

Pakistan, France to sign N-accord soon

PARIS, Oct 21: France and Pakistan are "willing to sign" an agreement on nuclear energy for civilian purposes, according to visiting Pakistani Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Azam Zarkhi, reports AFP.

"France and Pakistan are willing to sign a framework agreement. We hope the agreement will be finalised in the near future," he told journalists here on Tuesday.

Zarkhi said the agreement would concern only the applications of nuclear energy in the fields of medical research, agriculture and protection against radiation hazards.

Zarkhi, who was here for routine talks with his French counterpart Serge Boidevaix, said he had not discussed stalled plans for France to build a nuclear power station in Pakistan.

Before going ahead with the

project, France has insisted that Pakistan must allow full inspections of its nuclear installations to ensure it is not using them to produce nuclear weapons. Pakistan has refused to submit to inspections until India, its neighbour and rival, does likewise.

However Zarkhi said he had discussed a proposal by Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was in France last January, for a nuclear-free zone in the west Asia region.

Pakistan's relations with France were good, Zarkhi said adding that Pakistan was eager to improve them further with more economic exchanges. He said a delegation of French businessmen would visit Pakistan next year and he invited France to participate in his country's industrial development.

NATO to deploy 5,000 troops in Bosnia in 4 weeks

GLENEAGLES, Scotland, Oct 21: NATO hopes to deploy within four weeks some 5,000 of the troops it offered to help guard relief convoys in the battlefield ex-Yugoslav republic of Bosnian-Herzegovina, German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe said Tuesday, Reports AFP.

He told reporters at a meeting of NATO defence ministers that NATO would also set up a headquarters 30 kilometres (19 miles) outside of the Bosnia capital of Sarajevo to help supervise the relief effort.

Ruehe made his remarks as ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation agreed to speed efforts to finalise their plans for dealing with the tragedy in Bosnia and to work toward involving their former Soviet-bloc rivals in European peacekeeping.

The situation in Yugoslavia, wracked by ethnic bloodshed since last year, took up most of the morning on the first day of a meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group.

NATO had offered to send 6,000 troops to help protect UN relief convoys but plans had yet to be worked out, Ruehe said 5,000 troops and the logistical headquarters would be deployed in three to four weeks.

Officials said NATO was working hard to assemble all proposals for what to do in the ex-Yugoslavias in time for a meeting of the 16-member alliance's military committee in December.

They said they hoped to involve former Warsaw pact countries in peacekeeping responsibilities at a meeting of their North Atlantic Coopera-

tion Council (NACC) in the first half of next year.

"With regard to peacekeeping efforts, there are also some responsibilities falling on the shoulders of eastern European countries," said Turkish Defence Minister Nevzat Ayaz.

Non-nuclear issues occupied a large place in the two-day NPG meeting that opened here Tuesday a year after NATO buried the cold war nuclear hatchet and slashed European stockpiles by 80 per cent.

Officials said no major announcements were expected from the meeting in this central Scotland city.

Also up for discussion was the alliance's relationship to the nine-member Western European Union (WEU) a largely

paper group that France wants to turn into a pillar of continental defence.

"There will be quite a lot of discussion of non-nuclear issues. The nuclear issue is pretty well squared away," said Pete Williams, Press Secretary to US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney.

The NPG groups defence minister from the United States, Canada and NATO's 14 European members except France, which left the alliance's integrated military command in 1967, and Iceland, which is an observer.

The NPG meeting in Sicily last year cut NATO's stockpile of tactical nuclear warheads in Europe from 3,600 to some 700 airborne nuclear bombs, while the United States and Russia are pursuing deep in strategic arsenals.

Off the Record



People crowd a bookstall in London to buy, Madonna's controversial book 'Sex'. — Star TV photo

Even recession can't touch her

LONDON: More than 150 people who stood in line in the rain were among the first to buy rock star Madonna's controversial book "Sex" on Wednesday, reports AP.

At the stroke of midnight, when British sales were authorised to begin, customers who had waited up to four hours outside Books etc. pushed through a crowd of reporters and camera crews.

The Charing Cross Road store was the first in Britain to start selling the book, offering it at a special reduced price of 32.40 dollars.

Other stores waited until business hours today to start selling the book, at the official price of 40.50 dollar.

Staff could not immediately say how many copies they had sold. Some people bought three or four copies.

Weeks of hype preceded the sale. Allegations that the book is obscene and should be banned have been rejected by the head of government's Crown Prosecution Service.

The 128 pages of Steven Meisel photographs—graphic images of bondage, domination, lesbianism and menages a trois—accompany Madonna's description of sexual fantasies.

"Sex" also went on sale in the United States on Wednesday, at 49.95 dollars.

