

Pakistan faithful to Shimla accord

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Shahryar Khan, today called on the Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, and delivered a letter from his Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reports PTI.

After his 30-minute call on Rao, the Pakistan Foreign Secretary said the letter was "positive and constructive" in contents.

Emphasising that Pakistan remained "faithful" to the Shimla Accord, Shahryar Khan expressed the hope that Kashmir would be "meaningfully" addressed during the four rounds of foreign secretary-level talks spread over three days.

"While we remain faithful to the Shimla Accord, it does not exclude our commitment to the UN resolutions," he said. Shahryar Khan described his meeting with Rao as "very cordial." The Pakistan Foreign Secretary, who arrived here yesterday for a five-day visit, began the day by holding a meeting with J N Dixit.

Gulf states seek closer relations with India to offset fears of Iraq, Iran

ABU DHABI, Aug 17: Gulf Arab states are seeking to boost relations with India to offset lingering fears of Iraq and growing Iranian military power in the region, diplomats say, reports AFP.

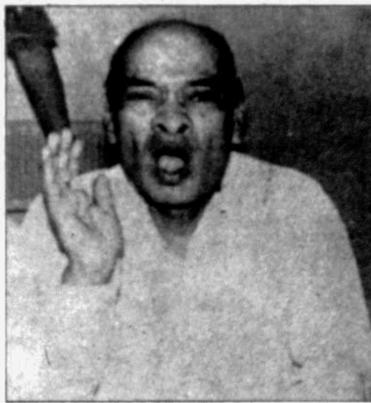
The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations are using their oil wealth to woo India after the withdrawal of most of the allied forces that crushed Iraq's military machine in last year's war for Kuwait.

"GCC states feel India can play an important part in maintaining peace in the region, given its political and military might and proximity to the Gulf," said a GCC diplomat based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"India is also a key trade partner and oil importer from the region. It is in its interest that the Gulf remains stable," he said, declining to be named.

As Iraq renews its claim to Kuwait and Iran pushes ahead with plans to beef up its military, GCC countries sent their top officials to New Delhi last week to seek support for security arrangements for the volatile region.

Abdullah Bishara, Secretary General of the six-nation GCC, met Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and other Indian leaders for talks on political and economic cooperation.



Narasimha Rao: Delhi's stand during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was an aberration.

GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE — were taken aback by New Delhi's refusal during the Gulf crisis to join nearly 30 countries in the US-led coalition that ejected the Iraqis from Kuwait.

Bishara told the UAE newspaper Gulf News in an interview published Saturday that Indian officials had expressed regret at the country's position during the crisis.

"Rao told me that New Delhi's stand during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was an aberration and a departure from the country's established foreign policy," Bishara said.

"He told me that the blame for this departure should go to the then government led by Pratap Singh."

Bishara, a Kuwaiti, felt India had a major role to play in bringing peace to the Gulf and said he expected it to be more assertive.

"We do not expect India to flex its muscles or behave like a policeman. When I say assertive, I mean an unambiguous and constructive stand," he said.

While admitting GCC investments in the subcontinent were negligible, Bishara said recent reforms by New Delhi would open the door for Gulf petrodollars.

to the absence of the right economic climate and policies of successive Indian governments," he told Gulf News.

"But it is going to be different now with the opening up of the Indian market and liberalisation of government policies."

He said an Indian business delegation would travel to Oman in November and a Gulf trade mission would soon visit New Delhi.

The bulk of overseas GCC assets are based in the West and estimated at more than 350 billion dollars. But there have been calls for turning to Asian markets after large losses because of world stock market crises.

Annual trade between India and the GCC has ranged between two billion and three billion dollars in the past five years.

The figure is dwarfed by the GCC's trade with the European Community, Japan and the United States, which stood at 34 billion dollars, 33 billion dollars, and 28 billion dollars respectively in 1991.

India was among the first countries to trade with the Gulf, with its merchant vessels coming to the region daily to buy pearls in return for clothes, food, spices and perfumes.

