

F-16 sale to Taiwan

Bush admin notifies Congress

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: The Bush administration formally notified the US Congress on Monday that it plans to sell 150 F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan for US dollar 5.8 billion over strong protests from China, reports Reuters.

President George Bush informally announced the move two weeks ago and Congress now has 30 days to either vote against the sale or allow it to go ahead. Little opposition is expected in view of congressional charges that China remains guilty of human rights violations.

The sale would be a major financial shot in the arm for General Dynamics Corp and is expected to save an estimated 3,000 jobs at the firm's Fort Worth, Texas, plant where the speedy fighters are built.

The Beijing government has protested against the planned sale to Taiwan, the nearby island which it still considers a province of China. Taiwan says it needs the F-16s to replace its ageing fleet of American-built F-5 and F-104 jets.

Bush said in announcing the sale at the Fort Worth plant that it was being made despite a 1982 memorandum between the United States and China



An Iraqi policeman stands Sept 13 at the entrance of a Shiite shrine in Najaf, southern Iraq, in the area where the US, France and Britain created a 'no fly zone' last month to protect Shiites against attack by the Iraqi government. — AFP/UNB photo

Fresh fighting in Bosnia puts Geneva peace talks at stake

SARAJEVO, Sept 15: Fierce fighting across Bosnia, involving shelling from artillery supposed to be under UN observation, threw new international peace talks into doubt, reports Reuters.

The crash of artillery and mortar fire echoed across the besieged capital of Sarajevo from its west and southwestern districts late into Monday night after a day of clashes between Serb attackers and the city's mainly Muslim defenders.

Pierce clashes were also reported around key towns in northern Bosnia and battle fronts in eastern Herzegovina. The upsurge of violence threw in to serious question plans for a new round of peace talks in Geneva on Friday involving Bosnia's Muslim, Serb and Croat leaders. Bosnia's Muslim President,

Alija Izetbegovic, said he no longer felt he could attend. Radovan Karadzic, head of the territory's Serbs, threatened to stay away too if the United Nations went ahead with plans to impose a 'no-fly' zone in Bosnia's airspace for Serb warplanes.

But in Geneva Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, co-chairmen of the peace conference, were quoted as saying they would press ahead with the meeting and expected senior representatives of both sides to be there.

AP adds: Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panic said Tuesday Chinese officials acknowledged his war-torn country's need for humanitarian aid, but gave no guarantees to provide the heating oil he requested.

Panic also urged Chinese of-

ficials to help ensure a seat at the United Nations for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, now composed only of Serbia and Montenegro since Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence.

Panic told a news conference after two days of talks in Beijing that the Chinese expressed support for the new Yugoslav government, but would not veto any UN move to expel the Serbia-Montenegro government from the world body.

In addition to the oil embargo, UN sanctions imposed May 30 against Serbia-Montenegro freeze foreign assets, suspend air traffic and ban all trade but food and humanitarian supplies.

"I believe if one baby or one child dies or one sick person dies in hospital because we

didn't have oil because of the embargo, that would be the greatest disgrace for the United Nations," Panic said.

He said Chinese officials agreed that the international sanctions should not punish the people of Yugoslavia.

"I have a commitment that there will be humanitarian help," Panic said.

He said the Chinese did not pledge to provide the heating oil, but promised the request "will be looked (at) very favourably".

China, one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, abstained from voting on the sanctions measure.

There have been no formal discussions at the United Nations on denying Yugoslavia's UN seat to Serbia-Montenegro, but there has been growing pressure to do that.

Clinton widens lead over Bush

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: With less than eight weeks before the November 3 elections, Democrat Bill Clinton has widened his lead over President George Bush by three percentage points, ABC news reported on Monday, says Reuters.

Clinton leads Bush by 54 per cent to 39 per cent among likely voters in the latest ABC news-Washington Post poll, up from 53 per cent to 41 per cent the previous week, the network said.

"While margins have differed from poll to poll, the message remains the same: Clinton leads," the network said.

