

Clinton file : FBI probing telephone monitoring

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: The FBI is investigating whether the State Department illegally monitored a department official's phone calls concerning searches of President-elect Clinton's passport files, FBI sources have confirmed, reports AP.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed Thursday that the investigation focused on the department's operations center and its monitoring of calls between former Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Tamposi and other officials.

It was the latest development in the complex case that began in the last days of the 1992 presidential campaign when it was disclosed that officials had searched the passport files of Clinton, his mother and Ross Perot.

Tamposi was dismissed Tuesday for her involvement in the passport records searches, widely criticized as an abuse of State Department privilege for political purposes.

Tamposi says she was responding to Freedom of Information Act requests from several news organizations in ordering the passport files searched.

Federal troops cane, teargas striking cops in Agartala

NEW DELHI, Nov 13: Federal troops cuffed and teargassed rebellious policemen today in Tripura after taking over security positions at vital installations in the remote northeastern Indian state, reports AP.

Central Reserve Police force and Assam Rifles troops swooped on the venue of a pre-dawn protest assembly on the Tripura capital Agartala and gave striking policemen gathered there a minute to disperse, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

But before the protesters could decide whether to heed the command, the troops charged them wielding canes and throwing teargas shells, injuring at least 14, PTI quoted police strike leaders as saying.

The confrontation came on the fourth day of a work boycott by 13,000 Tripura policemen, who are pressing for higher wages.

Paramilitary troops surrounded police barracks at several places in the north-eastern state to prevent strikers from taking to the streets.

They took over security duties at the armoury, communication centres, the fire brigade, jails, government buildings and other sensitive installations, PTI said.

Protest leader Prabir Das Chowdhury condemned the paramilitary's use of force today, saying the striking policemen could have hit back but did not.

"We could have offered resistance by using the armoury which was under our control," he was quoted as saying, adding that strikers would set a meeting to decide their course of action.

The policemen, on strike since Tuesday, have refused to negotiate with the government and have rejected a marginal salary increase offered to them.

Senior Tripura officers belonging to an All-India Cadre are not backing the strikers, who are also demanding trade union rights for men and women in uniform, PTI said.

Federal troopers also arrested several strike leaders in an overnight operation which came after wardens deserted their posts Wednesday at one federal and seven provincial prisons to back the boycott.

Inmates are presently running the administration of some of the jails because of the policemen's strike. PTI reported Thursday that the prisoners were cooking and doing other chores inside the jails while federal troopers stationed outside kept a vigil.

Border Security Force officials in New Delhi said paramilitary troopers would disarm the striking policemen if they resorted to violence to press their demands.

Off the Record

He loves and adores her

LONDON: The Daily Mirror said Friday it had obtained details of a recording of a phone call in which Prince Charles tells a married woman friend he loves and adores her, reports AP.

The tabloid said the tape confirms that the Prince, who'll be 44 on Saturday, and Camilla Parker Bowles, 43, "have been involved in a loving and highly personal relationship for some time. And certainly during Charles' marriage to Princess Diana."

Buckingham Palace refused to comment on the Daily Mirror's story.

On Tuesday, the Daily Mirror said Charles and Mrs Parker Bowles have been meeting in secret regularly for several years and their relationship is known to friends.

The reports follow months of speculation in Britain's tabloid press that the 11-year-old marriage of Charles, the eldest son and heir to Queen Elizabeth II, and Diana, 31, is on the rocks.

The Daily Mirror said that during the exchanges, Charles and Mrs Parker Bowles tell each other "I love you" and Charles also says "I adore you...I'm so proud of you."

The paper said it was satisfied the tape is genuine but did not say how it obtained the details.

Mrs Parker Bowles is the wife of brig. Andrew Parker Bowles, 52, the officer in charge of the army's veterinary service. They have been married 19 years and have a son Tom, 17, and a daughter Laura, 14. Charles is godfather to the son.

Mrs Parker Bowles was a girlfriend of the prince before he married Diana.

