

Premadasa visits India amid tight security

NEW DELHI, Oct 1: Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa flew into the Indian capital Thursday on a three-day state visit during which he is to discuss regional and bilateral issues with Indian leaders, reports AFP.

Premadasa, accompanied by his wife, was provided with heavy security during the ceremonial 21-gun salute and inspection of an inter-services guard of honour in the forecourt of the presidential palace soon after arriving at a secluded air force base.

The President and his wife Hema were greeted by Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma and his wife Vimla, premier P.V. Narasimha Rao, who had returned from France hours earlier, and other senior Indian officials.

"We are no strangers and the relations between India and Sri Lanka are quite good," Premadasa told reporters in

brief remarks, adding that his visit would boost bilateral ties. Premadasa was originally to come on a "working visit", as chairman of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) until New Delhi said it was upgrading his trip.

Unprecedented security marked Premadasa's arrival at the presidential palace. Scores of plain clothes Indian and Sri Lankan detectives ringed both the residents until they retreated inside the place.

Premadasa, who is also accompanied by his international Affairs Advisor Bradman Weerakoon, is to have talks with Sharma and Rao over both bilateral and regional matters, officials said.

The subjects would include SAARC and the bloody Tamil separatist campaign in Sri Lanka, which has sent hundreds of Tamil refugees fleeing to India.

Sharif withdraws sedition charges against newsmen

ISLAMABAD, Oct 1: The Pakistani government on Wednesday dropped sedition charges it had brought against three journalists, reports Reuters.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ordered withdrawal of the charges in response to an appeal by the national associations newspaper owners and editors, a government statement said.

Islamabad's special court for speedy trial issued summons on Sunday for Mir Khalilur Rahman, Editor-in-Chief of

The News daily newspaper, its Islamabad edition editor Mubeen Lodhi and a reporter to answer sedition charges.

An Interior Ministry official laid the charges over publication of an Urdu poem criticising the government for financial scandals and urging an army takeover.

"We are delighted," Lodhi said after Wednesday's statement. "It's an unconditional withdrawal."

The case triggered widespread criticism from opposition politicians, former

government allies and journalists.

The statement by Interior Minister Shujaat Hussain, quoted by the official APP news agency, said the government would refer the case to the All-Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS) of owners and the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE).

"The government expects the APNS and the CPNE to themselves determine whether it was appropriate for the daily to publish the report," Hussain said.

The news printed the poem on September 7 along with a report on investors hit by two financial scandals. It carried a front-page apology two days later and suspended the reporter who wrote the story.

The Interior Minister said the report was considered seditious because it contained "material to incite hatred against democratic institutions, members of the National Assembly and the elected government."

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'Gandhi's view on village life not clear'

NEW DELHI, Oct 1: Mahatma Gandhi's view of Indian village life was not understood even by his contemporaries like Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr B R Ambedkar, according to a new book, reports PTI.

Citing a few instances of this "misunderstanding", it says in October 1945 Gandhi wrote to Nehru, "I am convinced... people will have to live in villages, if we are to build a society based on truth and non-violence."

Nehru, the chief builder of independent India, replied: "The whole question before us is not one of truth and non-violence... the whole question is how to achieve this society and what its content should be. I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence."

Nehru further said a village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent, says the book 'Images of Rural India in the 20th Century' edited by Alok Bhalla and Peter J Bunker.

In the chapter on 'Gandhi and his vision of Indian villages' S K Chai, writes the chief architect of the Indian constitution, Dr B R Ambedkar, intervening in the Constituent Assembly debates, said the village was a 'den of ignorance and illiteracy, a habitat which perpetuates both physical and mental ill-health.'

China celebrates founding anniversary

BEIJING, Oct 1: Communist China on Thursday celebrated the 43rd anniversary of its founding, signing the benefits of a socialist market economy 'scarcely distinguishable from long reviled capitalism', reports AFP.