The economy continues to be the most important issue in the presidential race, according to the new poll.

Among those who think the economy is getting better, 82 per cent support Bush against 16 per cent for Clinton.

But only 10 per cent of those polled believe the economy is getting better, the network found.

Syria rejects Israeli offer for partial pullout from Golan

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: Syria's chief negotiator on Monday ruled out a partial Israeli withdrawal on the Golan Heights as a solution to more than four decades of conflict, reports AP.

But Muwaffiq al-Alal withheld judgment on the new proposal the Israeli negotiator, Prof. Itamar Rabinovich, brought with him as peace talks resumed at the State Department after a 10-day recess.

"I think it provides an excellent basis for further progress," said Rabinovich, a Tel Aviv University professor. "I very much hope our Syrian interlocutors will rise to the occasion."

Before the break, Israel and Syria had for the first time begun to talk about a settlement based on UN Security Council land-for-peace resolutions.

Al-Alal told reporters he did not want to judge Israel's proposal before seeing it. But he stressed Syria was demanding Israel give up all of the strategic Golan Heights, which Israel annexed in 1982.

"The subject of negotiations is a comprehensive peace," the Syrian diplomat said. "In a peace process for a comprehensive peace you do not talk about partial withdrawal or partial solutions."

In Jerusalem, meanwhile,

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin warned Syria to expect no Israeli readiness for land concessions until Syria defines what it means by peace.

Rabin said Israel had yet to hear from Damascus whether it agreed with Israel's definition of peace: "Open borders, diplomatic relations, embassies, normalization of contacts between us."

Last week, Rabin said Israel was willing to negotiate an interim security arrangement with Syria while negotiators worked toward a comprehensive peace.

Rabinovich described the proposal Israel intended to give Syria as "very carefully prepared" and as containing "some creative thinking and a lot of good will."

He said he hoped Syria "will rise to the occasion and that a fruitful dialogue will develop on the basis of this paper."

On two other fronts, Israel resumed negotiations with Jordan and with Lebanon. Talks with a Palestinian delegation were scheduled for later in the day.

In a goodwill gesture, Israel is offering Jordan some of the water a bountiful rainfall produced this year. Talks on water resources in the region involving some two-dozen nations are due to open here on Tuesday.

Japan rules out Miyazawa's meet with Yeltsin

TOKYO, Sept 15: Japan's Foreign Ministry has ruled out any chance of Prime Minister Kijich Miyazawa meeting Russian President Boris Yeltsin in mid-November to discuss a long-running territorial dispute, news reports said today, according to Reuters.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Potomkin told Interfax news agency in Moscow on Monday that Yeltsin, who last week put off an official trip to Japan, could meet Miyazawa in Olinawa before a rescheduled visit to South Korea.

"We cannot think such a proposal reliable unless it is conveyed to us by the Russian Foreign Ministry through an official diplomatic channel", one Japanese Foreign Ministry source told the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper.

"There can be no possibility of the Prime Minister going all the way to Tokyo to meet the Russian President."

30,000 ships go through Panama canal a year

PANAMA CITY, Sept 15: More than 30,000 ships go through the Panama canal every year, Guillermo Quijano, Housing Minister and member of the tripartite commission, said Sunday, reports Xinhua.

These ships were vastly from North America and Japan, the minister said at the end of a seminar held by the tripartite commission for canal users.

Off the Record

Richer but still restless

LONDON: Richer but still restless, Lady Margaret Thatcher is proving not so much a hard act to follow as an awkward presence for Prime Minister John Major to live with, reports AP.

At home, the 66-year-old Lady Thatcher now is a symbol of the divisions over Europe that wrack Britain's governing Conservative Party.

Abroad, the leader whom the Soviets dubbed the Iron Lady in Cold War days has privatized her politics and fame in the 22 months since she was ousted in a Conservative Party revolt.