The Daily Mirror said the taped phone call was made in December 1989, less than two weeks before the so-called Dianagate tape was made of an alleged phone conversation between Diana and an unmarried man friend, James Gilbey.

The Daily Mirror's rival, The Sun, last August carried lengthy transcripts of the 1989 Dianagate tape in which the man tells the woman "I love you, love you, love you" and calls her by a pet name, Squidgy, and she blows kisses down the phone to him.

The Sun at that time identified them as Gilbey and Diana. Gilbey, the marketing consultant for a sports car company, has been a friend of Diana for almost 15 years. The Sun said the Dianagate tape was recorded by a radio ham from a car phone conversation.



19th century condom sold in auction

LONDON: Five 19th century condoms sold for more than 8,000 pounds (dhs 12,000) Thursday in an auction of scientific and medical instruments, reports AP.

Christie's auction house said one condom sold for 3,300 pounds (dhs 5,000), equalling the world record price for a condom.

It was described in the catalogue as "rare male contraceptive device of animal membrane," decorated with an erotic scene and complete with silk tie.

A decorated French condom fetched the same high price at "the successful debut of condoms at auction this summer," Christie's said in a press release.

Two of the condoms sold Thursday were also illustrated with erotic scenes and two others were dyed pink and yellow. Buyers and sellers were not disclosed.

Smoking reduces woman's fertility

LONDON: British scientists say a nicotine byproduct detected in human eggs may explain why smoking appears to reduce a woman's fertility, reports AP.

The study not only shows that a breakdown product of nicotine, cotinine, seeps into eggs, but that women with cotinine-tainted eggs were dramatically less fertile.

Previous studies suggested smokers have more difficulty getting pregnant than nonsmokers. This new study does not provide a precise mechanism, but offers a piece of evidence.

"We are now closer to understanding how smoking impairs fertility," said Dr Michael Hull, professor of reproductive medicine and surgery at Bristol University.

"The practical message," Hull added, "is that infertile or subfertile couples should really stop smoking."

BRIEFLY

Iran frees 400 Iraqi POWs: Iran on Thursday released 400 Iraqi prisoners held from their war which ended four years ago, the official news agency Irna reported, AFP says from Tehran.

It said the POWs were freed in an operation supervised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the Khosravi border post.

"Iran's humanitarian move indicated its goodwill and we expect Iraq to reciprocate," an Iranian official said, noting that another 200 Iraqi prisoners were released last week conflict. Iran counters that Iraq holds 5,000 of its men, a figure estimated to be at least 1,000 by the ICRC.

Blast kills 4 in Medellin: A bomb placed by a lamppost in Medellin exploded late Thursday as two motorcycle officers passed by on patrol, killing them and two civilians, authorities said, AP reports from Bogota.

The civilians killed were the wife of one of the officers, who was accompanying her husband on patrol and a person who was walking nearby, an official report said.

Several buildings in the northern neighbourhood of Manrique suffered extensive damage.

Police did not say who they believed was responsible for the bombing. Officials have blamed Medellin cartel leader Pablo Escobar for other recent attacks on city police officers.

Escobar allegedly has ordered the attacks to retaliate for the killings of several of his subordinates in confrontations with police and to disrupt an officials search for him.

Gaza riots leave 2 dead: Masked Palestinians shot to death two fellow Arabs in the occupied Gaza Strip on Thursday as clashes between soldiers and residents left 24 injured, Arab and army reports said, AP from Jerusalem.

It was the second day of rioting after four Palestinians died in clashes with Israeli troops in the occupied lands on Wednesday, the highest one-day death toll since April.

Arab reports said masked men shot to death 25-year-old Abdel Hamid Muhammad Hadji in his home town of Gaza City, and 42-year-old Nabil Abu Kadr in Rafah, his home town.

The reports said both men were known to be collaborators with the Israeli authorities. Kadr was believed to be the longest-standing collaborator in Rafah, they said. Later graffiti appeared on the walls saying Kadr was killed by Fatah, the mainstream group of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Arab reports said.

