

Afghan Interior Minister says Next govt will decide fate of Najibullah

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18: Afghanistan's next government will decide the fate of former communist President Najibullah, now sheltering in the UN offices in Kabul, Pakistan's AFP news agency quoted a senior government minister as saying, reports Reuters. "Presently he (Najibullah) is in the United Nations office in Kabul," Interior Minister Ahmad Shah told AFP. Najibullah sought shelter in the UN offices in the Afghan capital on April 16 after he was overthrown by a palace coup that precipitated the entry of the Mujahideen to Kabul. Afghanistan's first permanent government since the Mujahideen took power, due to be elected at a meeting of na-

Pentagon sees no major shift in ME policy under Clinton

WASHINGTON, Nov 18: US defense policy regarding the Middle East will not significantly change under a Clinton administration, a Pentagon official said, reports AP. The official, speaking on background, reviewed US post-Gulf war defense policy in the Middle East during a November 17 briefing at the Foreign Press Center. "I don't see much real change in our overall strategy in the region," the official said. "It does not appear that there is much variance between (president-elect) Clinton's objectives and what we've been pursuing in the region." The official stressed that US defense policy on the

Middle East is based on "enduring national interests" no matter who resides in the White House. "It's an American strategy," he said, focused on the Middle East peace process and deterring further aggression in the Gulf. On the peace process, the Pentagon has focused its attention on the multilateral talks, specifically on the arms control and regional security committee, the official said. This committee is exploring confidence-and security-building measures which would include the installation of hot-line communications between Israel and its Arab neighbours and advance notification of military exercises, the official reported. The United States hopes any agreement on these measures will "enhance the bilateral negotiations," he said. US policy in the Gulf is based on deterring further aggression, safeguarding the free flow of oil, controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and enhancing regional security cooperation, the officials noted. US deterrence strategy is focused on Iran and Iraq, the official said. Referring to Pentagon assessments, the officials said "the immediate threat in the region, is from Iraq." "Iraq retains a dangerous degree of technology in the area of weapons of mass destruction," he said. "We believe Iraq continues to hide from UN inspectors as much as 100 missiles, 16 launcher systems, a significant quantity of chemical weapons precursors and its entire biological weapons programme," the officials said. Iraq, he added, has not revealed all of its nuclear weapons programme. In addition, while Iraq's military strength has been cut in half since the Gulf War, it still constitutes "the largest military force in the region" with close to 500,000 men in uniform, the official said.



GENEVA: File picture dated November 10 of one of the tobacco boxes of Prussian King Frederick II of the German Thurn and Taxis collection, that was auctioned for \$ 2.3 million during a Sotheby's auction in Geneva November 17. —AFP/UNB photo

Russia to withdraw 9,000 troops from Estonia

HELSINKI, Nov 18: Russia will withdraw its estimated 9,000 soldiers from Estonia next year, the Baltic republic's new Prime Minister, Mart Laar, said Tuesday, reports AP from Helsinki. "We've had contacts with high Russian Foreign Ministry officials who promised that the withdrawal of troops will happen," Laar said. "I believe it will be in 1993." Talks between Estonia and Russia have been deadlocked over the withdrawal of former Soviet troops, which came under Russian control last year after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Laar appealed for Finland's help in forming an international body to oversee the withdrawal of troops from the Paldiski nuclear base, near the capital, Tallinn.



ZAGREB, Croatia: A group of Muslim women gather in front of a barracks waiting for food in a refugee camp in Zagreb November 17. —AFP/UNB photo

US congressman for lifting arms ban on Bosnia, Croatia

WASHINGTON, Nov 18: A US congressman en route home from Macedonia and Croatia called Tuesday for selective air strikes against the government of former Yugoslavia if the Serbian siege of Bosnia-Herzegovina continues, reports AP. Rep Frank McCloskey of Indiana, in a statement released by his office, said he would press both the outgoing Bush administration and the incoming Clinton administration to "defeat and deter Serbian aggression" in neighbouring states. Clinton on Monday said the United States has several options, short of sending in troops, for dealing with violence in Bosnia and the threat to neighbouring Kosovo. He said he did not want to preclude any option before taking office Jan 20. McCloskey was in Frankfurt, Germany, after spending five days with Democratic Sen Dennis DeConcini of Arizona in Croatia and Macedonia. It was McCloskey's second trip to the shattered former Yugoslavia. DeConcini is co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission, a US government group that oversees US participation in the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In addition to possible air strikes, McCloskey called for a lifting of the UN arms embargo against Bosnia and Croatia, liberation of concentration camps in Bosnia, war crime trials for Serb leaders and closing of the US Embassy in Belgrade. Specifically, McCloskey urged the prosecution of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and his allies in Belgrade, Bosnia and Croatia on war crimes charges. "The Bush administration should implement a strong commitment to an American and Western policy generally of air power," said McCloskey, who was staying in Frankfurt, Germany, en route back to Washington.

