

Kenya denies Americans permission to fly aid

MOMBASA, Kenya, Aug 21: Kenya, saying US humanitarian efforts for starving Somalia are poorly organized and ignored Kenyan regulations, on Friday denied the Americans permission to fly the aid from this port city, reports AP.

The United Nations had warned of "a lost generation" of children in the African nation if tons of food do not arrive in coming weeks.

T J Dowling, an American Embassy spokesman in the capital Nairobi, said the Kenyan government withdrew permission for the US flights.

"Negotiations are going on at the highest level," Dowling said.

The Kenyan Ministry of Information issued a statement Thursday night accusing the Americans of failing to get permission to fly their cargo planes into Mombasa, the country's main Indian Ocean port city.

It also said the United States was conducting an "uncoordinated food airlift" and planned to use American troops to distribute the food to refugees, bypassing humanitarian agencies.

Dowling denied each accusation.

In Mombasa, where Washington hopes to launch its effort, US Marine Lt Col Dennis McBride, chief of staff of the multi-service operation, expressed impatience.

"We've got people standing by, ready to load food," the Livingston, N.J., native said.

"We've got aircraft. We're ready."

The Americans had hoped to launch the airlift with a flight by a C-130 Hercules to the northeastern Kenyan town of Wajir. It was to carry 10 tons of wheat flour, grain, beans and vegetable oil.

Rao not serious to resolve Babri Masjid issue: VHP

LUCKNOW, Aug 21: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) yesterday said it would have to start preparations for the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya instead of adopting a "wait and see policy," reports PTI.

In a statement here, the VHP Secretary, Onkan Bhawe, said they had "doubts" over the Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's efforts to solve the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid tangle.

The Prime Minister's recent utterances over the issue indicate that he is not at all serious to solve the dispute," he said.

The first step in the direction of the construction will be the Pujya ceremony of "wooden slippers" (Charan Paduka) at Nandi Gram near Ayodhya on September 27 and 28 next, he said.

US okays uranium for Japan's controversial N-plan

WASHINGTON, Aug 21: The United States has formally approved a plan to ship a ton of highly toxic plutonium from France to Japan aboard a freighter for use in Tokyo's controversial nuclear power programme, reports AP.

In a letter last week to key congressional committees, the State Department said Japan had come up with a plan for transporting the plutonium "that constitutes a sound basis" for going ahead with the shipment this fall.

In the letter to the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations panels, the administration said it intended to give the go-ahead to Japan, along with notification of the security help it will provide for the shipment.

That is expected to include intelligence help to counter potential attacks or terrorism, including surveillance by spy satellites along the ship's route.

The United States maintains control over the plutonium, because it was processed from spent uranium fuel rods originally provided to Japan as part of a nuclear cooperation agreement. Unlike low-enriched uranium, plutonium also can be used to make nuclear weapons.

The Washington-based Nuclear Control Institute, which has been campaigning against Japan's programme for commercial development of fast-breeder reactors, criticized

the move as dangerous and potentially destabilizing.

The Bush administration, by allowing US-controlled plutonium to be used in this way, is guilty of a major nuclear nonproliferation policy failure," said Paul Leventhal, the institute's president.

"This shipment of the most toxic and explosive substance on earth is totally out of step with a worldwide trend to reject the use of plutonium fuel as unnecessary, uneconomical and dangerous," Leventhal said.

Leventhal said the freighter now being ready for the 30,000-mile (48,000-kilometer) journey in Yokohama harbor will be escorted only by a

lightly armed Japanese coast guard cutter, far less security than provided for the only previous sea shipment of plutonium, in 1984.

He also said the shipment will add to a large surplus in Japan of weapons-usable plutonium, a destabilizing influence in a region where North Korea is pursuing its own nuclear weapons development programme.

Japan, the only country against which atomic weapons have been used, has no nuclear weapons programme of its own.

Breeder reactors like those being developed by Japan are designed to use plutonium as fuel, at the same time breeding more plutonium than they consume. Most nations have given up breeder reactors as uneconomical and less safe than conventional nuclear power plants.