Army reports said 19 Arabs were injured in clashes with security forces in Khan Yunis sparked by the deaths of three residents of the town during riots on Wednesday. Arab reports said seven were injured by live fire.

Collor charged with corruption: Brazil's suspended President Fernando Collor de Mello, was indicted by the Attorney General on Thursday for his alleged role in a 55 million dollar corruption scheme, Reuter reports from Brasilia.

The now-powerless Collor, who is already battling impeachment, was charged with passive corruption and forming a criminal group in connection with an alleged influence-peddling ring Attorney General Aristides Junqueira told a news conference.

France to help destroy Russian N-arsenals

PARIS, Nov 13: France will join the United States and Britain in helping Russia destroy the cold war nuclear arsenal that once threatened them under an agreement signed in Paris on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The West has been worried that it would take poor Russian technology 15 years to complete the mammoth dismantling task and fulfill wide-ranging disarmament pacts with the United States.

The Russians are committed to destroying 22,000 of their estimated 35,000 warheads, and they have admitted they could not handle more than 2,000 a year, French Defence Ministry officials said.

France will spend several hundred million francs (Tens of millions of dollars) over three to four years to help

speed up the process, under the agreement signed by Foreign Ministers Roland Dumas and Andrei Kozyrev.

"This is an important agreement taken to implement major (disarmament) facts," Dumas said.

"Those weapons are more easily built than destroyed," a Russian diplomat at the signing ceremony told reporters.

Several groups of French nuclear and military experts have visited Russia over the past year to prepare the deal which provides for joint studies in turning the weapons nuclear material into civilian fuel and protect storage facilities for the weapons.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) committed Moscow and Washington to scrapping thousands of warheads.

Baghdad urges UN to lift sanctions

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 13: Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, intends to come to New York this month and ask the Security Council to ease economic sanctions, diplomats said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

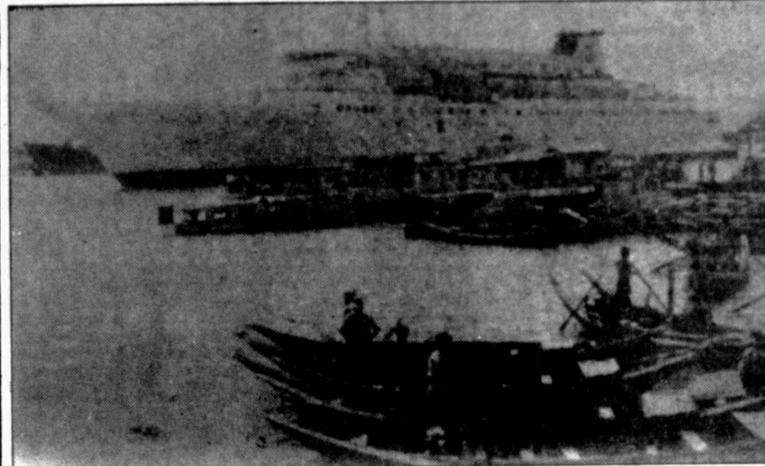
A letter to the council from Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf said he believed Iraq had "met in full the substantive obligations" required by the main Gulf War ceasefire resolution and therefore it was "incumbent on the council to begin to lift the embargo and all the exceptional measures imposed on Iraq."

Sahaf said he wanted to send a high-level delegation to address the council, which diplomats said would be headed by Aziz on November 23.

The Foreign Minister said Iraq would submit an updated report on "measures and steps" that have been implemented on the destruction of his country's nuclear, chemical, biological and ballistic weapons.

The council on November 23 undertakes its periodic review of stringent sanctions imposed on Baghdad following its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The review is expected to be routine and continue the sanctions.

Resolutions after the 1991 Gulf War require Iraq to dispose of all weapons of mass destruction before it is permitted to export oil.



YANGON: The cruise ship Ocean Pearl arrives at Yangon earlier this week carrying over 400 western tourists. Myanmar's ruling generals have decided to throw open the country's tightly sealed borders to tourists in an effort to replenish the country's coffers with hard currency. — AFP/UNB photo

Deng asks officials not to make concessions on HK

HONG KONG, Nov 13: Paramount Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping has reportedly instructed Chinese officials not to make any concessions in the increasingly bitter Sino-British dispute over Hong Kong's political future, a leading newspaper said Friday, reports AP.