Delli rules out scheduled castes quota in HC, SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The centre has ruled out the possibility of making a reservation quota for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the appointment of High Court and Supreme Court judges, reports PTI.

The issue cropped up following representations from members of parliament, bar associations, bar councils, organisations and associations for the welfare of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST) for more representations to persons belonging to these groups.

Official sources pointed out that appointments of judges were made in terms of Articles 124 and 217 of the Constitution of India, which did not provide for reservation in favour of any caste or class of persons.

However, administrative action has been taken to ensure that, as far as possible, representation is given to members of SC/ST, backward classes and minorities in the appointment of High Court and Supreme Court judges.

Blast rocks Pak navy base: 3 killed

KARACHI, Aug 17: A powerful explosion rocked a Pakistan navy base on the Arabian sea Monday, killing at least three officers and injuring 41 others, including several civilians, government officials said, reports AP.

The explosion occurred a day after Pakistan and the United States completed a two-day joint naval exercise in the area.

No one has immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion and government officials refused to link it with the joint exercise.

"We cannot say anything right now, but it certainly seems to be a terrorist activity," said Pakistan Navy Commander Roshan Khayal.

For two days, US and Pakistani navy officers waged an imaginary war on the Arabian sea. The American warship, USS Lasalle and frigate, USS Vandergrift, participated in the exercise along with smaller gunboats and helicopters.

This was the first joint exercise since Washington suspended its military and economic aid to Pakistan in 1990, charging that Islamabad was making a nuclear weapon.

Pakistan denies the accusation.

The objective of the joint exercise was to enhance the old military relationship and collaboration between the navies of the two countries," said a Pakistani navy spokesman, who cannot be identified under briefing rules.

Witnesses said they heard a loud blast and saw hundreds of people running for safety.

The area is a giant port outside Pakistan's largest city of Karachi, where hundreds of people gather daily waiting for ferries to transport them to nearby islands and ships anchored out to sea.

The bomb apparently went off in the hands of the person planting it, said Karachi Commissioner Javed Ashraf. So far the person has not been identified.

Reuters adds: A bomb exploded on a naval jetty in the southern Pakistan port of Karachi killing three people and injuring 41, police and doctors said. The bomb exploded at the crowded Kemari jetty where launches take passengers to the nearby naval base at Manora island, police said.

No one claimed responsibility for the blast.

Sharif asks Hekmatyar to halt attack

LONDON, Aug 17: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Monday called on Afghanistan rebel leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar — a long-time ally — to halt his attack on Kabul, reports AFP.

Sharif, in an interview published by the Financial Times, said: "I think Hekmatyar should abide by the commitment that he has given. He should not fight the government."

The newspaper, saying Sharif had "cooled" toward Hekmatyar, noted that Pak-

istan had supported the Mujahideen leader and his Hezb-i-Islami party during 13 years of civil war in Afghanistan.

"When should he fight?" Sharif asked. "Afghanistan stands liberated. Who is he fighting against?"

Sharif described the week-long Hezb-i-Islami attack on Kabul as a violation of a power sharing agreement reached among rebel chiefs last April in Peshawar, Pakistan, after the fall of President Najibullah, whose government had been installed by the Soviet Union.

His comments came as Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani sacked Prime Minister Abdul Sabur Fared and Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Hakem stepped down on advice from the government.

Both men are Hezb-i-Islami members.

Rabbani asked the Afghan people and governments of friendly countries to "sever all sorts of links" with the faction.

The sacking was denounced as illegal by the Hezb-i-Islami.

Fared had assumed the

Prime Minister's post on July 6, almost a week after Rabbani had taken over the Presidency for an interim period of four months.

Party sources said Fared had left Kabul last week for official visit to Pakistan and Iran and was reported to be in Switzerland.

Fared's dismissal came at the peak of a decade-old rivalry between Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami and Rabbani's Jamiat-Islami, which is allied with the Uzbek militia of Abdul Rashid Dostam.