They're fed up with bats

LONDON: Bats are making a mess in England's churches and the wife of a country clergyman says it's time the little creatures went somewhere else, reports AP.

"They are vicious little creatures; they bite," says Catherine Ward, wife of a clergyman who has bats in two of the five churches in his care.

"We see the problem as a spiritual one because our churches have a struggle to keep going and they ought not to be endangered further by bats," Ward said from her home in Bale in Norfolk.

She has founded the Movement Against Bats in Churches to campaign for a change in the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act which protects Britain's 15 bats species from being disturbed except in parlors, bedrooms and other occupied rooms of homes.

Queen has brought 200 trunks of bizarre items

BERLIN: The German media sowed signs of catching queen-mania today as the British monarch's five-day state visit to Germany bred a rash of articles, many of them bizarre, reports AP.

The privately-run television channel RTL Plus said it had found out that the Queen had brought 200 trunks of clothes and other belongings for her five-city tour, including her own team, a horsehair pillow, bottles of English water and pure Scottish wool underwear.

The channel's royal-watcher, reporter Peter Wuest, admitted on breakfast television that he had had "no means of checking" this last fact.

In Berlin, meanwhile, the tabloid B.Z. reported that Michael Fagan, who caused a security scandal in 1982 by sneaking into the Queen's bedroom in Buckingham Palace, intended to repeat his exploit during her German tour.

Fagan, 41, plans to enter the West Berlin residence of the British Ambassador, Sir Christopher Mallaby, the B.Z. said, adding that the idea had been conceived as a promotion for a punk-rock group.



BRIEFLY

Kurds kill 19 in Turkey: Nineteen civilians were killed Tuesday when Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) rebels ambushed a bus near the eastern town of Bingol. Anatolia news agency reported, AFP says from Ankara.

PKK separatists stopped the bus at Solhan and opened fire from automatic weapons, killing 19 passengers and wounding six others the agency said quoting the governor of Bingol.

The Turkish army and Iraqi Kurdish forces have been trying since October 5 to drive PKK separatists out of northern Iraq and the Turkish-Iraqi border region.

Typhoon hits Guam again: The second typhoon in less than two months swept over Guam early Wednesday, knocking out power and water to parts of the island of 135,000 people, AP reports from Abana.

The eye of Typhoon Brian was passing over the southern tip of the island, the Joint Typhoon Warning Center on Guam reported at noon Wednesday (0200 GMT). The storm had maximum sustained wind of 115 mph (185 kph) and gusts to 145 mph (230 kph), and it was moving west-northwest at 7 mph (11 kph), the center said.

Power was out in some places, and residents in the southern part also lost water, said Guam civil defense spokesman Carl Gumataotao. Schools, businesses and government offices were closed and many residents were in shelters.

Forecasters at the warning center said the powerful winds of the eye wall were expected to bash the island for about three hours.

Guam is west of the international date line, 3,800 miles (6,080 kilometers) west of Hawaii and 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) south of Japan.

Gates holds talks with Kravchuk: US Intelligence Chief Robert Gates held talks with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk in Kiev Tuesday, focusing on the role of intelligence agencies in monitoring international security, Itar-Tass news agency reported, AFP says from Moscow.

The head of the Central Intelligence Agency and Kravchuk discussed possible bilateral cooperation in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in fighting arms and drug trafficking as well as terrorism, the agency said.

Gates last week took up the same issues during an unprecedented meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Moscow.

Gunmen kill soldier in Belfast: Gunmen, on Tuesday night killed an off-duty soldier on his uncle's farm near the village of Rasharkin 35 miles (55 km) northwest of Belfast, police reported, AFP says from Belfast.

He was the first member of the British Army's newly created Royal Irish Regiment to be killed in the province's sectarian and political fighting. No group immediately claimed responsibility.

The Ulster Defence Regiment was the target of hundreds of attacks by the Irish Republican Army fighting British rule in Northern Ireland and the army had no illusion that the change to a new regiment would bring halt the attacks.

Police did not immediately name the dead man but the BBC said he was a 43-year-old sergeant.



LONDON: Miners Stephen Baratt (L) and Kevin Guy from Calverton Colliery in Nottingham stand outside the House of Commons in London, October 20 to lobby MPs about the pit closure. — AFP/UNB photo

Saudi gen blames Schwarzkopf for hogging war glory

LONDON, Oct 21: A retired Saudi General has accused US Gen Norman Schwarzkopf of claiming all the glory for the allies' Gulf War victory last year, The Times of London reported Wednesday, reports AP.

It quoted Gen. Khalid bin Sultan, who shared command of allied forces in the Gulf, as saying Schwarzkopf's autobiography "It Doesn't Take A Hero" contains inaccuracies and slanted remarks.