Quoting unidentified sources in Beijing, the independent Chinese-language Mingo Pao said Deng was firm about China's opposition to democratic development in the British colony before its transfer to Chinese hands in 1997.

"Deng Xiaoping has ordered that China absolutely cannot make any concessions in the current Sino-British dispute over Hong Kong's return to the motherland," the sources were quoted as saying.

If true, the comments would be the first by China's aging patriarch in the increasingly strident war of words between Britain and China over Hong Kong Gov. Chris Patten's plans to expand democracy in the territory before 1997.

Chinese officials have intensified their attacks following a vote Wednesday by Hong Kong's Legislative Council to support Patten's sweeping constitutional package to increase voter participation in the 1995 legislative elections.

China says that Patten's plans violate previous Sino-British document which will serve as Hong Kong's mini-constitution after the takeover.

If Patten proceeds with his plans without Beijing's approval, Chinese officials have warned, Beijing will replace the colony's existing government in 1997 despite promising Hong Kong "a high degree of autonomy" for at least 50 years after that date.

Honecker's trial shakes up public opinion in Germany

BERLIN, Nov 13: Erich Honecker's trial for deaths at the Berlin Wall is shaking up German public opinion, bringing back memories of the most bitter chapter in the country's recent history, reports AP.

"Look into her eyes, you coward," the BZ tabloid of Berlin trumpeted in a front-page headline Thursday.

On one side of the page was a photograph of the 80-year-old Honecker, the former East German Communist boss. On the other was a dramatic looking picture of Karin Gueffroy, mother of the last person killed while trying to flee to the west over the Berlin Wall.

Less than an hour after the manslaughter trial started Thursday morning, a Berlin court called a recess until Monday to give doctors time to examine an allegedly ailing co-defendant.

Yet even the brief opening session was the top news story well into the evening on radio and television broadcasts.

The trial of Honecker and five other top-ranking East German Communists has also caused a flood of television documentaries and talk show rounds.

SAT-1, a cable channel, had a lengthy live show Wednesday night, with East Germans who suffered under the Communist regime standing up to recount their mistreatment and denounce the ousted bosses.

After the trial's first session, the mother and brother of one man killed as he tried to escape were featured on a live talk show on the ZDF national television network.

Thursday's editions of the mass-circulation Bild newspaper featured a doctored photo showing Honecker in a striped prisoner's uniform and hat.

Despite the interest, many Germans seem to have doubts about putting Honecker on trial for ordering the killings of people who tried to escape.

A new public opinion poll by the FORSA research firm says of 1,006 Germans surveyed, only 51 per cent favor the trial while 43 per cent said it was pointless to haul him into court.

The FORSA poll, commissioned by RTL television, had a 4 per cent margin of error and was conducted on Wednesday.

Honecker looked well and fit as his trial started on Thursday.

India detains 12 Myanmar nationals

NEW DELHI, Nov 13: Indian security forces have detained 12 Myanmar nationals in the western state of Gujarat, bordering Pakistan, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said Thursday, reports AP.

Police were quoted as saying that the 12, including a few women and children, were taken into custody Wednesday when they tried to illegally cross into Pakistan from the Kutch area of Gujarat.

PTI gave no other details. A number of Myanmar people have fled to India through its eastern border with Myanmar in the wake of protests against the military regime in their country.

A few of them have since been granted refuge by India on humanitarian grounds.

Storm lashes Lanka

COLOMBO, Nov 13: Heavy rains lashed Sri Lanka today causing minor flash floods in the wake of a tropical storm which blew over the Indian Ocean island, officials said, reports Reuter.

Trees were uprooted and fell across highways in the capital Colombo and several western, southern, central and eastern regions along the path of the storm which crossed over to the Arabian Sea late Thursday, meteorological officials said.