Fared had assumed the

Food supply not enough in Somalia

MOGADISHU, Aug 17: More food is reaching this desperate land, but it's still not enough to save the 1.5 million Somalis in danger or starving, aid officials say, reports AP.

And the shipments won't help the neediest unless complemented by increased security, medicines, trucks and planes, they add.

In the Indian Ocean capital of Mogadishu, and in coastal towns such as Merca, Brava and Kismayu, food deliveries now arrive steadily.

In Mogadishu, the price at the open air market for a 50-kilogram bag of rice has dropped in recent weeks from 80 dollars to 15 dollars, evidence of growing supplies.

But security remains difficult in Mogadishu, as young gunmen hijack and loot delivery trucks filled with huge amounts of food.

The starvation is most severe in remote interior towns such as Baidoa and Bardera, where scarce vehicles and roads make distribution extremely difficult. Thirty people were reported killed Sunday in Baidoa after fighting erupted

over the looting of food.

Also Sunday, armed Somalis in vehicles fitted with artillery guns attacked the port at Kismayu where the World Food Programme was unloading a relief ship. They stole 100 metric tons of food and barrels of fuel imported to move the emergency aid, according to WFP official Trevor Page.

The United Nations says as many as 1.5 million people could die in coming weeks, almost a quarter of the Somali population. An estimated 30,000 metric tons of food are needed each month, and a little over half that is coming in, aid groups say.

Food supplies are improving, but food by itself won't save all these people," said Ian MacLeod, a spokesman for UNICEF. There must be an integrated effort that includes better security and more medicine.

More medicine was needed, he said, because most malnourished people do not die of starvation but contract a disease that proves fatal in their weakened condition.

BRIEFLY

UN envoy in Libya: A United Nations envoy arrived in Tripoli Sunday on a mission to convince Libya to hand over men suspected of bombing a jetliner and to renounce its support for international terrorism, AFP reports from Tripoli.

UN Under-Secretary General Vladimir Petrovsky, who travelled overland from Tunis, held a meeting soon after his arrival late Sunday with Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Beshari, an official source said.

He handed him a message for Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi from UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali calling for compliance with Resolution 748 passed in mid-April by the UN.

It imposed arms, diplomatic and air traffic sanctions on Libya after it refused to hand over two suspects wanted in the West for the bombing of a US jetliner over Scotland in 1988, which killed 270 people.

687 policemen sacked in Sind: Pakistan has sacked 687 policemen in troubled Sind province for their association with criminals, a government statement said on Sunday, Reuters says from Karachi.

It said recent inquiries found these policemen involved in criminal cases or mixing up with criminals. They were "discharged or dismissed from service."

The action follows orders by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to cleanse the police department in the province where an army-led crackdown against crime was launched last May.

"The scrutiny of more cases is going on and as soon as the records are finalised, the personnel involved in the criminal activities or linked with criminals would be removed," the statement said.

Hosni Mubarak returns home: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak returned late Sunday to Cairo after a day of unannounced visits to Oman and Kuwait, reports AFP from Cairo.

Officials would only say that he discussed regional questions with Kuwaiti ruler, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and presented his condolences to Sultan Qabus on the death of his mother.

It was the Egyptian leader's second visit to Kuwait since Iraq was expelled from the northern Gulf state. Egypt was a member of the US-led coalition which fought for Kuwait in the January-February 1991 Gulf War.

Earlier officials had said he might also visit Saudi Arabia for a meeting with King Fahd.

Robot to cleans room: A Japanese firm is designing a robot that vacuum cleans a room and then tucks itself away to recharge its batteries, Reuters reports from Tokyo.

A spokesman for the Matsushita Electric Industrial Co, the world's largest consumer electronics firm., said on Monday that the home cleaning robot would go on sale after development was completed next year.

A prototype of the robot comes equipped with an ultrasonic sensor that detects and dodges obstacles, Matsushita said. Other sensors determine the type of floor or rug to be cleaned so that the nozzle can be adjusted accordingly and regulate the suction power based on the amount of dust on the floor.

