

BRIEFLY

Yeltsin in Hungary: Russian President Boris Yeltsin arrived in Hungary on Tuesday for a two-day official visit to strengthen bilateral ties and try to settle financial matters left unresolved when the Soviet Union crumbled, Reuters reports from Budapest.

Accompanied by his wife Naya, Yeltsin flew to Hungary by special jet from London, where he enjoyed a warm welcome far removed from the political turmoil he faces at home.

Hungarian officials expect Yeltsin, supported by a coterie of top-rank ministers, to clear up some long-running issues.

These include accounting for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and settling nearly two billion dollar in trade debts the Soviet Union ran up with Hungary before it collapsed.

8 fundamentalists held in Egypt: Egyptian authorities on Tuesday arrested eight Muslim fundamentalists for preparing explosives they allegedly planned to use against residents and police, the police said, AFP reports from Asyut.

The suspects were arrested in Sanabu village, several kilometers (miles) from Dairut in Asyut province, which is 400 kilometers (240 miles) south of Cairo, police said.

In bloody clashes in March and June, 12 Coptic Christians and three Muslim fundamentalists died in Sanabu.

Muslim fundamentalists and police in the city of Asyut battled each other with automatic weapons on Monday night, leaving as many as five people wounded and leading to the arrests of 18 fundamentalists.

One beheaded in Saudi Arabia: A Saudi convicted of murdering his cousin was beheaded Tuesday at a public square in southern Saudi Arabia, Riyadh Radio reported, AFP says from Riyadh.

Hadji Ibn Ali Al-Harraz Al-Maleki, who was sentenced to death for having shot dead his cousin, was executed in Sibiya, in Jizzan province, the radio reported, quoting an Interior Ministry statement.

US envoy slates Kenyan govt: US Ambassador Smith Hempstone on Tuesday strongly condemned the Kenyan government for denying opposition parties a fair chance to compete in the country's first multi-party elections for 26 years, AFP reports from Nairobi.

"The playing field is not level," Hempstone said in a speech to British and German businessmen, voicing doubts that presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in less than four weeks would be free and fair.

Hempstone blasted President Daniel Arap Moi's administration for restricting travel by opposition leaders eager to hit the campaign trail, denying them fair access to the media, preventing them from opening branch offices and failing to include at least a million young people on the electoral roll.

'Massive arms build-up threatens regional stability'

Iran asks India to help ease tensions in Gulf

NEW DELHI, Nov 11: Iran on Tuesday asked India to help ease tensions in the Gulf, saying a massive arms build-up there was forming local hostilities and threatened regional stability, reports Reuters.

"Domineering forces, with their extensive and massive military presence, are undermining tranquility, peace and stability in this vital region by showing division and animosity among regional countries," Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was quoted as telling Indian officials.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said Velayati, leading a high-level delegation on a visit to India, asked New Delhi to help ease tensions.

Indian officials said Iran last

year wanted to buy a 10-megawatt nuclear reactor from India. But an Iranian embassy spokesman later denied "ever asking India for the reactor."

Indian officials told Reuters last year that New Delhi had turned down an Iranian request for the reactor following pressure from Washington.

The Washington Post said on Tuesday that the Bush administration had begun a diplomatic campaign to stop western nations from selling militarily useful technology to Iran.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Assistant Secretary of State Edward Djerejian had raised the matter with the Indian envoy in Washington.

An Indian foreign ministry delegation is due to visit Washington for official talks on Thursday. Indian officials said the talks would focus on US concerns over India's nuclear policy.

India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, says its nuclear programme is peaceful. New Delhi has refused to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, saying it discriminated against the non-nuclear states.

Velayati, who arrived in New Delhi on Monday after a short trip to Kabul, briefed Indian Minister of State for External Affairs R L Bhatia about the situation in the beleaguered Afghan capital.



WASHINGTON: US President George Bush holds up a statue of a bull he received as a gift from Republican Senators, Congressmen and cabinet members on Tuesday during a GOP leadership dinner in his honour.

— AFP/UNB photo

US expels Cuban diplomat

WASHINGTON, Nov 11: The United States said on Tuesday it was expelling a diplomat at Cuba's mission to the United Nations for spying, reports Reuters.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Carlos Manuel Collazo Usulan, a third secretary, must leave the United States within 48 hours.

"He's being asked to leave the United States for activities inappropriate to his responsibilities at the United Nations," Boucher told reporters.

"In other words, the FBI has considerable information which demonstrates that the individual is engaged in espionage activities," he said. He refused to elaborate.

Boucher said the Cuban mission in New York was informed on Tuesday morning

UN team seizes 200 drums of uranium in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Nov 11: Member of a US inspection team took possession Tuesday of 200 drums of uranium stocked at a nuclear facility in northern Iraq, team leader Dimitri Periccos said, reports AFP.

