

Israel may allow deportees to back home in Sept

JERUSALEM, Aug 12: About half of the 396 Palestinian deportees still stranded in Southern Lebanon can return to the occupied territories in mid-September, a Defence Ministry spokesman said today.

Parliament limits president's power to name four ministers Yeltsin firm to hold election in autumn

MOSCOW, Aug 12: President Boris Yeltsin announced today that the first legislative elections in Russia since the aborted Soviet coup would be held this Autumn whether the hardline parliament approved them or not, reports AFP.

get for 1993-1994 approved last Spring, and had asked the government to draft a new "Presidential budget."

The Kremlin began pushing last Spring for early Autumn elections and Yeltsin has stated these could be organized over the head of parliament by his special assembly which endorsed a new draft constitution in early July.

any body," he stated. The draft amendments approved today included provisions under which the legislature would have the power to hold votes of confidence at will in the entire government as well as in individual ministers.

US suspends air service to Nigeria

WASHINGTON, Aug 12: The US government suspended air service Wednesday between the United States and Nigeria because of security problems in the African country, the transportation department said, reports AFP.

porters to force the military government from power. Lagos was expected to come to a standstill Thursday with millions of residents expected to stay home for fear of a repeat of the bloodshed that marred a similar protest in early July.



President Bill Clinton (C) and current US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell (L) smile on Wednesday as US Army Gen. John Shalikashvili (R), 57, responds to a question regarding the former Warsaw Pact nations joining NATO with, "I have just been nominated for the position of Chairman, not President of the United States."

Murtaza to run as independent candidate

KARACHI, Aug 12: The exiled brother of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto will run for election as an independent candidate in the political heartland of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a spokesman said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Off the Record

Surprise birthday party

WASHINGTON: President Bill Clinton was given a surprise birthday party by the White House staff on Thursday — a week before he turns 47, reports Reuters.



BRIEFLY

Tremor shakes Japan: An earthquake measuring 4.3 degrees on the open-ended Richter scale occurred near Japan's northern Hokkaido Island Thursday, Japan's Meteorological agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

30 feared drowned in Gujarat: At least 30 people were feared drowned in India's western Gujarat state on Wednesday when a boat carrying them capsized in a lake, the United News of India (UNI) news agency said, Reuters reports from New Delhi.

2 arrested in Thailand: Authorities have arrested two alleged members of a passport forgery gang that helped send Thai women to work as prostitutes in Japan, police said Thursday, AP reports from Bangkok.

4 miners crushed to death: Four miners were crushed to death when a load of ore fell on them about 1,220 meters (4,000 feet) underground, the Sheriff's office said, AFP reports from Arizona.

11 killed in Russian blast: Eleven workmen were killed in a quarry Wednesday when 280 tonnes of dynamite blew up for unknown reasons, the Interfax news agency said, AFP reports from Moscow.

5 die in Indonesian boat capsizes: At least five people died and about 20 were missing when an Indonesian vessel caught fire and sank off the island of Sulawesi, the official Antara News agency said yesterday, Reuters reports from Jakarta.

Coup plot: 210 arrested in Iraq LONDON, Aug 12: An Iraqi opposition group said yesterday that President Saddam Hussein's government had arrested 210 military officers, retired officers and civilians after an alleged coup plot, reports Reuters.

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Heavy rainfall in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Aug 12: Fresh heavy rainfalls washed away three weeks' cleanup work in Nepal as a 72-hour downpour triggered landslides and flooding in the central and lowland regions, a Home Ministry official said Wednesday, reports AFP.

30 prisoners held by LTTE end hunger strike COLOMBO, Aug 12: Thirty prisoners held by Tamil separatists have given up a hunger strike after two weeks, a military spokesman said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Thousands of fish float up dead in a Manila lake MANILA, Aug 12: Hundreds of thousands of fish have floated up dead in nearby Laguna lake, the Philippines' largest, sparking suspicions of chemical poisoning from a factory that dots the shoreline, a legislator who represents the district said Thursday, reports AFP.

60,000 Russian troops still in E Germany BERLIN, Aug 12: Fewer than 60,000 Russian troops are still stationed in eastern Germany — about a sixth of the 1989 total when the region was the old Warsaw Pact's frontline, a German army officer said, reports Reuters.

They support sex outside marriage WASHINGTON: Most American Catholics respect Pope John Paul II as a spiritual leader but disagree with him on issues including abortion, divorce and sex, according to an ABC News-Washington Post poll released on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

In search of dinosaur CHICAGO: The discoverer of the oldest dinosaur fossil known will lead a 24-person team on a two-month search of the Sahara, where he hopes to unearth unique species of the ancient reptiles, reports Reuters.

S African polls in jeopardy DURBAN, South Africa, Aug 12: President Frederik de Klerk said that South Africa's first non-racial election, scheduled for April next year, was in jeopardy because of ongoing black township violence, reports AFP.

Hosokawa's remark on World War has triggered a backlash TOKYO, Aug 12: Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's acknowledgement of Tokyo's World War II responsibilities has triggered a backlash in Japan, fearful of renewed compensation demands from Asia, reports AFP.

Party, a conservative party replaced by Hosokawa's coalition early this month, protested Hosokawa's remark in their meeting with chief Cabinet Secretary Masayoshi Takemura Wednesday.

The remark was "regrettable," said the group including Ken Harada, who has held such portfolios as transport and posts and telecommunications. "We cannot accept it taking into account the feelings of the war bereaved."