No mass demonstration was organized, the grand military parade having been abandoned after the 1984 anniversary, but despite leaden skies hundreds of thousands of thousands of people descended on Tianamen Square in central Beijing.

Repatriation of Lankan Tamils from India begins Jan

COLOMBO, Oct 1: The repatriation of the remaining 88,000 Sri Lankan refugees in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu will begin in January next year, reports Xinhua.

This follows extensive talks held with the delegation of Indian officials which arrived here on Monday to discuss plans to expedite an early return of these refugees, according to Rehabilitation Ministry sources here.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has now stepped into assisting the programme of repatriating these persons, the sources said, adding that UNHCR officials will assist Tamil Nadu authorities to attend to the welfare of refugees before they are sent back.

Blacks to contest parliamentary polls in Australia

BRISBANE, Oct 1: Twenty-five years after Australia's indigenous blacks won the right to vote, an attempt is being made to weld them into a political force for upcoming parliamentary elections, reports AFP.

In a move which would give 50,000 aborigines a potentially powerful parliamentary voice for the first time, applications have been lodged to register the Australian Indigenous Peoples Party (AIPP).

The focus of policies would be on aboriginal land rights and small business, he said.



PARIS: Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (L), meets with French President Francois Mitterrand on Wednesday, before a lunch given in his honour. —AFP/UNB photo

Kashmir non-negotiable: Rao

PARIS, Sept 30: The Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, today asserted that Kashmir is non-negotiable, as it is and has always been an integral part of India, reports PTI.

He further warned that Pakistan's claim over this sensitive border state challenges the very basis of India's secular character.

"India is a secular state and cannot allow determination of states on narrow religious considerations, because we believe in the welfare of humanity as a whole and not of any particular region," Rao asserted.

Rao was fielding queries at a meeting organised by the French institute of international relations here last night. He told the audience,

mainly French policy-makers and intellectuals, that India has never annexed any territory. On the contrary, it has been attacked several times and has, therefore, to defend its frontiers.

Referring to the bilateral disputes with Pakistan, Rao said all outstanding issues with Pakistan would be resolved through peaceful parleys.

"We are not going to fight each other," he said, adding that he has held five rounds of talks with his counterpart Nawaz Sharif.

Meanwhile, three civilians were killed and four others were wounded when Pakistani troops resorted to heavy shelling in Palianwala area in

Chamb sector in Jammu district since yesterday.

Officials reports said Pakistani troops opened fire on Indian positions with light arms first and followed it up with heavy mortar fire and shelling deep inside the Indian territory in Palianwala area. The shelling continued from yesterday morning to the early hours of today.

Indian troops returned the fire, inflicting some casualties on Pakistan side, the reports said. The number of Pakistani casualties was not immediately known.

Reports said people in Palianwala and other surrounding villages moved to safer places when they came under Pakistan fire.

US wants stronger UN embargo on Yugoslavia

WASHINGTON, Oct 1: The United States said Wednesday it would seek to tighten the U.N. embargo against the former Yugoslavia, and any exceptions for humanitarian reasons would require U.N. approval, reports AFP.

State department spokesman Richard Boucher sidestepped suggestions that the United States had told Yugoslavia Prime Minister Milan Panic it would support a partial lifting of the oil embargo.

The Belgrade press Tuesday quoted Panic as saying he intended to ask the U.N. Security Council to partially lift the embargo on heating oil so Yugoslavia would have heat this winter, and that the United States supported the move.

Asked if the United States envisioned easing the embargo in any way, Boucher said, "No, in fact, our steps — our efforts have been devoted to tightening the embargo in a whole variety of ways in things that have happened recently."

Boucher said Panic was asking for deliveries of heating oil for the winter, but said "that's something that we'd have to look at, along with the sanctions committee" of the U.N. Security Council.

At a private Luncheon Tuesday with Panic, acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger "expressed encouragement for Panic's attempt to bring peace to the former Yu-

goslavia", the state department said in a statement.

