

Kabul won't return US Stinger launchers

NICOSIA, Cyprus, Aug 20: Afghan premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar Thursday said his country will not return Stinger missile launchers supplied by the United States to anti-Soviet rebels, Iran's news agency reported, says AP.

Washington wants to buy back the anti-aircraft weapons to keep them from falling into the hands of terrorists.

"The Afghan government does not intend to allow even a round of ammunition to be taken out of Afghanistan," Hekmatyar told reporters in Tehran, Iran. His comments were carried by the Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Nicosia.

The mujahideen fighters, who received dozens of Stingers from Washington in the 1980-89 war against Soviet troops in Afghanistan, took power last year after overthrowing the Communist government.

The New York Times re-

ported last month that the Central Intelligence Agency will spend \$55 million to buy back the Stingers to keep them out of the hands of terrorists and hostile governments.

It reported that Iranian and North Korean spies and Islamic militant groups were bidding to buy Stingers from the mujahideen.

Tajik rebels fighting to overthrow the Russia-backed government of Tajikistan have said they bought Stingers from Afghan fighters. The rebels are hiding in northern Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar, who assumed the premiership in June after months of fighting with other mujahideen factions, also said his government opposes UN supervision of presidential elections to be held in October.

"We only want the UN to dispatch an envoy to act as an observer to ensure that there will be no rigging in the presidential polls," IRNA quoted him as saying.

Egypt to try 65 militants

CAIRO, Aug 20: Egypt will try 65 Muslim militants in a military court this week accused of conspiring to overthrow the government and belonging to the group that tried to assassinate the Interior Minister on Wednesday, security sources and defence lawyers said, reports Reuter.

The militants are from the Jihad (holy struggle) group, which claimed responsibility for an assassination attempt on Wednesday against Interior Minister Hassan Al-Ali.

The group charged Ali, who was injured in the bomb attack, with working for a "regime" that was fighting Islam and implementing American and Israeli policies in the region.

It said in a statement that two of its militants — Nazih Nushi Rashed and Tarek Abdel-Nabi — died in the bomb attack

Bid to kill Interior Minister

Alfi's motorcade. Three other people were killed and 15, including Alfi, were wounded.

Alfi, who in four months as Interior Minister has led a sharp campaign against militants, will fly to Switzerland for treatment on Friday and may meet an artificial joint to replace his shattered elbow, the sources said.

Four wounded people would be flown to Britain, France and Germany for treatment.

The Jihad said the gun assault was a warning message to President Hosni Mubarak and was intended to take revenge for Muslim militants being tried for seeking to apply the Islamic Sharia Law in Egypt.

Security sources said on Friday the 65 Jihad militants, eight of whom are on the run, are accused of forming an illegal organisation "with the aim of

suspending constitutional laws, attempted murder and possession of arms and explosives".

An earlier Baghdad report says: Iraq's official press gloated over the attempt to kill Egypt's Interior Minister and one newspaper today urged militants to make President Hosni Mubarak their next target.

"In broad daylight and in daring and challenging attack... an armed attempt to assassinate Egyptian regime's Interior Minister," said the Defence Ministry newspaper Al-Qadisiyah in front page banner headline.

Four people were killed and 16 wounded, including the Minister Hassan Al-Ali, when a bomb exploded with ball bearings packed in front of his car outside his ministry in central

Cairo on Wednesday.

Babel, a newspaper published by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, urged the assassins, most likely militants fighting to turn Egypt into an Islamic state, to make Mubarak their next target.

"They (Egyptian leaders) are empty heads and the opposition, active in all Egyptian streets, has now nothing left to do but to pick them up," Babel said in an editorial.

"And then the last slap will be on the cheek of the regime's President Hosni Mubarak and through him to all of his administration thriving on blood, starvation and corruption," Babel said.

It praised the assassination attempt against "the most outstanding tool of his (President Mubarak's) oppression and recklessness".

Off the Record

"What's beneath the blouse"

NEW DELHI: A city judge, has rejected a petition to ban a movie with the suggestive song, "What's Beneath the Blouse," submitted by a lawyer who was embarrassed when his 3-year-old daughter sang the lyrics in a shopping mall, reports AP.

