

BRIEFLY

Gambia bans political assembly:

Gambia's military president has tightened his hold on the tiny West African country by banning political assembly and setting a Ruling Council of army officers above the mainly civilian cabinet. Reuter reports from Banjul.

The edict, signed by Lieutenant Yahya Jammeh last Friday, was published on Monday as police arrested six public officials suspected of misconduct, among them a nephew and brother in law of ousted President Sir Dawda Jawara.

US to sell 600 missiles to Turkey:

The US Defence Department said on Monday it planned to sell nearly 600 missiles to Turkey at an estimated cost of 137 million dollars, reports Reuter from Washington.

The sale includes 500 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, 80 Amraam air-to-air missile and 16 Harpoon ship-launched guided missiles.

The proposed sale would help improve the military capabilities of Turkey.

UN soldier killed in Somalia:

A peacekeeper from Zimbabwe was killed during an attack by Somali militia in a western border town, the United Nations said Monday. AP reports from Nairobi.

Ten colleagues missing since the Saturday attack in Belet Huen near Ethiopia's border were found unharmed and flown to Mogadishu, said UN spokesman George Bennett.

Bennett, who spoke by telephone from Mogadishu, said the slain soldier was a corporal, but declined to give his name.

British woman killed in Nairobi:

Burglars beat a British woman to death in her suburban Nairobi home over the weekend, the Foreign Office said Monday as it issued a warning to Britons travelling to Kenya. AFP reports from London.

Adam Winter surprised four burglars who had entered his home Sunday. A fight ensued, and his wife Carol aged 30 was beaten to death. Winter was injured but their one-year-old daughter was unharmed.

6 die in Cuban train collision:

Two trains collided near Havana on Monday, killing six people and injuring 156 more, the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina reported. Reuter says from Havana.

The news agency said the accident occurred when two passenger trains collided at a junction at Luyano neighbourhood in the southeast of the Cuban capital.

Japan to improve ties with China:

Japanese Prime Minister Michi Murayama in a meeting with Beijing's ambassador to Tokyo promised to improve relations between the two countries, Xinhua reported on Tuesday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

In his meeting on Monday with Ambassador Xu Dunxin, their first since Murayama formed his cabinet a month ago, the Japanese Premier said his government would continue to vigorously promote the Sino-Japanese friendly relations and support China's policy of reform and opening up, and its modernisation drive.

Canadian jets collide in Quebec:

Two Canadian Air Force jets collided on Monday night over northern Quebec, but there were no casualties, officials said. AP reports from Montreal.

The crash occurred as the two Tornados were returning from an exercise in Alaska. One of the aircraft made an emergency landing and both occupants escaped uninjured, said Capt. J P Lacasse early Tuesday.

Blasts rock US navy armoury:

Several explosions rocked a US navy weapons stockpile in Indian head, Maryland, on Monday night, local television stations reported. Reuter says from Washington.

The Indian head ordnance station lies about 25 miles (40 km) south of Washington on the Potomac river. Navy spokesman Lieutenant Rod Hill said he had no immediate information on the reported blasts.

Typhoon hits ROK, 36 feared dead:

At least 36 people were dead or missing yesterday after Typhoon Brendan swept through South Korea's southern areas, relief officials said. Reuter reports from Seoul.

At least four people camping in a valley were killed and 32 were missing in torrential rainstorms triggered by Brendan, they said. Rescuers saved two of 24 fishermen from two trawlers which sank in rough seas off the southern island of Cheju.

Fire destroys library in Norwich:

More than 100,000 books were destroyed on Monday when a fire devastated the library in the eastern England town of Norwich. Reuter reports from Norwich.

Police believe the blaze was due to a gas leak which was then ignited by a caretaker switching on a light. No one was injured in the blast. The library's entire stock of books and local country records was wiped out.