"Some houses had their roofs blown away. Power and telephone lines are down in many places. But the destruction has been very much less than what was feared at first," a police officer said.

Colombo International Airport was also on the path of the storm which was accompanied by strong gusts but there was no disruption to flights, officials said, adding that winds were considerably weaker over land.

Coup plot uncovered in Guatemala

GUATEMALA CITY, Nov 13: President Jorge Serrano said his government had uncovered a plot to overthrow him and identified the organisers, but said the failed scheme represented no security threat, reports AP.

Serrano said "judicial measures" would be taken against the individuals involved, whom he did not identify.

Defence Minister Jose Garcia said the army was investigating the plot, which he said had been encouraged by "frustrated politicians" and former military staff who were hoping to use a recent Supreme Court ruling on Guatemala's diplomatic recognition of neighbouring Belize as a pretext for launching their plan.

Violence degrades American life

WASHINGTON, Nov 13: The United States leads industrialized nations in murders, sexual assaults and other attacks, and the fear of violence has permeated American life, the authors of a new study say, reports AP.

The specter of violence has degraded American life, left people afraid to walk their neighborhoods at night, put children in danger in school and caused many to barricade themselves behind locked doors, according to a report released Thursday by the National Research Council.

The nation's anxiety on the subject of violence is not unfounded. In 1990, more than 23,000 people were homicide victims," the report said, although it noted that murder rates were higher earlier in this century, and higher still in some locations last century.

"Violent deaths and incidents that result in lesser injuries are sources of chronic fear and a high level of concern with the seeming inability of public authorities to prevent them," the report said.

The United States, the study found, is in general, more violent than other societies.

"Homicide rates in the United States far exceed those in any other industrialized nation," the report said. "Among 16 industrialized countries surveyed in 1988, the United States had the highest prevalence rates for serious sexual assaults and for all other assaults including threats of physical harm.

Despite this, the study said US violence is not the worst it has ever been. The homicide rate peaked in the early 1930s and then dropped for the next 30 years, the study said. The rate rose again between 1979 and 1981, then declined, only to rise again in the late 1980s.

"Historical data suggests that certain cities may have experienced still higher homicide rates during the 19th century, the report said.

Both victims and perpetrators of violent crime are more likely to be male and come from ethnic or racial minorities, the study said. The most likely to commit violence are men in the age range of 25 to 29. In the majority of assaults, rapes and homicides, the perpetrator was an acquaintance of the victim.

Homicide rates are five times higher among blacks than among whites.

Victims most often are minorities, with blacks 41 per cent and Hispanics 32 per cent more likely to be victims than are whites.

The cost to society of violence is high, the report said. It estimated these average costs per violent incident: rape, dhs 54,000; robbery, dhs 19,200, and assault, dhs 16,000. This loss includes a value given to pain, suffering, psychological damage and the loss in quality of life.

Putting more people in prison for longer periods of time has had little effect on the rate of violence, the report said.

Japan's army officer fired for suggesting coup

TOKYO, Nov 13: An army major who had proposed a coup to clean up corruption in Japanese politics was fired Thursday, the Defence Agency said, reports AP.

"A coup d'etat or revolution" is the only option, the major, Shinsaku Yanai, wrote in the Oct 15 issue of the right-leaning news magazine Shukan Bunshun, which has a circulation of 700,000.

He contended that "it is no longer possible to correct injustice through elections in a legitimate way that is the basis of democracy."

The article appeared one day after Shin Kanemaru, Japan's most powerful political kingpin, resigned in disgrace from Parliament for accepting

illegal donations from a mob-linked trucking company. Yanai said in the article that scandals had occurred repeatedly in Japanese politics and there was little hope of reform.

Despite Japan's post-World War II pacifism, the article raised ominous echoes from the 1930s, when the now-defunct Imperial Army took over civilian government and led the nation to war.

But the civilian defence chief, Sohei Miyashita, and other government leaders immediately rebuked Yanai, and defence experts called a coup by Japan's current military, the Self-Defence Forces, extremely unlikely.