"We're aware that Panic has made clear desire to see some humanitarian deliveries," Boucher said, stressing that U.N. permission would be needed for this.

Boucher said mechanism to enforce sanctions agreed at the London peace conference had been established. Three

enforcement teams left here Wednesday for Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and will be ready to work October 5, he said.

PTI adds: Over 1,00,000 people could die in Bosnia and Herzegovina from hunger and exposure, if fighting continues to hamper relief supplies and aid is not increased, according

to estimates.

But the toll could increase substantially if the weather is worse than usual or fighting lessens. If the fighting subsides facilitating the delivery of aid, the toll could come down sharply to 30,000.

But the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has put the toll at 400,000 in "worse case" estimates.



JERUSALEM: An Israeli policeman examines the body of a Palestinian who was shot dead on Wednesday as he tried to stab an Israeli army officer, shouting 'God is great', in the east Jerusalem Arab village of Beit Haninna. —AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Four hanged in Kabul: The interim government hanged four convicted criminals at sunset Wednesday, imposing strict Islamic law for the second time in a month in an effort to curb street crime, reports AP from Kabul.

The four were convicted in closed trials by a special revolutionary court on charges of murder, rape and theft of government property, according to a state prosecutor who announced the sentences over a loudspeaker as yellow and green nylon nooses were placed around the condemned men's necks.

About 2,000 to 3,000 people cheered as they watched the executions from the edge of Zarting park in downtown Kabul. At times, Defence Ministry forces had trouble keeping the frenzied crowd from storming the execution site.

The prosecutor did not identify which armed factions the condemned men belonged to. But security forces said at least three were former members of an Uzbek militia accused of looting and terrorizing the city since the former Communist regime collapsed in late April.

2 more reach Everest peak: Two more members of an Italian expedition made a successful bid Wednesday on the 8,848-metre (29,028-foot) summit of Mount Everest, the Nepalese Tourism Minister announced, reports AFP from Kathmandu.

The two were identified as Verza Giampiero, 39, and Abele Benc, 38, both Alpine Mountain guides.

They headed for the summit for their fourth camp pitched at a height of 7,985 metres (26,350 feet), taking six and a half hours to reach their goal, the ministry said.

The leader of the 14-member expedition, 37-year-old Agustino Da Polenza, announced no more attempts would be made on the summit.

OAU for int'l conf on Somalia: Senegalese President Abdou Diouf, representing the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), on Wednesday called for an international conference on Somalia and UN help in settling Liberia's civil war, reports Reuters from UN.

Speaking to the General Assembly, Diouf said that West African organisations set up to solve the Liberian crisis were sytemed and needed "increased assistance" from the United Nations. He did not define the type of aid he had in mind.

"The fact is clear — it is a bitter one — the horizon is dark because the master peace plan and the agreed upon arrangements do not have the means to fulfill their peace mission," Diouf said.

Khalistan leader killed: The chief of a hardcore Sikh militant group fighting for an independent Sikh homeland was shot dead Thursday by security forces in the northern Indian state of Punjab, reports AFP from New Delhi.

Balwinder Singh Shahpur, chief of the Dashmehs Regiment of Khalistan, was killed outside the Golden Temples in Amritsar city, PTI said.

US aid for Pak flood victims: President George Bush on Wednesday ordered the Defence Department to provide up to five million in supplies to Pakistan for use in aiding victims of massive flooding, reports Reuters from New Jersey.

Bush, campaigning in New Jersey, signed an order providing the disaster assistance.

The White House did not indicate what type of supplies would be sent to Pakistan.

Quake shakes eastern Japan: A moderate earthquake occurred measuring 4.4 on the Richter Scale shook eastern Japan Thursday but there were no immediate reports on damage or casualties, the meteorological agency said, reports AFP from Tokyo.