The Hindi song is sung to a gyrating dance sequence by the buxom actress Madhuri Dixit, but the answer to the title question is an innocent, "There's a heart beneath my blouse."

New Delhi Judge SM Chopra, who saw the movie with the contesting lawyers, ruled Thursday that the song did not offend public decency.

Bombay's film industry churns out 850 movies annually, mostly aimed at a semi-literate audience that enjoys violence and titillation. But film-makers must stay within strict censorship codes that do not permit nudity or even kissing scenes.

Conservative movie-goers raised a furor over the song even before "Khalnayak," "The Villain," was released on August 6, saying it was too suggestive.

Chopra dismissed a plea by Ram Parkash Chugh, who earlier lost an appeal to ban the song from the music market before the film was released.

The movie, which deals with terrorism, has drawn huge crowds in its first three weeks. In the northern town of Dehradun, scalpers got as much as 120 rupees (dhs 4) for a 15 rupee (50 cent) ticket.



Assassination anniversary of Benigno observed

MANILA, Aug 20: Thousands gathered Friday to mark the 10th anniversary of the assassination of former President Corazon Aquino's husband in a rally which also marked her return to public life after leaving office last year, reports AP.

But many in the crowd appeared to be students, municipal employees, workers for pro-Aquino industrialists and others bused in to swell the crowd.

Corazon, whose six-year term ended on June 30, 1992, had appealed for Filipinos to turn out to honour Benigno Ninoy Aquino, slain August 21, 1983, moments after returning from the United States to challenge his archrival, then-President Ferdinand Marcos.

Police estimated about 25,000 people gathered for the afternoon rally in suburban Makati. Members of the crowd chanted "Ninoy, Ninoy" and waved streamers with his picture. Yellow confetti streamed for office buildings.

"To me this gathering that we have here shows that it was Ninoy who restored democracy," said Gov. Ben Guiao, who brought about 5,000 people from his province, Pampanga. "Credit must be given to his wife," Cory Aquino, and credit must be given also to President (Fidel) Ramos for his part."

Lotion to overcome impotence

LONDON: Israeli scientists said on Thursday they had developed a lotion that men could rub on their penises to overcome impotence, reports Reuter.

A report in the New Scientist Magazine said Mati Fridkin of The Weizmann Institute of Science and Ilan Gozes of Tel Aviv University had developed the ointment, called Stearyl-VIP.

The lotion, a mixture of Vasactive Intestinal Peptide (VIP) and stearic acid, penetrates the pores in the skin and enters the blood vessels, causing an erection.

VIP, a neuropeptide, has long been known to be one of the natural agents that cause an erection. But because it is soluble in water rather than in fat it has had to be injected rather than rubbed in.

Fridkin and Gozes reported they combined VIP with stearic acid, which is fat-soluble, to make a cream.

They tested it on castrated rats and found it worked.

"Healthy authorities in Israel are considering whether to start clinical trials in humans," the article said.

It said Fujimoto Pharmaceutical of Japan had funded the research and held a licence for the commercial use of the lotion.

The two scientists said the drug seemed to have no side effects, but warned it was not a universal panacea for impotence. It could be especially useful for some men with physical reasons behind their impotence they said, such as those being treated for diabetes.

Bronze Lenin stolen

TBILISI, Georgia: Thieves using a crane plucked a 10-ton bronze statue of Soviet founder Vladimir Lenin from its pedestal and hauled it away of the second anniversary of the August 1991 coup, officials said Thursday, reports AP.

The culprits bound guards at an army depot in the town of Zetafon in western Georgia loaded the monument onto a truck and escaped, said Valiko Gogolashvili, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry.

Although the theft came on the anniversary of the failed putsch that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was not clear whether the thieves had any political motive or simply hoped to sell it.

Zetafon is 110 miles (180 kilometers) west of the Georgian capital, Tbilisi.



Libya wants diplomatic ties with US, Britain

LONDON, Aug 20: Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi has urged the United States and Britain to renew diplomatic links with his country, a gesture he said may persuade two Libyans accused of bombing a Pan Am jet to surrender themselves, reports AP.

Gaddafi said UN sanctions will not force a trial of the two alleged government agents who are charged with the December 21, 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland, which killed 270 people.