Russia to give fire plane to US:

Russia will send a special plane to help fight wildfires in the western United States, despite blazes that have charred hundreds of thousands of acres (hectares) back home in Russia, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

The American side asked us to provide a plane on Monday, and we're going to fulfil their request, since the fire situation in Russia isn't alarming," said Marina Rykina, a spokeswoman for the Ministry for Emergency Situations.

2 ministers fired in Turkmenistan:

Two of the most powerful ministers in Turkmenistan's government have been sacked for corruption and for hastening the republic's slide into economic crisis, an official newspaper said today. Reuter reports from Ashgabat.

Agriculture minister Palzgeldi Meredov and Oil and Gas Minister Nazar Sayunov were dismissed by president Saparmurat Niyazov on Saturday.

Cholera breaks out in S Russia:

A cholera epidemic has been spreading rapidly across the republic of Dagestan in southern Russia, with a two-fold increase reported just over the weekend, officials said Monday. AP reports from Moscow.

So far, 175 cases have been confirmed, and an additional 83 people have been infected, said Karl Smolikov, a spokesman for the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations. Eighty-seven others have been hospitalized on suspicion they were carrying cholera microbes.

3 African jurists in Rwanda commission

WASHINGTON, Aug 2: United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed three African legal experts to the newly created UN Commission of Experts to analyse evidence of genocide and grave human rights abuses in Rwanda, reports USIS.

A spokesman for the secretary-general announced August 1 that the members of the commission are: Atsu Hoff Amega, former president of Togo's Supreme Court; Haby Dieng, attorney general of Guinea; and Salifou Fomba, professor of international law in Mali.

The Security Council on July 1 asked the secretary-general to urgently set up the impartial commission.

"Our proposal of a package deal involves all the basic principles and ways for a solution

International

US, France, Russia reject Serb call to reopen peace talks

PARIS, Aug 2: France, Russia and the United States rejected on Monday a Bosnian Serb call to reopen talks on the latest peace plan, insisting that the blueprint was not negotiable, reports AFP.

The French Foreign Ministry said the call from Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic for an immediate resumption of talks added "nothing new" and that the plan still stood on a take-it-or-leave-it basis as when it was presented last month in Geneva.

In Washington the State Department called Karadzic's call "a non-starter" with spokesman Michael McCurry saying, "it is not envisioned that we'll reopen negotiations."

And in Moscow, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said Russia still expected an affirmative response from the Serbs to the peace plan, which would partition Bosnia along ethnic lines.

"We have defended the interests of the Serbs, but the plan presents a peace ultimatum, and an ultimatum must be either accepted or rejected," Kozyrev said.

"So I have no intention of starting new talks," Kozyrev told Russian television.

The peace plan would give 51 per cent of Bosnia's territory to the new Croat-Muslim Federation and 49 per cent to the Serbs, who control around 70 per cent after 27 months of war. The two sections would exist in a single entity within Bosnia's current borders.

Following the Bosnian Serb rejection of the plan last month, the contact group agreed over the weekend to press for tougher UN sanctions against Serbia, the Bosnian Serbs' patron. The group also said exempting the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo from an arms embargo could be inevitable.

Karadzic said on Monday he wanted to change the plan to "guarantee the sovereignty" of the self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb Republic. His faction objects to sharing the same country with the Croats and Muslims.

At UN headquarters in New York, diplomats said the contact group met informally on Monday to discuss tightening sanctions against Serbia.

The draft resolution under discussion calls for strengthening the existing embargo and a freeze on all foreign exchanges with Serbia and Montenegro which from the rump republic of Yugoslavia, a European diplomat said.

The draft, which could be presented to the Security Council by the end of the week also includes new trade sanctions and travel restrictions according to the diplomat who said a freeze on foreign held assets is also under considera-

tion.

Another report says: The Speaker of the Bosnian Serbs' self-proclaimed parliament raised the possibility on Sunday of a referendum by his people on an international peace plan which the Bosnian Serb leadership has rejected.