It said the epicenter of the quake, which occurred at 11.31 am (0231 GMT), was some 30 kms (18.6 miles) underground off the coast of Ibaraki prefecture, northeast of Tokyo.

An intensity of three on the seven step Japanese earthquake scale was recorded in Mito, about 100 kms (62 miles) northeast of Tokyo, where an intensity of one was registered.

Ukrain PM offers resignation

KIEV, Oct 1: Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk announced yesterday that Prime Minister Vitold Fokin has offered his resignation over economic problems, reports Xinhua.

In his address to parliament, President Kravchuk presented Fokin's resignation to parliament but said Fokin would stay on until a new prime minister was appointed.

"Considering today's situation, Vitold Fokin took the decision that the government in this situation cannot carry out its duties," Kravchuk said.

Clinton's welcome to Perot has now become a headache for him

WASHINGTON, Oct 1: In the very breath he welcomed Ross Perot to rejoin the presidential race, Bill Clinton also worried aloud: "He could give the election to Bush if those who want change are equally divided," reports AP.

It's not much different over at the Bush campaign. There, strategists, see Perot's maneuverings as just the campaign shakeup Bush needs, but they worry in their next sentence that Perot might aim a multimillion dollar advertising blitz at the president.

So for all their nonchalance about the Texas billionaire's latest maneuverings, both campaigns have reason to worry about the unpredictable Perot.

There's no disputing that most of Perot's state organizations have shrunk and the computer tycoon's support shrunk with them in the 10 weeks since Perot quit the race. And the political pros he called in to turn his talk show parade into a presidential campaign are gone, so a

late Perot candidacy would likely be a bit hazardous by traditional standards.

But beyond that, any attempt to assess Perot's impact on the race is clouded in uncertainty.

Will he actively campaign? If so, everywhere or just in selected states? Will he play to win or just highlight his economic views in hopes of nudging Bush and Clinton? Will he direct most of his fire at Bush, as he did in the early stages of his quasi-campaign, or spread his barbs evenly? Will he run only positive ads or attack Clinton or Bush? Or both? How much more of his fortune is he prepared to spend?

Until Perot sheds light on his plans the answers are anyone's guess.

"You're asking a question that can't be answered," Clinton strategic James Caville said when asked to assess Perot's impact. "I think we'll be OK but until we know what he is doing and how he plans on doing it, it's all speculation."

With all the uncertainty, it's hard to take issue even with Vice President Dan Quayle's inconsistent analysis.

"If Ross Perot runs, that's good for us," Quayle said Tuesday. "And if Ross Perot doesn't run, that's good for us."

In the short term, measured in hours and days at this stage of the campaign, both Bush and Clinton are suffering Perot is getting most of the attention this week.

Bush and Clinton are in no position to complain that they can't get their messages heard over the Perot cacophony. Both sent high level delegations to court Perot and his supporters this week, lending legitimacy to Perot's repeated claim that he and his followers could make the difference in November.

In the long term, it's Perot's unpredictability that is a cause of concern in both camps.

With just over a month to go, Bush has been trying to move in the polls with a combination of

attacks suggesting Clinton is a waffler, not a leader, and spend-happy liberal hiding behind a moderate label. Bush strategists insist that with more repetition, the criticisms will take hold, so the last thing the president needs now is to be distracted by incessant Perot attacks.

And Clinton, as the leader, wants no obstacles in the last lap.

Neither Clinton nor Bush is worried about Perot winning. Polls show more than half the voters view Perot unfavorably and that many of his early supporters will not be willing to back Perot again.

UN will send 750 Canadian troops to Somali port

MUGADISHU, Oct 1: The United Nations is sending 750 Canadian troops to the north-eastern Somali port of Bossaso after a breakthrough agreement with the clan in control of the region.

The UN commander of troops in Somalia, Brigadier-General Imtiaz Shaheen, told Reuters the troops would be deployed within three to four weeks to guard famine relief operations.

Bossaso is under the control of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) of warlord Mohamed Abahib Muus.