"If they have sanctions, all the sanctions in the world and even in the universe, they will never make Libya submit," Gaddafi said in an interview with Scottish Television broadcast Thursday.

The UN Security Council last week threatened to increase sanctions against Libya if it does not surrender the two suspects by October 10. Libya is under air, arms and diplomatic sanctions for refusing to turn over the two men to the United States or Britain.

At the same time, Washington, London and Paris threatened to freeze Libya's assets abroad and ban the purchase of oil-related equipment.

France wants to interrogate four other Libyans suspected of bombing a French UTA airliner.

Gaddafi said in an interview with Scottish Television broadcast Thursday.

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BRIEFLY

Teresa plants sapling: Mother Teresa yesterday planted a sapling at the Rajiv Gandhi Smriti Van in New Delhi in memory of the late former Prime Minister, PTI reports from New Delhi.

Addressing a gathering on the occasion, Mother Teresa exhorted the people to spread the message of love, peace and brotherhood.

The brief but solemn function was also addressed by the Minister of State for Environment, Kamal Nath. The minister said the planting of a sapling by Mother Teresa would inspire everyone to make the mother earth greener and more suitable to live.

US guards rescue 7 Cubans: Seven Cuban refugees stranded on a barren island jumped back into the ocean rather than be rescued by Bahamians, US Coast Guard officials said yesterday, AP reports from Miami.

The tactic worked — off-duty Coast Guard station chief Kevin Coyne rescued them from their foundering raft, and they were taken to the United States.

"The chief told them the Bahamians were going to come out but, before that, they jumped back in now if it's a record, but we have our hands," he said.

Measles claims 25 in Philippines: An outbreak of measles in three towns in the southern Philippines has killed 25 people, most of them children, a provincial official said yesterday, Reuter reports from Cagayan de Oro.

Governor Francisco Matugas of Surigao Del Norte, about 700 km (440 miles) south of Manila, said 160 victims had been taken to hospital.

He said he feared the two-week-old epidemic might claim more lives. Findings of the provincial health office pointed to the nearby island of Homonhon as the possible source of the disease, Matugas said.

Floods take 72 in China: Flash floods in northern China's Inner Mongolia region killed 72 people and more than 15,000 head of livestock in July and August, a official newspaper said yesterday, AP reports from Beijing.

The Economic Daily (Jingji Ribao) said the heavy rains began July 26 in the area of Chifeng City, 350 kilometers (220 miles) north of Beijing. It said 2,100 villages were affected and tens of thousands of rural homes collapsed.

Homes in rural northern China are usually made of unfired bricks.

9 to die in China: Courts in southeast China sentenced nine people to death for committing violent crimes and theft, a China-run news agency reported Friday, AP says from Hong Kong.

The criminals were sentenced Wednesday by three courts in and around the city of Xiamen in Fujian Province, the China News Service said.

Chen Zhiming, a worker at a packing firm, received the death penalty for stealing 317 colour TV sets using "methods and a cunning rarely seen in Xiamen," the report said. It said Chen was preparing to flee abroad when police arrested him.

Woman held for shooting doctor: A woman was arrested in Oklahoma City overnight in the shooting of an abortion doctor outside his Wichita clinic, Oklahoma City police said. She was jailed on suspicion of attempted murder, AP reports from Wichita.

Rachelle Renee Shannon, 37, of Klamath Falls, Ore., was taken into custody at the Will Rogers Airport when she returned a rental car matching the one in which the assailant fled, said Capt Hill City, police spokesman.

Dr George Tiller, who sometimes wore bulletproof vest and travelled with a guard dog, was shot in both arms Thursday by a woman who had been seen passing out anti-abortion literature. The woman fled in a car driven by another person.

14 die in Jakarta boat capsizes: A total of 14 people died and nine others were missing after a boat sank in bad weather off the island of Madura, port authorities in Madura said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Some 14 people were rescued after the boat capsized when it approached the jetty at Tanjung near the Madurese town of Sumenep Thursday, said Abdul Raayid, head of the port administrative authorities in Sumenep.