Hosokawa said in his first news conference Tuesday that Japan waged a "war of aggression." "I admit it was a wrong war," he said in what was thus far the most frank acknowledgement of war atrocities by a Japanese Prime Minister.

His coalition government that includes the Socialists, who have been most sympathetic to Asian victims, is reportedly planning to offer a formal apology for the war in a resolution and diplomatic speeches.

But Sanket said a possible apology would fail to quell Asian criticism of Japan, because it is frequently used as a card to win political and economic compromise from Japan.

"We should not give excessive expectations to Asian countries," a Foreign Ministry source echoed in the mass-circulating Yomiuri Shinbun, denying Japan would make new reparations.

A series of lawsuits have been filed by former comfort women, mostly Asians who were forced to offer sex to Japanese soldiers during the war, demanding compensation from the Japanese government.

60,000 Russian troops still in E Germany

BERLIN, Aug 12: Fewer than 60,000 Russian troops are still stationed in eastern Germany — about a sixth of the 1989 total when the region was the old Warsaw Pact's frontline, a German army officer said, reports Reuters.

Major General Hartmut Foerstch told reporters late on Tuesday that there were 58,415 Russian soldiers in eastern Germany at the end of July, down from 380,000 when the Soviet army occupied old communist East Germany.

Russian's withdrawal from eastern Germany was scheduled for completion by the end of 1994 under the terms of a series of agreements that sealed German unification in 1990.

The process was speeded up last year to have a scheduled finish in August 1994 after Bonn promised Moscow additional aid.

Thousands of fish float up dead in a Manila lake MANILA, Aug 12: Hundreds of thousands of fish have floated up dead in nearby Laguna lake, the Philippines' largest, sparking suspicions of chemical poisoning from a factory that dots the shoreline, a legislator who represents the district said Thursday, reports AFP.

The occurrence affected Milkfish and Tilapia farms on the western shore of the lake, adjacent to the industrial southwestern suburbs of Manila, and if left unchecked could spread south and east, congressman Roy Almoroso said in a radio broadcast.

The Laguna lake development authority, which oversees fishing and environmental protection of the 356 square-mile lake said its biologists were investigating the fish deaths and would issue a statement to the press later.

Almoroso said there was evidence that a "poisonous chemical or substance was deliberately released" into the lake during heavy rains last weekend.

Called on Japan to write off all debt and build a "comfort women highway."

Takemura, the right arm of Hosokawa, appeared to be against changing the government policy that war reparations have been fully paid.

The issue of compensation is generally over," he said in an interview with Yomiuri.

The government is nevertheless studying measures to subdue Asian anger, perhaps a fund for the comfort women, while keeping its doors open to court battles by individuals.

The gradual opening of government eyes to its militarist past is widely believed to reflect Japan's growing to its economic strength.

Japan needs the consent of Asian neighbours to expand the activities of its troops in UN peacekeeping operations, seen as a prerequisite to win a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Mass mouse suicide

BEIJING: Hundreds of thousands of mice drowned themselves in lakes and rivers in northwest China this summer in a mass suicide that may have been triggered by overpopulation, the Xinhua news agency said Wednesday, reports AP.

Scientists have not found any signs of disease in the mice, and there are no reports of disease among other animals or people in the region, the official news agency said.

Herdsman began finding dead mice in early May in the Altay grassland and nearby parts of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, it said. The numbers grew quickly, and more than 300,000 dead mice were scooped up at just one sluice gate on a river, Xinhua said.

Some dead mice were found on dry ground, however, and it was not clear how they died.

They support sex outside marriage

WASHINGTON: Most American Catholics respect Pope John Paul II as a spiritual leader but disagree with him on issues including abortion, divorce and sex, according to an ABC News-Washington Post poll released on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The poll was released a day before the Pope visits Denver to address a youth gathering and meet President Bill Clinton.

Their survey, taken from August 6 to August 8, questioned 1,216 adults, of whom 28 per cent said they were raised as Catholics. Some 22 per cent still considered themselves Catholics.

Of those who are still Catholics, 85 per cent said they look up to the Pope as a moral and spiritual leader, but 78 per cent said they do not believe he is infallible, a tenet of modern Catholicism.

Seventy per cent said they support artificial birth control, 57 per cent support abortion on demand, 58 per cent oppose the ban on priests getting married, 63 per cent support women becoming priests, 62 per cent oppose the ban on divorces and 56 per cent said they did not support the Pope's opposition to sex outside marriage.

In search of dinosaur

CHICAGO: The discoverer of the oldest dinosaur fossil known will lead a 24-person team on a two-month search of the Sahara, where he hopes to unearth unique species of the ancient reptiles, reports Reuters.

"Africa is the least-explored continent for the story of dinosaur evolution," planetologist Paul Sereno said on Wednesday in a ceremony at the Field Museum here.

Africa was drifting free as an island 100 million years ago, and Sereno said previously unseen species of dinosaurs and plant life could shed light on the process of evolution.

Sereno, a University of Chicago researcher, previously discovered the world's oldest dinosaur, Eoraptor, a small carnivorous beast found in what is now Argentina.



LONDON: Neil Clarke, the hair and colour artist at Madame Tussaud's, gives the finishing touches to the latest wax portrait of Elizabeth Taylor on August 12. It is the third wax model of the star to be exhibited since 1964.