After cleaning up, the dome-shaped robot, weighing 18 kg (40 pounds), returns to its charging station.



MOSCOW: The Russian MIG-29 fighter plane is seen on display at the Moscow Air Show that closed on Sunday. The show, which featured the latest models of Russian aircraft, attracted foreign businessmen and thousands of Moscovites. A number of countries are negotiating with Russia to buy the MIG-29, which costs around 25 million US dollar, as well as other models.

'Socialism victim of suicide'

HAVANA, Aug 17: Cuban President Fidel Castro has said that socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe did not die a natural death but was the victim of both "suicide and assassination," reports Reuters.

But, he added in interview excerpts published on Sunday, man should always deep on dreaming of utopias and the future would bring a new wave of revolution to a world where "imperialism" currently held the upper hand.

"It is already known how the whole process of disintegration of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe was planned and mapped out" Castro said in an interview with Tomas Borge, the former Interior Minister of Nicaragua's former left-wing Sandinista government.

Excerpts of the interview, which was recently published in a book entitled "UN Grano De Maiz" (A Grain of Corn), were carried by the Cuban communist youth newspaper Juventud Rebelde on Sunday.

Castro said history would eventually disclose the names of those in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who had worked with the intelligence services of the United States to destroy the socialist bloc.



The thing is that socialism did not die a natural death: There was a suicide, an assassination of socialism," he added.

Castro, who turned 66 last Thursday, re-affirmed his determination to keep Cuba on a socialist course.

He said former leaders of the Soviet state, Cuba's main ally for 30 years, had taken part, either consciously or unconsciously, in what he called "an incredible self-destruction."

But he did not see former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev as "an assassin who pre-meditated the destruction of the Soviet Union."

"I have no doubt that Gorbachev had the intention of fighting to perfect socialism," Castro said.

He said Cuba, which along with North Korea, China and Vietnam, was one of the world's last remaining socialist states, had become the focus of attacks by the "imperialist" West.

"I think that even if we end up as a little island alone, that has great value," he added.

JKLF threatens to kill 4 Indian hostages

A Muslim separatist group in Kashmir has threatened to kill four Indian military personnel it is holding hostage if any militant dies in prison, newspapers reported Monday, says AFP.

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) said in a statement Sunday that it would kill the four in the event of a "torture death" of any militant in the interrogation centre of jail, the Statesman and other dailies said.

The JKLF abducted the defence personnel, believed to be from the army, on August 3 when they were going from Patna to Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital which is also the urban hub of the bloody separatist campaign.

It earlier demanded the release of 15 of its jailed members in exchange for the hostages, and rejected appeals from their families to set them free.

10 S African leaders arrive in Namibia for talks

WINDHOEK, Aug 17: Leader of 10 southern African states have arrived in Namibia for a summit today to create a development community that will help them compete against a powerful post-apartheid South Africa, reports Reuters.

Summit spokesman Kyosinkwe Mosei said the proposed Southern African Development Community (SADC) would "promote deeper economic cooperation and integration on the basis of balance, equity and mutual benefit."

Namibian President Sam Nujoma, leader of the newest member of the existing Southern African Development Conference (SADCC), hosted a private dinner for the summit participants on Sunday.

ANC spokesman Trevor Manuel said the movement was fully consulted on the text of the treaty.

US clarifications on loan guarantees to Israel not sufficient: PLO

TUNIS, Aug 17: The PLO said on Sunday US clarifications on loan guarantees to Israel were insufficient and it had called Palestinian peace negotiators to Tunis to discuss the next round of Middle East talks, reports Reuters.

"The US clarifications are insufficient... and there were positive words which are not linked to precise steps nor guarantees," PLO Executive Committee Yasser Abed Rabbo said.

He said that if the Palestinians did go to Washington on August 24, Jewish settlement of occupied Arab lands would be top of the agenda.