Yeltsin in Seoul

SEOUL, Nov 18: Russian President Boris Yeltsin arrived Wednesday for a historic three-day visit aimed at forging a new political and economic partnership with South Korea, a former adversary, reports AP. Hours before his arrival at Seoul's Kimpoo International Airport, about 40 family members of the victims of a South Korean airliner shot down in 1983 demonstrated in central Seoul, shouting "Yeltsin go home." The protesters later gathered at the Russian Embassy in southern Seoul, shouting slogans opposing Yeltsin's trip. "Estonia wants international support, an international commission to study the situation... to avoid a possible catastrophe," Laar said. "This base is not only dangerous to Estonia but to the whole area." Finnish officials said the government was studying ways to help Estonia dismantle the Paldiski base, used by the Soviet military to train nuclear submarine crews. Laar, 32, was on his first visit abroad since becoming Estonia's youngest prime minister last month. He met with President Mauno Koivisto and Prime Minister Esko Aho. "Estonia needs rapid economic reforms."

She is against 'girl scout promise'

SAN DIEGO: A 6-year-old girl and her father are suing the Girl Scouts of America, saying the organization violates the girl's rights by requiring her to recite a pledge containing a reference to God, reports AP. Nitzya Cuevas Macias, who is an atheist, claims in the lawsuit filed Tuesday that the "Girl Scout promise" is a "religious test oath." The girl and her father, Salvador Cuevas Macias, want a judge to force the organization to continue allowing the child to participate in scouting events but without requiring her to recite the pledge. The promise says, in part, "I will try to serve God and my country." A Superior Court judge issued a temporary restraining order Tuesday preventing the group from canceling meetings. The girl's family claims scout leaders canceled a meeting last week to prevent her from attending. In a letter, the national executive director of Girl Scouts of America, Patricia Winterer, said the organization does not require members to swear an oath or allegiance to God.

Americans get two for the price of one

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.: President-elect Clinton made clear Tuesday that his wife, Hillary, is an active member of his transition team, reports AP. Clinton was asked about speculation regarding his wife's role in planning the new administration during a photo session for his transition planning board. "There is no speculation," he said. "We just sort of sit down here around this table every day and talk. She's part of it." Mrs Clinton had joined her husband, Vice President Al Gore and eight top transition advisers around a large wooden table in the den of the Arkansas governor's mansion. Clinton said: "Senator Gore is always here. Mrs Clinton is always here, and a lot of people come in and out, depending on what we're talking about. It's pretty much how I've always done things." During Clinton's five terms as governor, Mrs Clinton, a 45-year-old lawyer, was his closest adviser. She headed a task force that developed Arkansas' landmark education standards, played a key role in his gubernatorial campaigns and presidential race and championed children's issues. Clinton first addressed speculation about her role on transition planning Monday, when he told reporters that she joined him and congressional leaders for dinner Sunday. "She knew more than we did about some things," Clinton said. Mrs Clinton reportedly recommended that Clinton make a brief speech the day after the election to reassure foreign leaders and financial markets. She also reportedly suggested that her husband give campaign manager Mickey Kantor a lesser role in the transition team. The speech was made. Kantor is no longer a major force. Clinton boasted early in the campaign that Americans would get "two for the price of one" referring to his wife, if he got elected.



BRIEFLY

German FM starts Israel visit: German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel started a two-day visit to Israel Tuesday for talks with officials on a more active role for Bonn in the Middle East peace process, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said, reports AFP from Jerusalem. Kinkel will meet Wednesday with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and he will also have talks with Palestinian leaders in east Jerusalem. He is the first German Foreign Minister to visit Israel since his predecessor Hans-Dietrich Genscher came in January 1991. German Chief of Staff, General Klaus Naumann, is also in Israel on the first visit of its kind since the creation of the Jewish state in 1948.