"We just have to verify the quantity of uranium and put it under the (International Atomic Energy Agency's) seal," Periccos said after the group seized the containers from a site at Al-Jazira, west of Mosul.

The team members, who flew to the site by helicopter, were previously aware of the existence of the nuclear material, Periccos told journalists in the Iraqi capital.

Other members of the 32-strong team, which arrived in Baghdad Sunday, were studying the destroyed nuclear facility at Tuwaitha 25 kilometers (15 miles) southeast of Baghdad.

"Part of the team is doing some measurements again to verify the irradiated fuel which is in the reactor," Periccos said. "And because it is not possible to apply seals on this fuel, we have now and then to measure it to be sure that nothing has happened with it."

Another portion of the irradiated fuel has been placed in a basin at a farm about 10 kilometers (six miles) south of Baghdad. It's looked after because it's out in the sun and it's in the heat," he said.

He also said that experts from a company he did not name were studying the possibility of shipping the irradiated fuel out of Iraq.

Baghdad criticised the IAEA, a Vienna-based UN or-

ganisation, for failing to take out the irradiated fuel they charged threatened the environment and the Iraqi people.

Periccos, a Greek, said that another UN group of experts had set up headquarters in Mosul where they were taking water samples to test them for radioactivity. They are to return to Baghdad Sunday.

Another group flew by helicopter to western Iraq to take more water samples, he added. And yet another group travelled to the south to inspect facilities that Periccos would not specify.

The Greek team leader also said he held several talks with Iraqi officials.

His mission, the 46th under UN Gulf War ceasefire resolutions calling for Iraq's disarmament, is to stay in Iraq until November 18.

Indian team off to US to discuss nuclear issue

NEW DELHI, Nov 11: An Indian Foreign Ministry delegation left for Washington Wednesday on a two-day visit to discuss nuclear non-proliferation and related security issues with US officials, a government spokesman said, reports AP.

The team will hold talks Thursday and Friday on a "whole range of security issues" with US State Department officials and arms control experts, Foreign Ministry spokesman Shiv Shanker Mukherjee said.

Emotional tribute from Republicans

WASHINGTON, Nov 11: President George Bush, in his first extended remarks since his election defeat, on Tuesday night received an emotional tribute from fellow Republicans and predicted the party soon will recover from his loss, reports Reuters.

"I think we've had a good record of stewardship," Bush said at a dinner hosted by Senate Republican leader Robert Dole.

"The IDEA that this party has seen its demise that the party is out of here, I don't believe it for one single minute," Bush said.

His defeat one week before to democrat Bill Clinton ends 12 years of Republican rule at the White House and sparked a round of finger-pointing over who bore responsibility for the loss.

He urged party faithful not to fall into "the tendency when there's defeat of this magnitude and this hurtfulness, to find somebody to blame."

Bush said he was confident Republicans will return to power in Washington and said there was nothing to be gained from "falling into this second-guessing trap."

Clinton pledges to stop spread of missiles in ME

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas, Nov 11: President-elect Bill Clinton has vowed to act more vigorously to stop the spread of missiles in the Middle East and to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya, reports Reuters.

Clinton made the pledge in an interview released on Tuesday, a day in which he took time out from transition planning to speak with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Saudi King Fahd by telephone about the Mideast Peace process.

Though the interview by the journal Middle East Insight was conducted four days before the presidential election, Clinton was specifically asked what his actions would be on the Middle East as President.

"I will act more vigorously to stop the spread of danger-

ous missiles in the Mideast, and insist on a strong international effort to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of nations like Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya," the President-elect said. Weapons of mass destruction include nuclear and biological and chemical weapons.

"Our policy must include not only an effort to reduce this spread but a reaffirmation of our strong commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative edge over its potential adversaries, he added.

He also said that his administration will treat the Arab-Israeli conflict as one in which the survival of Israel is at stake.

The interview, which will appear in the journal's November/December issue, was released on Tuesday, as Clinton continued planning for his new administration.

Members of his Transition Board of Directors, located in different cities across the country, held a half-hour telephone conference call. Details of what was discussed were to be released, however.

Clinton held several planning meetings but took time to speak with Mubarak and Fahd. Spokesman George Stephanopoulos said Clinton spoke with the Egyptian President about the Middle East peace process and told the Saudi King that the United States is committed to the security of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia.

He shared King Fahd's concern about the possibility of a new hostile power in the region, Stephanopoulos said, referring to Iran, which has been developing a nuclear programme and building up its military capabilities.

Bush is looking for permanent housing in Houston

HOUSTON, Nov 11: President George Bush, who leaves office next January, is looking for permanent housing in his adopted hometown of Houston, a local real estate agent said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

John Daugherty, owner of John Daugherty Realtors here, said the President and First Lady Barbara Bush have made appointments to view several houses listed by Daugherty in the exclusive Tanglewood section of west Houston.