But for Japan, which must import fuel to meet all its energy needs, the programme is seen as potential route to energy independence.



HOUSTON: US President George Bush (L) and First Lady Barbara Bush play with confetti on Thursday as it showered them at the 1992 Republican National Convention. The confetti and more than 100,000 balloons were dropped after the President concluded his speech.

Pakistani beheaded in S Arabia

NICOSIA, Aug 21: A Pakistani sentenced to death for drug trafficking was beheaded in Saudi Arabia today, reports Reuter.

Riyadh Radio quoted the Saudi Interior Ministry as saying the man had been arrested while trying to smuggle an unspecified quantity of heroin into the country.

The radio, monitored by the BBC, did not name the man who was executed in the Riyadh region after Friday prayers.

Western safe haven plan an imperialist conspiracy: Iraq

NICOSIA, Aug 21: Iraq on Thursday rejected a Western plan to create a safe haven for Shites in southern Iraq as an "imperialist conspiracy" and said it would not accept Western controls over the movement of its warplanes, reports AP.

The comments by an unnamed spokesman for President Saddam Hussein marked the first official reaction to the mounting drive by the Gulf War victors to halt attacks against Shiite rebels in Iraq's southern marshlands.

The statement, carried on the Iraqi News Agency, raised the possibility that the allies plan to patrol the skies over the south could provoke new fighting in Iraq, where the Gulf War ceasefire has been in effect since March 1991.

Saddam and his ruling Revolution Command Council met Thursday night in Baghdad to review the "imperialist threats," the Iraqi agency said.

"Those who plan these flagrant, aggressive measures should realize that Iraq's people and its militant leadership will never let the imperialist-Zionist scheme of dividing Iraq be passed," the spokesman warned. "They will resist it with all their means."

"If the United States rulers and their imperialist, ambitious allies think that they can impose on southern Iraq what they imposed last year on the northern region during particular circumstances, they (are) deluded and those circumstances will never be repeated," the spokesman said.

Iraq invited a UN envoy currently in Baghdad to inspect conditions in southern Iraq, a gesture apparently designed to head off the imposition of a "no-fly zone" in the Shiite areas.

But Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali said at the United Nations he had instructed the official, Jan Eliasson, to reject the invitation until Iraqi officials renewed an agreement allowing UN humanitarian relief workers to be stationed in Iraq. Eliasson is undersecretary for humanitarian affairs.

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ME talks begin Monday

JERUSALEM, Aug 21: Palestinian negotiators, upset by US agreement to underwrite 10 billion US dollars in loans to Israel, left today for the next round of Middle East peace talks in Washington, reports Reuter.

Delegation spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi told reporters in East Jerusalem Palestinians felt the United States, chief broker of the peace talks, was favouring Israel over the Arabs.

"It wasn't an easy decision to take," Ashrawi said of the Palestinian agreement to attend the talks which start on Monday. "We still feel that ... the balance has been hit in many ways."

US-Israeli relations have warmed since the June election of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who pledged to accelerate peace negotiations.

Rabin has curbed Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip since taking office.

But Palestinians were disappointed that US President George Bush agreed to give Israel the loan guarantees

without demanding a complete freeze on all Jewish settlement building in the occupied territories.

The delegation left the West Bank for Jordan and will travel from there to Washington.

AP adds: Thousands of Palestinians gathered in Arab East Jerusalem on Thursday for the biggest Palestinian cultural festival since Israel conquered the West Bank and Gaza in 1967.

The festival opening emphasized Palestinian hopes for political gains in the ongoing Middle East peace talks.

Three flaming arrows were launched from a sling shot, but failed to ignite a torch. A worker eventually lit it by hand.

"The slingshot is a symbol of the Palestinian uprising," explained organizer Ibrahim Shajaidah, "and the torch means independence."

One float featured a model dressed as a policeman. The Palestinian delegation to the peace talks has proposed the establishment of a Palestinian police force during the first stages of autonomy. Israeli leaders are considering the idea.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said that he expects the first step toward Palestinian autonomy, elections in the occupied territories, to take place by March 1993. Talks resume in Washington on Monday.