Schwarzkopf, who was in overall command of the US-led allied force, is in Britain to promote the book. He was at a party at the Imperial War Museum in London Tuesday night marking its publication.

The Times said Prince Khalid is angry about what he sees as Schwarzkopf's attempt to take all the credit for driving Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait.

It quoted the Prince, who it said is writing his war recollections, as saying: "There are so many inaccuracies and slanted remarks in his book

that I feel I must set the record straight...."

"One is asked to believe that Schwarzkopf alone perceived the urgency of the threat from Iraq, that he alone devised the war plans and orchestrated every phase of the campaign. He minimizes the role of my own command in achieving territory."

It quoted the Prince as saying he is upset with Schwarzkopf's claims that it was he who pointed out to me that Al-Khaffji was indefensible and that its garrison should be pulled out."

It quoted the Prince as saying: "I made an evacuation plan for Al-Khaffji's civilians two weeks before Gen. Schwarzkopf arrived.... It took no genius to recognize that the small community of Al-Khaffji, well within range of Saddam's artillery, was a sitting duck that could not be defended."

The Times said the Prince made his remarks Tuesday night but did not say where or in what circumstances.

US opposes fresh UN accord with Iraq on aid operations

WASHINGTON, Oct 21: The United States said Tuesday it opposed a new agreement between the United Nations and Iraq on humanitarian aid operations in that country, saying the accord limited the movement of UN personnel, reports AFP.

Washington, has "serious questions" about the accord drafted after three months of negotiations, according to State Department spokesman Richard Boucher.

Boucher said that the new text, which replaces an earlier accord that has expired and which must still still be approved by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, limited the freedom of UN personnel to operate throughout Iraq.

The accord calls for cutting from 500 to 300 the number of UN guards, in Iraq and limits their deployment to Iraq, Kurdistan in the north and Baghdad.

US government sources quoted in the Washington Post Tuesday said that if the agreement were approved, the Iraqis will have "succeeded in putting dramatic limits on the ability of UN personnel to get around the country."

A decision on the pact is expected this week, according to Jan Eliasson, who is in

charge of all UN humanitarian operations.

Boucher said that the United States was holding discussions at the United Nations aimed at modifying the text.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said late Tuesday that he approved of a draft agreement between the United Nations and Iraq on UN humanitarian operations in that country.

Boutros-Ghali told AFP he had communicated his approval in writing to the President of the Security Council, Jean-Bernard Merimee of France.

The United States Tuesday said it opposed the agreement reached Saturday in Baghdad by UN and Iraqi officials, saying the accord limited the freedom of movement of United Nations guards in Iraq.

ROK threatens to resume military exercise with US

SEOUL, Oct 21: South Korea threatened Wednesday to restart "Team Spirit" military exercises with the United States next spring unless rival North Korea accepts inter-Korean nuclear inspections, reports AP.

North Korea earlier had said inter-Korea dialogue would face a "catastrophe" if the exercises were resumed. In past years, the Communist called off all inter-Korea dialogue during the three-month exercise period as a protest against what it called northward invasion rehearsals.

In a letter to North Korea, South Korean Prime Minister Hyon Soong-jong also demanded Wednesday that Pyongyang apologize for a major Communist spy case that

Seoul authorities announced had been uncovered recently.

"In a situation like this, in which the nuclear issues remain unsolved, we cannot but resume the Team Spirit exercises in 1993," Hyon said in the letter to his northern counterpart, Yon Hyong Muk.

Hyon's letter was a reply to Yon's October 13 letter denouncing South Korea in connection with the spy case, which Yon called a political frame-up.

The United States and South Korea had held "Team Spirit" exercises annually since 1976 to practice defenses against a possible North Korean attack. An attack by the North in 1950 started a three-year war.

Pindi asked to roll back N programme for US aid

ISLAMABAD, Oct 21: The outgoing US Ambassador to Pakistan Nicholas Platt, has advised Islamabad to roll back its nuclear programme if it wanted a resumption of US aid, a newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Washington cut off more than half a billion dollars in annual economic and military assistance to Pakistan in October 1990 under the Pressler law which prohibits aid to a state developing nuclear weapons.

Unless Islamabad reverses its nuclear programme it will continue to feel the "bite" of the Pressler amendment, Platt told the nation in an interview.

Y'slavia, Croatia to set up liaison offices

GENEVA, Oct 21: Yugoslavia and Croatia will set up liaison offices in their respective capitals in a bid to normalize their relations, the presidents of the two countries agreed here Tuesday, reports AFP.

The liaison offices will be placed under the authority of a joint committee created after Yugoslav President Slobodan Cosic of Yugoslavia and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia first met on September 30.