He said Mrs Bush may make an initial house-hunting trip to Houston next week. The First Lady's press office said it could not confirm her schedule after a planned five-day vacation in Florida this week with the President.

Bush lived in the tanglewood section of Houston before being elected vice president in 1980 and owns a small lot there.

Tajik govt resigns

MOSCOW, Nov 11: Tajikistan's embattled coalition government has resigned and left an interim council in control of the Central Asian republic, officials and news media said Wednesday, reports AP.

The State Council, formed last week and led by former Acting President Akbarshah Iskandarov, was to remain in control until parliament picks a new government during a session scheduled to start Monday, officials said.

Resignation of the cabinet and the legislative leadership Tuesday evening was a victory for militants opposed to the coalition that took power in September, after forcing former president Rakhmon Nabiyev to resign.

Heavy fighting in Monrovia

MONROVIA, Nov 11: West African soldiers fought gunbattles with guerrillas in central Monrovia on Wednesday and the top US official for Africa said the peacekeepers had become combatants in Liberia's civil war, reports AP.

Some of the heaviest fighting in the 27-day battle for Liberia's capital came after midnight Tuesday, when the Economic Community of West African States had called on warring Liberian factions to cease fire.

Before dawn, guerrillas loyal to rebel leader Charles Taylor emerged from their hiding places in swamps outside downtown Monrovia and opened fire on troops of the

seven-nation peacekeeping force.

Brig. S. Victor Malu of Nigeria, the West African chief of staff, said the attacks began after a Tuesday noon deadline that Taylor had set for a unilateral ceasefire.

"The fighting has escalated... the attacks seemed to be even more severe," Malu said Tuesday night.

The West African forces responded to the attacks by bombarding the rebels with artillery from land batteries, gunboats and jet fighters.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. Meanwhile, Herman Cohen, US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said the West African force could no

Colombian troops kill 29 leftists

SANTAFE de BOGOTA, Nov 11: Colombian forces backed by helicopter gunships have killed 29 leftist rebels in a jungle area of southern Colombia, the national police chief said Tuesday, reports AFP.

The offensive was ordered in response to an attack Saturday in which the guerrillas, in a sharp escalation of a three-week-old offensive, killed 28 policemen who had been guarding oil installations in Putumayo department.

The police chief, General Miguel Antonio Gomez, said the 29 insurgents killed by security forces over the past three days were from the guerrilla unit that killed the policemen. "They were the same delinquents," Gomez said.

Gomez said the operation in the area of thick jungle near the Ecuadorian border involved army and navy forces and included planes and helicopter

gunships.

Saturday's rebel raid and a surge in attacks on police by suspected Medellin cartel gunmen prompted President Cesar Gaviria to declare a 90-day national state of emergency Sunday.

The government Tuesday imposed strict media regulation to try to block rebel groups' access to the press and stop reports sympathetic to guerrillas or drug dealers from reaching the public.

Communications Minister William Jaramillo told a press conference that the controls were meant to support the state of emergency Gaviria declared amid spiralling violence, kidnappings and murders nationwide blamed variously on drug traders and two allied rebel groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army

Lankan troops destroy 4 rebel bases, kill 19

COLOMBO, Nov 11: At least 19 Tamil guerrillas were killed and four rebel bases destroyed in a three-day offensive by government commandos and special forces in eastern Sri Lanka, military sources said today, reports Reuters.

They said the offensive, from Sunday through Tuesday in Batticaloa district, was aimed at disrupting rebel supply bases.

"We destroyed a large stock of food and medicines," a senior military officer said of the offensive by army commandos and special forces backed by infantry units and helicopter gunships.

He said most of the guer-

illas were killed during a fight at a rebel training camp. Others were killed in air strikes.

Military sources said no government troops were killed by rebel fire during the operation, but a helicopter crewman died on Monday when his aircraft crashed after hitting a power line during a logistics mission in Amparar district, south of Batticaloa.

The joint operations command in Colombo, which controls all military operations, said they had no immediate information about the eastern offensive.

At least five people were injured on Wednesday in Batticaloa

2 Palestinians shot dead in Gaza

JERUSALEM, Nov 11: Israeli soldiers shot dead two Palestinians in clashes today in the occupied Gaza Strip sparked by the killing of a PLO guerrilla, Palestinian sources said, reports AFP.

Violent demonstrations erupted in Khan Yunis at news of the death late Tuesday of Nahad Mohamar, 20, of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a branch of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Troops opened fire to disperse the protest, killing a 20-year-old cousin of Mohamar and a 63-year-old man, hospital sources said. Ten protesters were wounded in the town, which was paralysed by a strike in mourning for the guerrilla.