He said that boat had been travelling between the island of Oidigenteng and Tanjung when big waves and strong winds capsized the boat about 30 metres (almost 100 feet) from the jetty.



FILES: The late senator Benigno Aquino (R) joined by his wife, Corazon Aquino (L) and two of their five children, Kris (L, front) and Maria Elena (R, front) in front of their home in Boston in 1983 where the family was forced into exile by ex-strongman Ferdinand Marcos. In the same year Benigno returned from the US alone and was shot dead while under military custody on his arrival at the Manila airport on August 21, 1993. — AFP photo

Rao to discuss Sino-Indian border dispute with Li

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao will visit China and South Korea next month, a government minister said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Minister of State for External Affairs Salman Khurshid said Rao would discuss the Sino-Indian border dispute during his three-day visit to China which starts on September 6.

"Rao's talks with Premier Li Peng will review the efforts of a Joint Working Group (JWG), which has been tackling the issue of the disputed Himalayan border since 1988.

India, however, was not expecting any breakthrough on the problem during Rao's visit, Khurshid said.

"The general focus of talks will be on bilateral and regional issues," he said.

Indian analysts maintain China controls some 15,000 sq km (5,800 sq miles) of Indian territory.

External Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh said on Wednesday that India would not give away any of its territory to China.

There is no intention of giving up the slightest bit of Indian territory," Singh told a parliamentary committee.

India and China fought a brief border war in 1962, freezing their relations until 1988 when then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing. Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng reciprocated the visit in December 1991.

China resents the presence

Nicaraguan rebels kidnap a group of politicians

MANAGUA, Aug 20: Rightist rebels kidnapped a group of politicians, soldiers and government officials in northern Nicaragua on Thursday, officials said, reports AP.

There was no word on the exact number of people taken hostage from the group of 27.

The rebels are demanding the resignation of Army Chief Humberto Ortega and Minister of the Presidency Antonio Lacayo, said journalists who were released by the rebels.

The rebels, led by Jose Angel Talavera, have threatened to kill their captives if the military intervene.

The guerrillas, disgruntled members of the former US backed Contras, seized a lieutenant colonel in charge of a special unit charged with disarming former combatants in Nicaragua's civil war.

They also seized two Sandinista deputies, a national opposition union legislator, agriculture ministry officials and several other government workers, officials said.

The group was on its way to a meeting with former Contras in Calauti, 280 kilometers (173 miles) north of Managua to discuss their disarmament when the attack happened.

humanitarian aid donated by Italy.

Ramiz Alia took over in 1985 from the founder of communist Albania Enver Hoxha and ruled the country until democratic elections last year. He was replaced in April 1992 by Sali Berisha.

Also arrested were the former Defence Minister Prokop Murra, former Communist Party ideologist Foto Cani, former Agriculture Minister Pali Miska and two ex-members of the politburo Muho Asllani and Besnik Bektesh.

Enver Hoxha's widow Neshmita who was a close aide of Alia was sentenced last to 11 years in jail for corruption and abuse of power.

Ramiz Alia held

TIRANA, Aug 20: Former Albanian communist leader Ramiz Alia was arrested on Thursday and put in jail on the basis of new evidence against him, magistrates said, reports AP.

Alia had been under house arrest since August last year. But the public prosecutors' office issued a statement Thursday it had decided "to stiffen the conditions of detention" of Alia and other former Communist Party leaders "in the light of new evidence" against them.

Alia and six other senior members of the former regime are accused of abuse of power and corruption. Alia is also alleged to have misappropriated

China plans fresh move on corruption

BEIJING, Aug 20: China's Communist Party ordered a fresh assault on official corruption Friday but did not unveil any new weapons in a long, tired war that so far has consisted mainly of sloganeering, reports AP.

Wei Jianxing, the head of a high-level anti-corruption commission, called for more and better laws and closer policing of the party's ranks. But he offered no specifics. The six-day meeting of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection has been anticipated for several weeks because of reports in Beijing-controlled newspapers in Hong Kong that the party planned significant new moves against corruption.

Top leaders have acknowledged that corruption has eroded the party's authority.

Einstein was womaniser, fathered illegitimate children?