The official, Momcilo Krajisnik, was giving the first official reaction to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's public endorsement of the plan, which calls on the Bosnian Serbs to give up a third of the land they have conquered in 27 months of war.

"We cannot commit national suicide by giving back land vital" to the self-declared Bosnian Serb republic, Krajisnik told a Serbian radio station. Excerpts of his remarks are to appear in Monday's edition of the newspaper Borba.

"That's why we should hold a referendum and let the people decide," he said.

— AFP photo



Bosnian soldiers carry a wounded dog to the hospital after it was shot by a Serb sniper on August 1. Serb snipers often target children or animals to draw other targets, and have been working with impunity under the observation of French UNPROFOR teams.

— AFP photo

Anti-kidnapping squads set up in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: The Delhi police has raised nine anti-kidnapping squads to tackle the growing menace of kidnapping for ransom, reports Xinhua.

The squads were formed under instructions of the Indian Home Ministry.

Indian Minister of State for Home P M Sayeed, who is also in charge of the union territories and the Delhi police, reviewed the situation in a meeting on Monday, which was attended by Delhi Lt Governor P K Dave and Delhi Police Commissioner MB Kaushal.

He said that the nine anti-kidnapping squads, one each district in the capital are in addition to the anti-kidnap ping cell in each district.

Invasion of Kuwait was justified, says Iraq

NICOSIA, Aug 2: Iraq said Monday that its invasion of Kuwait four years ago was justified because its neighbour was using oil as a weapon to destroy the Iraqi economy, reports AP.

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Pakistan will find alternatives to F-16s

ISLAMABAD, Aug 2: President Farooq Leghari said Monday Pakistan was studying various options to buy fighters for its air force if the United States did not lift a ban on supplying already contracted F-16 fighters, reports Reuter.

Keeping in view its defence needs, Pakistan will find alternatives to the F-16 aircraft if it is not made available...," the local PPI news agency quoted him as telling reporters at an aeronautical complex at Kamra, west of Islamabad.

PPI quoted him as saying US officials told him during his visit to Washington earlier this year that the F-16 issue could not be solved unless Pakistan's nuclear programme was run according to US wishes.

The Pakistani government says its nuclear programme is peaceful but it will not sign NPT.

The Pakistani government has re-announced its nuclear programme is peaceful but it will not sign NPT.

— AFP photo

planes were built but were prevented from being delivered because of suspicion that Pakistan was working to produce nuclear weapons, which Islamabad denies.

The provision of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan for which it has made a payment of 658 million dollars is the moral and contractual responsibility of the United States," Leghari said.

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— AFP photo

however, that a light-water reactor can be provided only as part of an overall solution in which the North opens up its nuclear programme and returns as a full member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it threatened to quit in 1993.

The North suspended its decision to leave the treaty three months later but has since refused to allow full international inspections of its nuclear facilities, deepening suspicions that it is developing nuclear weapons.

It is unclear whether there will be a breakthrough in the 17-month nuclear standoff during the Geneva's talks.

According to Seoul officials, the United States is interested in getting North Korea to promise not to reprocess plutonium, a component of nuclear bombs.

The United States says,

from its 5-megawatt reactor in May.

Western experts generally believe the North has enough plutonium to make at least one atomic bomb. Reprocessing the spent fuel rods would give the North enough plutonium to make several more bombs, they said.

The United States, the officials say, will propose in the Geneva talks that the North hand the spent fuel rods over to a third country like China to prove that it has no intention of making weapons.

Quoting unidentified government sources, South Korea's national news agency Yonhap reported Tuesday that North Korea offered in talks with the United States last month to place plutonium reprocessed from the spent fuel rods under UN control.

The United States reportedly wants a step-by-step approach, giving the North benefits in parallel with progress on the nuclear issue.

Arafat upholds closure of An-Nahar

JERUSALEM, Aug 2: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Monday made permanent an order closing a pro-Jordanian newspaper, leaving the Palestinian community with a single Arabic daily, reports AP.

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