Suharto asks army to bear local characteristics in mind

JAKARTA, Oct 21: President Suharto told the Indonesian armed forces today to bear local characteristics in mind wherever they were based in the country, reports AFP.

"For every region, there is a need to develop a specific pattern of regional and territorial guidance to suit the local geographical, demographic and social conditions," Suharto told military leaders holding their annual coordination meeting here.

He said that just as with national strategies and policies, the military's territorial policies should take into account local values, social organization, tradition and culture.

Rao's honeymoon with opposition and press ends

NEW DELHI, Oct 21: Sixteen months after he took power and radically transformed India's semi-socialist economy, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's honeymoon with the opposition and the press has ended, reports AFP.

The 71-year-old veteran politician is facing flak from both the once-sympathetic media and opposition parties, sections of which hailed him as a harbinger of dynamic change when he assumed office on June 21, 1991.

The Premier is now accused of dithering on most major issues and the leader who inspired much hope at the start of his innings, has little to show besides his controversial economic reforms.

"Rao has an old habit of not taking any decision," said spokesman K R Malkani of the Chief Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party). "He waits, waits and waits and things time will solve all problems."

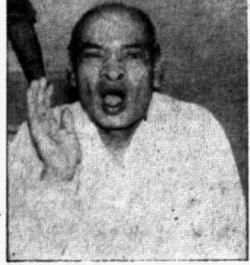
"In the process, many problems are getting more complicated," he said. "That is the problem with the Prime Minister."

"He generally behaves as if he ignores a problem long enough, it will develop a safe pair of wings and fly away," ex-MP M J Akbar said.

Even sections of Rao's Congress (I) party share the same misgivings. Several congress leaders, including some ministers, have in private expressed unhappi-

ness with Rao, who is also president of the ruling party.

"In his manifest penchant



for being unable to make up his mind, Rao makes Hamlet look like James Bond," said respected news magazine

India Today, in a recent assessment of the Prime Minister.

Rao is under attack for his indecisiveness on Kashmir, where Muslim militants are fighting a secessionist campaign, and for failing to respond quicker to halt a controversial Hindu temple construction drive that ran for 18 days in July at a site also claimed by Muslims.

Adding to the criticism, Rao's cabinet has been without a Foreign and Commerce Minister for months and he himself holds more than 10 portfolios. But repeated promises to fill the empty slots and reshuffle the cabinet have not been acted upon.

He has also not filled four vacancies in the 21-member

policy-making Congress working committee, nor has he formed the ruling party's influential parliamentary board.

The premier has made no decision on rampant disaffection in the southern state of Karnataka, where more than 100 Congress lawmakers are up in arms against Chief Minister S. Bangarappa, who recently dared Rao to sack him.

On Kashmir, he has frequently stressed the need for a political solution, but given no indication what he may have in mind.

BJP and Opposition Leader L K Advani, who last year called Rao the best Prime Minister India has had in nearly 25 years, Monday accused him of abetting corrup-

Don't believe crazy opinion polls, Bush tells voters

SOUTH CAROLINA, Oct 21: Denying that his re-election campaign is on the brink of defeat, President George Bush Tuesday heaped scorn on the media and public opinion polls, reports AFP.

"Don't let these news casters tell you what's happening, or how to vote... don't believe these crazy polls. Don't believe these nutty pollsters," he said during a whistle stop train tour through Georgia and South Carolina.

His attacks on those predicting his political demise are an attempt to convince voters not to give up even though polls put him 19 points behind Democrat Bill Clinton, with two weeks to go before election day.

The Bush campaign's favourite bumper sticker reads "annoy the media re-elect Bush" on white letters on a red background. The president quoted he bumper sticker during the final presidential debate Monday, then joked, "I'm going to pay for this later on."

According to some, Bush can not go wrong with his attacks on the media. Independent candidate Ross Perot says the media are at least as unpopular as the US Congress.

Throughout Bush's train trip, his attacks on the media please the crowds most. "Throw the media off the train," read one placard by the railway in Georgia.

Top Laotian officials in Yangon

BANGKOK, Oct 21: High-ranking Laotian officials arrived in the Myanmar capital on Tuesday for an officials visit, state-run radio Yangon reported, says AFP.

The eight-member delegation was headed by Laotian Agriculture Minister General Sivasat Keobounphan, the radio said in a broadcast monitored here Tuesday night.

Sivasat held talks with Myanmar counterpart Tmajor General Myint Aung shortly after arrival and later called on Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw at Yangon's foreign ministry, the radio said.

The meetings were also attended by senior Myanmar officials and Laotian diplomats to Myanmar the radio said.