Narayanan sworn in as Vice-President

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Former diplomat KP Narayanan was sworn in as India's ninth Vice-President here Friday, two days after winning a near unanimous election largely on the strength of being an "Untouchable", reports AFP.

Narayanan, 72, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by his predecessor, current President Shankar Dayal Sharma, at a glittering 30-minute function at the presidential palace.

Narayanan later shook hands with Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, former premiers Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Chandra Shekhar and members of the federal cabinet.

"I feel very much honoured and happy that the nation has reposed trust in me," he told reporters after the ceremony, "at the same time, I feel a sense of responsibility to rise up to the expectations of the people."

Imelda won't use body to foment violence

MANILA: Former First Lady Imelda Marcos has signed an agreement with the government pledging not to use the return of her husband's corpse to the Philippines to foment violence, officials said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Under the accord, the remains of the late president Ferdinand Marcos will be temporarily interned in his northern home province in September and his family will be allowed later to fulfil Marcos' wish to be buried in Manila.

Marcos, ousted in a 1986 popular revolt that forced him and his family to flee to Hawaii, will be given "appropriate military honours," according to the released agreement.

But a spokesman for President Fidel Ramos said he would deny Marcos a state funeral or the full military honours promised by an armed forces spokesman last week.

Imelda Marcos, who signed the agreement with Interior Secretary Rafael Alunan on Wednesday, told reporters the family was no longer insisting on a state funeral in Manila "for the time being."



Hanan Ashrawi

UN refugee programmes in Afghanistan running out of money

TORKHAM, Pakistan, Aug 21: Clutching the gate that separates Pakistan and Afghanistan, tears streaming down his mud-caked face, Ali Ahmed wept for his seven children killed when dissident guerrillas bombed the Afghan capital, reports AP.

He slumped against the gate, pleading with Pakistani security guards to let him drive into Pakistan with his battered van jammed with women, children, clothes and housewares.

Hundreds of Afghan refugees — some returning to their war-scattered homeland and others, like Ahmed, fleeing the relentless rocketing of rebels loyal to Muslim fundamentalist leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar — swarmed the border post at Torkham.

Afghanistan, once Cold War battlefield, has been largely forgotten by the world as it slips into a ruinous inter-ethnic conflict and UN refugee programmes are running out of money. The 14-year civil war was supposed to be over with the fall of Communist-style President Najibullah in April.

For much of the war between Mujahideen and successive Soviet-backed governments in Kabul, Ahmed was a refugee in New Delhi.

"I demonstrated outside the Soviet Embassy in India and I begged them for our freedom. Then there was freedom in Afghanistan and I went home. Now all my children are dead," he wailed.

Ahmed, who made it to Pakistan, said he left behind a trail of refugees between Kabul and the eastern city of Jalalabad, about 75 miles (120 kilometres) away. Other witnesses estimated about 25,000 refugees were camped along the banks of the Kabul river, most of them heading for safety within Afghanistan.

In Kabul, thousands more waited to escape the city including many foreign diplomats.

UN negotiators met this week in Pakistan with Afghanistan's Islamic government — made up of rebel groups that toppled Najibullah — and Hekmatyar in a bid to guarantee safe passage out of Kabul for expatriates.

"It is hoped that by the end of this week the evacuation could take place," said a UN official in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, who asked not to be identified.

The United Nations already has evacuated 27 aid workers from the capital and the Geneva-based International Committee for the Red

Cross was preparing to withdraw all but the most essential.

But for every Afghan fleeing the country there were truckloads heading back to their homeland, fed up with more than a decade in squalid refugee camps in Pakistan.

Refugees loaded even their goats and cows onto giant trucks already stuffed with half a dozen beds, cushions, clothes and wood to rebuild their homes destroyed by war.

"We have to take everything. There is nothing for us there," said Gul Agha, who had spent the last 14 years in a sprawling refugee camp, that turned into a blinding dustbowl each summer.

One million refugees have returned to Afghanistan since Najibullah fell in late April, said the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees office in Pakistan.

"This is the largest repatriation movement in UNHCR history," said spokesman Reinout Wanroy.

