

International

Transfer of missile systems to Pakistan, Iran

US to impose sanctions on China if CIA report proved

BRIEFLY



Pop music superstar Michael Jackson accepts his award as a honoree at the second annual 'VH 1 Honors' on Thursday in Los Angeles.

Savimbi promises peace: Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi vowed Thursday to push the peace process under way in this homeland, AP reports from Brazzaville, Congo.

Lanka tops snake bite death list: Sri Lanka now heads the list of the countries known for snake bite deaths in the world as it has more than 60,000 snake bite victims every year, a university professor told pressmen in Colombo on Thursday, Xinhua reports from Colombo.

Floods claim 17 more in Assam: Rampaging floods have killed 17 people and displaced at least one million others in the far-eastern Indian state of Assam, newspaper reported yesterday, AFP says from New Delhi.

Vietnam detains 2 dissidents: Vietnam has arrested two veteran revolutionaries for political dissent, in a move seen as an attempt to stifle opposition as the Communist Party prepares for its congress next year, AFP reports from Hanoi.

2 Russian army officers killed: Two Russian officers were killed by unknown attackers in the Tajikistan capital Dushanbe, a spokesman for the Russian-led force trying to prevent an upsurge in the Tajik civil war said yesterday, AFP reports from Moscow.

Russian manuscripts recovered: Some 5,000 18th-century manuscripts stolen from the Russian National Archive have been recovered in Berlin and the Russian city of St Petersburg, the Berlin Justice Ministry said Thursday, AFP reports from Berlin.

2 cops shot dead in Karachi: Gunmen killed two traffic policemen in a drive-by shooting in the middle of Pakistan's southern port of Karachi yesterday, police said, Reuter reports from Karachi.

Quake shakes E Japan: An earthquake registering 4.2 on the Richter scale shook eastern Japan early Friday, but there were no reports of damage or injuries, the Meteorological Agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Hussein for end to hardships of Iraqi people: BEIRUT, June 23: Jordan's King Hussein has offered to fight the odds to help lift the UN embargo on Baghdad and end the hardships of the Iraqi people, in a newspaper interview published on Thursday, reports AFP.

Major apparently confident of winning party polls: LONDON, June 23: Whoever challenges John Major for the Conservative Party leadership next month, it's the wounding — not the winning — that counts, reports AP.

France denies secret deals with Serbs: PARIS, June 23: France denied today it had made deals with the Bosnian Serbs on the release of UN peacekeepers detained in the recent hostage crisis, reports AFP.

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Opposition in Britain calls for polls: LONDON, June 23: The opposition Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats Thursday called for a general election after Prime Minister John Major resigned as Tory leader and called a leadership election, reports AFP.

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WASHINGTON, June 23: The United States said on Thursday it would be required to impose economic sanctions on China if it was determined that Beijing had violated an international missile accord, reports Reuter.

But White House spokesman Mike McCurry said no such determination had yet been made after reports that the CIA has concluded that China recently delivered important components for missile systems to Iran and Pakistan.

"I can't comment on intelligence matters," McCurry said. "I can tell you that when we make a determination that there's been a transfer of missile technology in violation of [missile technology control] guidelines, our law requires the imposition of sanctions."

The New York Times reported on Thursday that the Central Intelligence Agency had concluded that in the last year China has delivered dozens, perhaps hundreds, of

missile guidance systems and computerised machine tools to Iran.

This could give Tehran the ability to improve the accuracy of North Korean Scud missiles already in its arsenal and enable it to build such missiles on its own, the Times said.

In addition, China in the last three months delivered parts to Pakistan that could be used in M-11 ballistic missiles, the newspaper said.

The Defence Department said it had been monitoring the reported missile technology transfers "very very closely" for some time and was continuing to do so.

"We are concerned about any actions that encourage or produce the proliferation of weapons," Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon told reporters. He said Defence Secretary William Perry has discussed the matter with his counterparts in China and Pakistan.

But he said the Pentagon

currently lacked "firm, conclusive evidence" that the reported Chinese shipments to Pakistan and Iran breached the missile technology control regime, a complex arms-control pact.

The development comes at a time of deep strain between China and the United States. AFP adds from Beijing, China effectively rejected today the possibility of Sino-US talks on alleged violations by Beijing of an international missile accord, citing the bitter bilateral dispute over US ties with Taiwan, reports AFP.

