The official opening will take place August 11 on the biggest airport in the former Soviet Union, and is expected to attract people from all over the world. At rear is the Russian Space Shuttle. — AFP/UNB photo

Leaders of former Y'slav republics invited to attend peace talks

BRUSSELS, Aug 11: Leaders of republics of the former Yugoslavia have been invited to attend the 13th plenary session of European Community-sponsored peace talks in Brussels on Friday, a British embassy spokeswoman said on Monday, reports Reuter.

She said a formal announcement about the meeting, under the chairmanship of former British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington was expected today.

Bosnia-Herzegovina boycotted the last full session of the talks in Brussels on May 6 because President Alija Izetbegovic said he could not safely leave his capital Sarajevo, besieged then as now by Serbian forces.