She commands huge lecture fees. This summer, to the outrage of the anti-smoking lobby, she was arranging a lucrative contract as consultant to Philip Morris. The US tobacco giant and her office acknowledge they are "finalizing" a deal.

Most foreign lectures by Lady Thatcher are to ticket-only audiences, contents and price undisclosed. She speaks in Washington on Saturday.

Julian Seymour, director of her London office, said, "We don't make any comment ever ... on anything to do with her own financial affairs or those of the (Thatcher) foundation."



Because they feel uneasy

TOKYO: A Tokyo hotel refused to provide accommodations for an American AIDS patient during his stay here to attend a symposium, hotel officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Organizers of the symposium, entitled "Living with AIDS," requested reservations at the Hotel Toshi Center for Sean Duque, 38, who addressed the one-day event last Thursday. But the hotel rejected the request.

"We don't want AIDS patients to stay because our customers will feel uneasy. And we're not equipped with hygiene measures," said an official at the hotel, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Duque, a singer-songwriter from Hawaii, developed AIDS about four years ago and has been active in efforts to educate people about the disease.

"Image is very important for hotels like us," the official said.

Although AIDS has been heavily reported in the Japanese media, the coverage tends to be emotional rather than informative.

Although scientists say the virus cannot be transmitted through normal contact with patients, some people still fear they may get infected through kissing, hugging, mosquito bites and sharing toilet seats.

The hotel official said the hotel wants to wait "until the public is ready."

Commitment against sex

WASHINGTON: The US Defence Department has committed itself at the highest levels to rooting out sexual harassment in military ranks and is on a path that should lead to success within five years, two key members of Congress said Monday, reports AP.

"We believe we have a programme in place that will deal with it," said Congressman Les Aspin, chairman of the lower house Armed Services Committee.

For the first time, the military services have made it clear that sexual harassment will not be tolerated and that the career advancement of uniformed personnel will depend on their sensitivity to the issue, said Aspin and Rep. Beverly Byron, chairman of the panel's personnel sub-committee.

The latest moves were triggered by embarrassed about last year's convention of naval aviators at which women were grabbed and partially disrobed by drunken male officers.

BRIEFLY

Iraq to salvage ships soon: Iraq said on Monday it would begin a salvage operation to clear three southern ports of 52 ships sunk during the Gulf war, reports Reuters from Baghdad.

Transport and Communication Minister Abdul Sattar Al-Mu'ini, quoted by the Iraq News Agency (INA) said the operation in the ports of Khor Al-Zubair, Khor Abdallah and U M Qasr would start soon.

The Minister, who gave no further details on the operation, said the ships included oil tankers "sunk during the raids and attacks by the American Atlantic planes of aggression on Iraq."

Palestinian shot dead: Israeli soldiers on Monday shot dead a Palestinian in the northern occupied West Bank village of Burkin, an army spokesman said, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

The spokesman said Mohammed Said Sleimane Sandi, 20, from the nearby Jenine Refugee Camp, was shot after failing to stop when police found him carrying an automatic rifle. Another person accompanying said ran off.

Monday's death brought the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces or settlers in the occupied territories to 929 since the Palestinians began their revolt, or Intifada, in December 1987, according to an unofficial count.

An army spokesman also said Israeli security forces in the West Bank had recently dismantled a number of underground cells of the Patah organisation, the main grouping in the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Singer Nabbie dead: Jim Nabbie, lead tenor for the light-harmony vocal group the Ink Spots for 47 years died after double heart-bypass surgery. He was 72, reports AP from Atlanta.

Nabbie underwent surgery Friday at Georgia Baptist Hospital and died shortly after midnight Saturday.

The Ink Spots began in 1932 and Nabbie was brought into the group in 1945 by founder Duke Watson. The group had a number of hits in the 1930s and 1940s, including "To Each His Own" and "Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall."

Nabbie and the current Ink Spots had been performing about 200 shows a year, the latest in Branson, Mo, on Sept 5. Manager Mill Della Lilley said Gregory Lee of Albuquerque, NM, will replace Nabbie during a four-week tour of England and Europe scheduled to begin Monday.