LONDON, Aug 20: Albert Einstein, sanctified as a pacifist who sacrificed human vanity on the altar of science, was a womaniser who fathered illegitimate children and may have beaten his wife, according to a new book, reports Reuter.

The genius who gave the world the Theory of Relativity and the equation E=MC² was also capable of physical passion, but he degenerated into a misogynist who nonetheless ended his life surrounded and protected by women.

"The private lives of Albert Einstein," written by British journalists Roger Highfield and Paul Carter, portrays him as an initially loving father who rejected a son because of mental illness and never became close to the other.

"The desire for impersonal detachment and the desire for intimacy were secretly at war within Einstein — just as his idealism was at war with a bleak cynicism, and his modesty at war with arrogance," the y write in the book, to be published next month.

Einstein had a passionate affair with Mileva Maric, a Serb who met the young German Jew while they were both physics students in Switzerland. They married despite the protests of Einstein's parents, but only after their first child was born.

The child, a girl called Lieserl, was sent away and there is no record that Einstein ever saw her. She has never been traced.

Maric, a promising physicist herself, lost her drive and never succeeded as a scientist. Because Einstein gave his Nobel Prize money to her, it was speculated that Maric was in some part responsible for his discoveries. But Highfield and Carter conclude the money was a bribe to get her to agree to a divorce.

The book cites recently released documents, mostly letters, that detail the decline of Einstein's marriage to Maric, her physical and mental breakdown, and his secret liaison with the cousin who became his second wife.

This caused a break with his elder son, Hans Albert. "He developed a bitterness towards his father that he never mastered, and which hurt Einstein badly," the book says.

"But the unluckiest member of the family was Einstein's younger son, Eduard, whose emotional turmoil in the years after the divorce eventually developed into mental illness," it added.

Friends, relatives and teachers felt Eduard had inherited the spark of his father's genius. "But Einstein was never at ease with Eduard's

great gifts, and possessed a horror of illness and modern medicine that led him to turn his back on his son. Eduard spent many years detained in a Swiss psychiatric clinic, unvisited by his father, and died in miserable circumstances."

Divorce papers mention violence, and Einstein certainly became disparaging of his first wife, describing her in a letter written to a friend in 1951 as a woman of "uncommon ugliness."

Although he "loved" women — a close acquaintance once wrote that "the commoner and sweeter and smaller they were, the better he liked them" — he felt they were inferior creatures.

Maric started out as an intellectual companion, and Einstein had a close friendship with his French colleague, Marie Curie.

But he described Curie, whom he did admire as a scientist, as a "brilliant exception" who had the "soul of a herring."

He told a female student: "Very few women are creative... I'm glad my wife doesn't know any science, my first wife did."

Einstein married his cousin Elsa in 1919, after years of wangling with Maric over a divorce. So sure was he of securing the Nobel prize for

physics that he promised the money to her years before actually winning it in 1922. It was to be invested for the future of their two sons.

After his marriage to Elsa, Einstein continued his affairs. Elsa told one friend he flirted with that she did not mind because he was not seriously attracted to intellectual women.

The Einsteins ended their lives in the United States, having fled the ravages of Nazi Germany in Europe. Einstein became very attached to Elsa's daughter Margot, and many people did not know he had another family.

Hans Albert wrote bitterly that people would look him in the eye and say "Impossible, Einstein has no son."

Einstein died in 1955 in Princeton, New Jersey, having spent his last years protected from the outside world by Margot, his sister Maja and his fiercely loyal housekeeper Helen Dukas. His brain was preserved by an eager pathologist.

Geneticists tried to use cells from it earlier this year to confirm whether he was the father of a woman who believed he had had an affair with her mother. The woman is not identified in the book, which says the tests were inconclusive.

Europeans and Americans need no visa to visit S Africa

American and most European visitors no longer need to get visas before visiting South Africa for tourism or business, South African Embassy Vice Consul Gertruida M. Lamprecht said Thursday, reports AP.

They can also do without transit visas if they are just passing through the country, she said.

Ms Lamprecht said the South African government had dropped the requirement on Wednesday for citizens of the United States, Canada and the 12 countries of the European Community. The new rule applies to some other countries as well, but the full list is not available, she added.

She said visas or working papers will still be needed by those who go to South Africa to work.