A soldier was seriously wounded earlier, Wednesday in the same area when Palestinian gunmen fired at a patrol, military sources said.

Serbs halt convoy of refugees outside Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Nov 11: A Red Cross convoy of 1,500 Muslims and Croat refugees from Sarajevo was stranded in freezing darkness outside the city on Tuesday after being halted at a Serb roadblock, UN peacekeepers said, reports Reuters.

The column of 14 overloaded buses was stopped near the Serb-held suburb of Tlidza on its way to the Croatian Adriatic Port of Split.

Sarajevo television quoted Bosnian Army Commander Safir Halilovic as saying that Muslims had been taken off the buses but its report could not be confirmed.

Halilovic banned further convoys until the plight of the Muslims had been clarified.

The UN did not know why the column had been prevented from reaching its overnight destination of Kisej-ljak, a Croatian controlled town 30 km (18 miles) from Sarajevo.

There was concern for the

scores of children and old people crammed aboard the vehicles with their meagre belongings and little food or water.

Plans to evacuate another convoy of 1,000 Serbs from Sarajevo to Belgrade also ran into difficulties when buses failed to turn up for most of them.

Only one vehicle left the city and as darkness fell, several hundred people of all ages were left milling around the departure point.

Tuesday was the first day of an operation mounted by the Bosnian Red Cross to take up to 6,000 refugees from Sarajevo which has been under siege since April by Serb forces opposed to Bosnian independence.

The Muslims and Croats left at about 1 pm (1200 GMT), many of them weeping for menfolk left behind to fight.

Harrowing farewells were exchanged amid the wreckage of Sarajevo bus station which

has been destroyed by constant shelling.

UN peacekeepers who dismissed the evacuation as a form of "ethnic cleansing" refused to protect the convoy as it began its 170 km (105 mile) trek through mountains to Split.

The Bosnian government refused to allow fit men of fighting age to join the refugees who waited for hours in chaos and freezing cold for the transport to arrive.

Nermin Zupcevic, a young fighter in his twenties, hugged his six-month-old son and wife and said: "I am in shock. My world is gone. I am losing my reason for living."

Zupcevic will remain to help defend Sarajevo while his family tries to reach Paris.

It was an extraordinary gathering of people in a city whose population has been taught by indiscriminate war never to stay too long in one place in large numbers.



SARAJEVO: A Bosnian family cries in the bus leaving Sarajevo on Tuesday. The Bosnian Red Cross started the mass evacuation of up to 6,000 Sarajevo residents. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Liz on verge of pneumonia

LOS ANGELES: Actress Elizabeth Taylor, who nearly died two years ago from respiratory problems, was ordered by doctors Tuesday to stay home because she fell ill and was on the verge of pneumonia, reports AP.

Taylor, 60, cancelled her upcoming appearances and activities to the end of the year on the recommendation of Dr Michael Roth, her personal physician, said Chen Sam, publicist for the actress.

Roth told Taylor to stay at her home in Bel-air and "not be out and about," but she wasn't confined to bed.

"Due to the recurrence of a severe upper respiratory tract infection with spiking fevers, verging on pneumonia, and in view of her health history in the past, I have asked Taylor to cancel all obligations for the next few weeks," Roth said in a statement.

The Oscar-winning film star rallied after being near death during a three-month hospital stay in the spring of 1990.

During that stay at St. John's Hospital and Health Center in Santa Monica, Taylor was dealt a setback when her viral pneumonia escalated into bacterial pneumonia and a yeast infection. Doctors said she was near death on April 22, 1990.

Grandma gives birth to twins

ANAHEIM, California: A 53-year-old grandmother gave birth Tuesday to twin girls who were conceived with donated eggs that were fertilized by her 32-year-old husband's sperm, reports AFP.

The babies were born 12 weeks premature at Martin Luther Hospital where they were reported in stable but guarded condition.

The mother, Mary Shearing, who has been hospitalized for two weeks, was in good condition, said hospital spokesman Dennis Gaschen.

He said babies delivered after 24 weeks of gestation are considered to be viable and have some chance of surviving. The shearing twins "are 28 weeks — nearly a month older."

Fifth summit of Arab Maghreb Union opens

NOUAKCHOTT, Nov 11: The fifth summit of the Arab Maghreb Union opened on Tuesday in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in the absence of Libyan Leader Moamer Gaddafi, reports AFP.

Gaddafi sent the Libyan ambassador to Morocco to attend the summit which is being chaired by Mauritania's head of state Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya.

Those attending included Algerian President Ali Kafi and Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

King Hassan II of Morocco was represented by his Prime Minister Mohamed Karimlamrani and the Moroccan Minister of state with responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Abd-ellatif Filali.

Palestinian Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat was attending as a guest.