US climber dies in Canada: A Colorado man lost his footing on a rocky slope and fell more than 4,000 feet (1,220 metres) to his death while climbing in the Canadian Rockies, authorities say, reports AP from Alberta.

The body of James Oliver Hebert III, 38, of Telluride, was recovered Monday from the north face of 11,665-foot (3,558-metre) Mount Temple near Lake Louise by rescue officials from Banff National Park.

Hebert and another experienced climber from Colorado reached the summit late Sunday and were at the top only briefly before blowing snow and cold temperatures forced them down, said Ian Syme, assistant chief park warden.

Hebert then lost his footing and fell down the peak's nearly vertical north face, said Syme. "It was a combination of bad luck, and the weather obviously was a factor," he said.

The mountain's highest elevations are covered by up to 2 feet (2/3 metre) of snow.

Brunei Sultan to visit Pakistan: Brunei Head of State Sultan Sir Hassanah Bolkiah will pay a state visit to Pakistan from September 18 to 21, the Foreign Ministry announced on Monday, reports Reuters from Islamabad.

He will have talks with Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on matters of mutual interest, it said.

China orders to confiscate illegal arms

HONG KONG, Sept 15: Chinese authorities have ordered the handing over or confiscation of all illegal firearms, saying they have undermined law and order in the country, it was reported today, says AFP.

The Public Security Ministry issued the administrative order to confiscate all illegal firearms because problems of arms smuggling, illegal arms manufacturing and the possession of all kinds of firearms have increased in recent years, the semi-official China news service said.

The circular bans all individuals and units from owning any military, sport or hunting firearms, and ordered them to surrender the weapons to local public security offices within a grace period of 30 days, or face severe punishment in accordance with the law.

Chinese authorities had earlier insisted that illegal firearms in the country were brought in by gangs from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, through China's southern border with Vietnam.

There have been numerous cases of armed robbery in Hong Kong where gunmen are hired from the mainland. China says they are recruited by Hong Kong triads and other organised crime elements here.

US satisfied with outcome of Thai polls

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: The United States on Monday expressed satisfaction with the outcome of Thai elections, and said aid could be resumed once the democratically elected government takes office, reports AP.

"As longtime friends of Thailand, we welcome the elections which are to bring into office a democratic and civilian government," said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher.

"We have a long history of close relations with Thailand, which is a mutual security treaty ally. We look forward to working with the new government on a full range of bilateral, regional and global issues."

Boucher added that US aid, suspended following the 1991 military coup, may be resumed once the elected government is inaugurated.



BANGKOK: Chuan Leekpai, leader of the Democrat party, talks to reporters on Tuesday after arriving at party headquarters here. The Democrats won 79 seats in the House of Representatives on Sunday election and are negotiating with other parties to form Thailand's next government. — AFP/UNB photo

Jalalabad bans unauthorised firearms

JALALABAD, Afghanistan, Sept 15: The Afghan city of Jalalabad has banned unauthorised firearms from its streets. Extending to the provinces a clean-up being enforced in the war-ravaged capital Kabul, reports Reuters.

"We have adopted a policy that to carry guns people must have special security cards," deputy governor Dr Asif told visiting UN officials and reporters on Monday.

Jalalabad's Shura, or ruling council, was issuing 200 such cards, he said. Kabul, where 2,000 civilians died in faction fighting last month, introduced a similar drive last week.

He appealed for international aid to accelerate the process of restoring order and a working administration to this city.

Fujimori wants execution of Shining Path leader Guzman

LIMA, Sept 15: As the capital braced for Shining Path revenge attacks President Alberto Fujimori said he would consider executing the guerrilla group's captured leader, reports AP.

The arrest of Abimael Guzman, known as 'President Gonzalo' to his devoted followers, was likely to weaken the insurgency, which has killed thousands of people and caused billions of dollars of damage since 1980.