And it's only one-third completed. There are still another 2 million refugees in Pakistan and 2 million more in Iran.

"The only problem we have is lack of funds," he said. UNHCR office in Geneva last week

sent the Islamabad office its last 2 million dollars.

When that runs out it's all over — at least until the international community digs deep and donates more, said Wanroy.

The money is used to provide returning refugees with about 130 dollar and several sacks of wheat.

Wanroy blamed the lack of donations on the relentless feuding between rival rebel groups and because Afghanistan is competing with a half dozen other trouble spots, the worst ones being Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia.

Another UN official who asked not to be identified said the international community, particularly those countries like the United States that together spent billions arming the rebels, have a moral responsibility to come to their aid now.

"I definitely believe we have a moral obligation," he said.

As the summer winds down and winter approaches, several UN officials fear a country-wide famine and severe fuel shortages.

"I don't think they will return to Pakistan. I am afraid they will stay there and die," said Wanroy.

Off the Record

'Elvis economics'

HOUSTON: Elvis lives — at least in George Bush's lingo. The president invoked the name of the late rock 'n' roll king as a cudgel Thursday night against rival Bill Clinton, reports AP.

Bush accused his Democratic foe of waffling on whether he favours a balanced-budget amendment.

"He's like that on a lot of issues, first one side, then the other. He's been spotted in more places than Elvis Presley," Bush said to hoots and cheers from the convention crowd.

Then he suggested a new name for Clinton's economic plan: "Elvis Economics."

"America will be checking into the Heartbreak Hotel," Bush explained.

Clinton, a big Presley fan, has been dubbed 'Elvis' by reporters covering his race for the White House.



Father or lover?

NEW YORK: Woody Allen's acknowledged love affair with the daughter of his ex-lover is a kind of emotional incest that can tear a family apart and leave lasting scars, experts say, reports AP.

"How can you be a father and lover?" said Sue Meier, director of the abuse hotline for Childhelp USA in Los Angeles.

"It doesn't make sense. If he's taken on the role of father or stepfather then he's looked upon as a parent. This is a betrayal."

Allen admitted earlier this week that he had fallen in love with Soon-Yi Previn, the 21-year-old adopted daughter of Mia Farrow and her second husband, composer Andre Previn.

The revelation came amid an ugly custody battle between Allen and Miss Farrow over three of Miss Farrow's 11 children, two of whom he later adopted. One is his biological child.

Meanwhile, Connecticut police have confirmed that Allen is being investigated, apparently over allegations that he abused his 7-year-old adopted daughter, Dylan. Allen denied molesting the girl.

Allen's sister, Letty Aronson, came to his defense Thursday, saying Allen and Soon-Yi Previn never had a father-daughter relationship.

"I would venture to say that Soon-Yi never thought of Woody that way," Aronson said. "The girl had a father."



HOUSTON: Mary Fisher, who spoke about her battle with the HIV virus, talks with former President Gerald Ford and former First Lady Betty Ford on Wednesday at the Republican National Convention. Fisher is the daughter of Max Fisher, a prominent Republican fund raiser.

Israeli soldiers kill one rebel in Lebanon

JERUSALEM, Aug 21: An Israeli army patrol killed a guerrilla in a clash in South Lebanon that also left nine soldiers injured, the army reported Friday, says AP.

Soldiers opened fire on a band of guerrillas Thursday night in a section of the Beaufort Heights just inside the Israeli-held zone in Lebanon, a military statement said.

Five soldiers were wounded moderately and four lightly when an explosive charge on the body of the slain guerrilla detonated, the statement added. It did not identify the Arab faction involved in the fight.

Editor held for criticising Sharif govt

LAHORE, Aug 21: A Pakistani newspaper Editor who regularly criticises Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government was arrested on Thursday, his deputy said, reports Reuter.

Ghulam Hussain, who edits the Urdu-language weekly 'Siasi Loug' and its English-language version Facts International, was picked up by plainclothes police from his office in the Punjab province capital of Lahore. Deputy Editor Atiq Butt said in a statement.

No official comment was immediately available. Police did not show Hussain an arrest warrant before forcing him into a car and driving off, Butt said.

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