Gunmen kill 4 in Istanbul: Gunmen opened fire on a police vehicle here Tuesday, killing four officers who were on their way to work and managed to escape on foot, the Anatolia news agency reported, reports AFP from Istanbul. The four assailants, armed with automatic weapons, ambushed the vehicle in the Levant District in a raid that appeared to be the work of professionals, who fled the scene leaving no traces of their identity behind. Two of the officers died instantly while the other two succumbed to their wounds in hospital.

Thatcher honoured: Israel's leading research institute awarded former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher an honorary doctorate on Tuesday in recognition of her defence of freedom around the world, reports AFP from Israel. Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven donned mortar board and gown to be made a Doctor of Philosophy honoris causa at the Weizmann Institute of Science, south of Tel Aviv. The doctorate was for "indomitable courage in the defence of freedom around the world, of her valiant championing of human rights, democracy... of her skillful and principled statesmanship and her remarkable record of public service... of her determined and enduring support for Israel and for the Jewish people."

Omar Montasser Libya's new FM: Libya's General People's Congress appointed Omar Montasser as Foreign Minister Tuesday replacing Ibrahim Beshari, a Reuters reporter inside the congress hall said from Sirt, Libya. The congress also merged the ministries of petroleum and electricity and appointed Petroleum Minister Abdullah Al-Badri to hold the enlarged energy portfolio.

Typhoon hits Guam again: Winds spinning off Typhoon Hunt began hitting Guam on Wednesday. It was the fourth typhoon in three months to affect the island, reports AP from Agaña, Guam. By 1 pm (0300 GMT Tuesday) winds started picking up throughout the island. "The storm has begun" said Carl Gumalao, spokesman for Guam's Civil Defence Agency.

Major supports plans to expand democracy in HK

LONDON, Nov 18: Defying Chinese threats, Prime Minister John Major has told a senior Chinese official that he supports plans to expand democracy in Hong Kong before the colony reverts to Beijing's control in 1997, reports AP. Also Tuesday, Britain announced former Foreign Secretary Lord Howe will lead a six-member delegation on human rights to China next month. One goal is to monitor the status of political prisoners, including students held after 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square and workers. Major told Vice Premier Zhu Rongji that he backed Hong Kong Gov Chris Patten's plan to have more elected legislators in the colony before it is handed over to China in 1997. Major's Downing Street office said. "It was a brisk and business like meeting," the office added in a statement after the hour long talks. "The prime minister emphasized... we wished to work in cooperation with China to a smooth transition." A spokeswoman did not say whether Major directly challenged Zhu about China's threat to renege on a 1984 agreement calling for the Communist Beijing government to preserve Hong Kong's capitalist system for 50 years. A spokesman at the Chinese Embassy could not be contacted for comment. Zhu is on a four-day visit, mainly meeting businessmen. He told the Royal Institute of International Affairs on Monday that the Patten proposals meant the 1984 agreement may have "gone with the wind." Patten, in London for consultations at the Foreign Office, reiterated challenges to China

Ukraine won't sell nuclear warheads

MOSCOW, Nov 18: Ukrainian leaders said Tuesday they have no plans to sell their nuclear warheads, a news agency reported, less than two weeks after a top Ukrainian official suggested auctioning them to "the highest bidder," reports AP. Ukrainian Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma, parliament chairman Ivan Plushch and Defense Minister Konstantin Morozov met with NATO's supreme commander, US Gen John Shalikshvili. "It was stressed during the meetings... Ukraine does not intend to sell nuclear weapons to anyone," ITAR-Tass reported from the Ukrainian capital, Kiev. "The issue of their elimination is being solved together with Russia." There has been increasing concern in Russia, the United States and elsewhere about Ukraine's arsenal of long-range strategic nuclear missiles. In recent weeks, Ukrainian officials have expressed misgivings about surrendering the weapons without receiving security guarantees or financial compensation. On Nov 5, First Vice Prime Minister Igor Yushkovsky said the 176 missiles on Ukrainian territory — the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal — belonged to the Ukrainian people and would not be given up for free. "We can sell these nuclear warheads to the highest bidder... to nuclear states, that means Russia first of all, or maybe another state, depending on which pays most," Yushkovsky told reporters at the time. On Monday, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk told Shalikshvili the Ukraine wanted Western nations to guarantee its security



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister John Major (R) welcomes Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Zhu Rongji at 10 Downing Street November 17 for talks. —AFP/UNB photo

Ishaq urges US to help resolve Kashmir issue

ISLAMABAD, Nov 18: Pakistan President Ghulam Ishaq Khan called on the United States to help resolve the Kashmir issue during a meeting here yesterday with general Joseph P Hoar, Commander-in-Chief of US central command, reports AFP. "All powers interested in world peace should take a meaningful initiative for a permanent solution of the Kashmir problem," an official statement quoted the President as saying during the meeting. Hoar arrived here Monday for a six-day visit at the invitation of Pakistani army chief General Asif Nawaz.