The PLO's "Ambassador" to Jordan, Al-Tayyeb Abdulrahim, said on Saturday night the United States had reneged on promises it would seek a total settlement freeze before agreeing to grant the 10 billion in loan guarantees.

Abed Rabbo did not elaborate on the clarifications received but adopted a more conciliatory tone.

"We continue to say for a complete freeze of settle-

ments, with international guarantees that the freeze will be permanent and total, including in (East) Jerusalem," he said.

"If the Palestinian delegation goes to Washington at the scheduled date, this question will be the top priority on the agenda, we will not discuss other points before that." Bush withheld the guarantees from the previous government of Yitzhak Shamir because of its hardline settlement policy.

New Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stopped plans to build what he calls "political settlements" after winning general elections in June. The curbs did not cover greater

Jerusalem and border settlements on lands deemed vital for Israel's security.

He would not say if Bush, whose administration has long called all settlements an obstacle to peace, accepted his new policy but said on Friday work on up to 11,000 homes already under construction in the occupied territories would continue.

US Secretary of State James Baker, said during a tour of the region to revive the peace process last month that Washington saw no difference between security and political settlements and both were an obstacle to peace.

Off the Record

'Don't criticise Elvis to me'

MEMPHIS, Tenn: Elvis Presley died in 1977, but his fans live on, among them the thousands who came to his grave on Sunday the 15th anniversary of the king of Rock 'n' Roll's death, reports AP.

"It just makes me feel good. I just kind of meditate and get all my sadness out," said Charolette Davis of Muskogee, Okla.

She and about 4,000 other Elvis fans toured Graceland, Presley's mansion, during the day, stopping at one point at Presley's grave in a small garden beside Graceland's swimming pool.

He died at the white-columned house on Aug. 16, 1977, at age 42. A medical examiner listed the cause of death as heart disease, and court testimony later revealed that Presley was addicted to prescription drugs.

Some 10,000 fans filed past the grave Saturday night during a candlelight vigil. The annual procession was the highlight of week-long festivities that included dances, concerts and fan-club gatherings.

The grave was covered with flowers, teddy bears and other offerings left by fans. Flower arrangements, some in the shape of guitars or hearts, lined a tree-shaded walkway to the grave.

Teresa Green and Janie Smalley of Tuscaloosa, Ala., stopped to read a poem attached to an arrangement. It was titled "Don't Criticise Elvis to Me."

"So if you know that I'm an Elvis fan then keep your mouth shut if you can And if you can't perhaps you'll learn Cause when I'm through, your ears will burn."

"So many people put him down," Ms. Smalley said, "He was a great entertainer and he always will be."

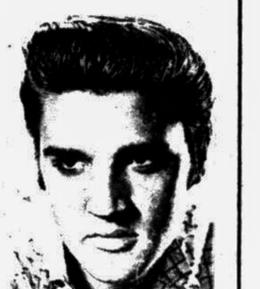
'He's old enough to be her grandfather'

NEW YORK: Film director Woody Allen and actress Mia Farrow broke up over an affair he is having with her 21-year-old adopted daughter, it was reported Monday, says AP.

Farrow's mother, actress Maureen O'Sullivan, and others close to the couple told the Daily News and New York Post that the 56-year-old filmmaker has been involved for seven months with Soon-Yi Plevin.

Soon-Yi has "been foolish and misguided about an old man," O'Sullivan told the Post. "I mean, he's old enough to be her grandfather."

Allen's press agent, Leslee Dart, said, "In an effort to maintain Allen's privacy, I cannot comment."



Allen and Farrow, who has appeared in 13 of his movies, had been a couple since 1980 but never married and lived apart. Last week, Allen filed for custody of the son they had together and the two children they adopted.

Farrow, 47, has 11 children, adopted and biological. Several, including Soon-Yi Plevin, are Korean-born. She was adopted by Farrow and her second husband, conductor Andre Previn.

In his upcoming "Husbands and Wives," Allen plays a professor who has an affair with a college-age student.