But many feared a wave of violence in retaliation for Guzman's arrest Saturday night with seven other rebels.

Guerrillas shot to death a policeman Monday and set off a bomb along a highway that injured eight commuters, police said, but there was no immediate indication the attacks were a response to the arrest of Guzman.

In the Villa El Salvador shantytown, where the rebels have twice destroyed the police station with car bombs this year, there was "a feeling of relief," said Ivan Milfin, director of the shantytown's small industrial park.

"But there's also a certain feeling that one has to keep one's guard up," Milfin said. "The rebels could suddenly step up their plans."

Some residents of Lima hung the red-and-white national flag out of their windows to

show solidarity with the government, but most checked their urge to celebrate. A small group gathered Sunday night at the site of a July car bombing that killed 25 people and wounded more than 140.

In the middle-class neighbourhood of Surco, where Guzman was captured, residents were nervous when approached by a reporter, fearing reprisals.

"It was a terrible surprise," said a neighbor of the safehouse where Guzman was captured. "We never imagined someone so sinister was living right there."

Guzman, 57, was being held in the basement of a fortress-like police station in downtown Lima. The street in front was blocked, and four armored vehicles were stationed outside. Two dozen soldiers and police armed with automatic weapons stood guard.

Among those captured with Guzman were Elena Albertina Iparaguirre, his companion, who has at times been identified as Shining Path's second-in-command, and Laura Zembrano, a leader of the party's Lima organization.

Security forces were put on full alert but were not deployed in the streets. The presidential palace has been protected by a cordon of tanks and armored personnel carriers since

April. Under emergency rule, which Fujimori imposed in April, Guzman could be sentenced to life in prison.

"But we must also listen to what the public demands," Fujimori said at a news conference. He said his personal belief was that Guzman deserved the death penalty, and said he would study its application.

Fujimori said Guzman would be turned over in two weeks to a military court, which will have 30 days to try and sentence him on charges of treason.

Guzman's capture was the sharpest blow to the Shining Path since it took up arms in 1980 to overthrow the government and impose a peasant-worker state patterned on the ideas of China's Mao Tse-tung.

Since then more than 25,000 people have been killed in political violence, including rebels, civilians and members of the security forces. The rebels are blamed for 22 billion dollars in economic damage, equivalent to Peru's foreign debt.

Experts believe the Shining Path has as many as 10,000 armed fighters. The US State Department estimates it has 25,000 active members, including those in support func-

tions. President Alberto Fujimori has pledged to defeat the Shining Path by the end of his five-year term in July 1995, and imposed one-man rule in April, with military support, because he claimed corruption was hampering his efforts.

Guzman is a figure of mythical invincibility to the rebels, and experts regard him as a brilliant strategist. His dominance in the organization is such that it is unlikely even a chosen successor could inspire the same devotion.

"As I understand it, the arrest of Guzman should result in the destruction of the Shining Path as a major threat for the Peruvian government," said David Scott Palmer, an expert on the Shining Path, in a telephone interview.

Palmer, a professor at Boston University, taught in the early 1960s at the University of Huamanga in the Andean city of Ayacucho.

Guzman taught philosophy at Huamanga before founding the Shining Path in 1970 and building up support over 10 years of political indoctrination.

Palmer, who knew the rebel leader, warned that Guzman would be more of a threat if he escapes, but that the government must also ensure he is not able to direct his insurgency from inside prison.

No talks until conditions are met: Mandela

LUSAKA, Sept 15: ANC leader Nelson Mandela reiterated here Monday that a meeting with South Africa's white minority government to resolve the deadlocked peace talks would not take place unless President Frederick de Klerk accepts his organisation's conditions, reports AP.

Mandela, who is on a two-day visit to Zambia, said De Klerk should release the remaining political prisoners ban the carrying of traditional weapons in Black townships and send security guards to all township hostels.

"We say these conditions must be implemented and addressed first, otherwise there will be no discussions," he told Zambia's president Frederick Chiluba.