Taiwan to buy \$3.8b arms from France

TAIPEI, Nov 18: Taiwan signed today a contract to buy 60 French-made Mirage 2000-5 jet fighters in a 3.8 billion US dollar package deal also including short and medium-range missiles, informed sources said, reports AFP. The contract was inked here by Taiwan's air force authorities and representatives from the French aircraft maker Dassault, radar supplier Thomson, missile producer Matra, and engine maker Snecma, the sources said. The deal also includes Mica medium-range missiles and Magic two short-range missiles. A contract to buy 150 F-16 jets in a 5.8 billion package from the United States was signed last week. In Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said it firmly opposed the sale. "We are firmly against the sale of weapons to Taiwan by any countries that have diplomatic relations with China," a ministry spokesman said by telephone. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen had earlier warned of a "setback in Chinese-French relations, saying that if France should go ahead with this sale of Mirage 2000s to Taiwan then certainly there will be a strong reaction from the Chinese side."

Deng in good health, says daughter

TOKYO, Nov 18: China's 88-year-old paramount leader Deng Xiaoping is in good health and living a relaxed life at home, his third daughter said today, reports Reuters. Deng Rong told Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa her father did not emerge to greet Emperor Akihito on his historic China visit in October because he was retired and no longer saw foreign dignitaries, Kyodo News Agency said.

Factionalism threatens nation's future, Ramos says

MANILA, Nov 18: President Fidel Ramos said Wednesday "something is terribly wrong" with the way the Philippines has governed itself since independence and that factionalism threatens the nation's future, reports AP. In a remarkably frank assessment, Ramos told the National Security Council that Filipinos were the first Asians to gain freedom after World War II but squandered the opportunity because of their provincial attitudes and internal bickering. Ramos said the nation's in-

dustry had grown inefficient behind protectionist walls at a time when the rest of the world was dismantling such controls. "We all realize there is something terribly wrong about the way we've been trying to run our affairs since independence" from the United States in 1946, Ramos told the meeting. "As the first Asian people to recover our liberty after World War II, we had a head start on all our neighbours," Ramos said. "Yet today, we lag behind almost everyone else in a re-

gion growing at the world's fastest rate." Ramos said that since independence, "Filipinos have been turned too much inward" and failed to note changes in the world. "We have been absorbed in parochial political quarrels," he said. "Our industries have been coddled much too long behind protective walls. But, of course, the world didn't wait... If we do not shape up, we will fall farther and farther behind." He said Thailand overtook the Philippines economically more than a decade ago and that Indonesia had "surpassed us in most economic aspects." "The time has come that we must put a new purpose and a new direction to our common life," he said. Ramos' remarks were similar to those made by the World Bank in a confidential study prepared in October. A summary was released Tuesday. In the report, the World Bank said the Philippines faced its best change for economic growth in 20 years but needed strong leadership to achieve its goals. "A consensus is needed between government and business, the executive branch and legislature to allow for consistency in policy implementation," the report added. The Philippine economy stagnated last year because of natural disasters, lagging investments and infrastructure decay. A critical electricity shortage on the two main islands, Luzon and Mindanao, is expected to remain until at least 1995. Critics also have cited structural weaknesses in the Philippine legislative and judi-

cial branches. But the country lacks strong, well-organized political parties necessary for smooth working between Congress and the executive branch. Politicians frequently change parties, and temporary alliances form and dissolve on an issue-by-issue basis. The National Security Council includes representatives from the executive, legislative, armed forces and the private sector. It meets irregularly at the discretion of the president to advise on national issues. Two killed in Assam police firing GUWAHATI, India, Nov 18: At least two people were killed and three injured when police fired at a violent crowd of tribesmen in India's north-eastern state of Assam on Tuesday, police said, reports Reuters. They said the incident occurred at Dokmak town, 250 km (155 miles) from the state capital Guwahati. Activists belonging to the Bodo and Karbi tribes have tried to enforce a 12-hour strike to press their demand for a tribal homeland.