"The US government contravened the basic principles of the three Sino-US joint communiqués," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

It was a reference to China's stance that Washington broke its pledge to maintain only unofficial ties with Taiwan by permitting a recent visit by President Lee Teng-Hui.

The move "damaged the basis of Sino-US relations, se-

riously harmed Sino-US relations and will inevitably affect consultations and cooperation between China and the United States on international issues," the spokesman said.

He was responding to a question on whether Beijing was willing to hold bilateral talks on China's missile technology sales after reported Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) allegations that Beijing had supplied components to Iran and Pakistan in contravention of an international accord.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry said Thursday "it would be our expectation that the United States would engage in further bilateral dialogue with the Chinese side on the issue of missile technology transfers."

He said talks could be held within the framework of an agreement between Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in October 1994 that called for discussions

State Duma asks Yeltsin to sack key ministers

MOSCOW, June 23: The Russian lower house of parliament, the Duma, voted today to recommend that President Boris Yeltsin sack the defence and interior ministers and the deputy prime minister for nationalities, reports AFP.

The vote is non-binding, but comes amid a storm over the so-called "power ministers" handling of the Budenovsk hostage crisis and the war in Chechnya.

The lower house recommended that Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, Interior Minister Viktor Yerin and Deputy

Prime Minister Nikolai Yegorov, charged with the Chechnya crisis, be fired.

A motion to also fire Sergei Stepashin, the head of the Federal Security Service, today's KGB, failed, gathering just 202 votes in favour, 24 against and 10 abstentions. A minimum of 226 out of 450 possible votes are needed to pass a motion.

Votes also failed against Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, first deputy premiers Anatoly Chubais and Oleg Soskovets, and Deputy Premier Sergei

Shakhrai.

The anti-Grachev vote passed by 268 to eight and two abstentions: The anti-Yerin vote by 284 to two and one abstention: And the anti-Yegorov vote by 245 to five with three abstentions.

Earlier, the Duma voted to set a decisive vote of confidence in President Boris Yeltsin's government for July 1.

The Duma voted 249 to seven with one abstention to hold the showdown with Yeltsin on that date, Interfax news agency reported.

Clinton admn delays Pentagon's proposal to resume N-tests

WASHINGTON, June 23: The Clinton administration has delayed indefinitely a decision on a Pentagon proposal to resume underground nuclear tests, the Washington post said today, reports AFP.

It quoted an unidentified senior administration official as saying that National Security Adviser Anthony Lake had cancelled a top-level meeting today on the proposal, ordering instead a new study on the issue that could take weeks.

Two other senior officials said the move was tantamount to burying the Pentagon plan permanently, and insisted that President Bill

Clinton would not approve resuming nuclear tests for the first time since 1992.

"This is not going to turn into another story about Clinton flip-flops, I can assure you. He's not going to do this. It's a fuss over nothing," one of the officials said.

White House official reportedly were alarmed when the fiercely contested Pentagon proposal was leaked to the press last week, soon after a much-criticised French decision to conduct eight nuclear tests in the South Pacific over the next year.

Defence Department officials urged that the white House propose a Loophole in

a comprehensive test ban treaty being drafted internationally to allow small-scale nuclear blasts for a period of up to a decade after the treaty takes effect.

The Pentagon officials argued that such tests were necessary to maintain the reliability of the US nuclear arsenal.

US officials and US allies complained that resuming nuclear tests would make a mockery of Clinton's stated commitment to a comprehensive test ban, which was emphasised during a UN conference last month that permanently renewed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).



Palestinian mourners shout slogans against Israel during the funeral of Mahmoud Al-Khwaja, 34, a leader of the Islamic Jihad movement who was killed on Thursday at Shatti Camp in Gaza City by unknown gunmen. The Islamic Jihad accused the Israeli security services of shooting Al-Khwaja.

Off the Record



A sapphire and diamond double clip brooch, a sapphire paste and diamond necklace and a sapphire and diamond dress ring are displayed at Sotheby's as part of Dame Barbara Cartland's jewellery auction Thursday. The three lots went under the hammer for 30,000 pounds (dollar 47,000) and the whole collection fetching 155,000 pounds (dollar 240,000).

Sridevi's mummy — the rare victim

NEW YORK: A neurosurgeon treating the mother of Indian film star Sridevi operated on the healthy part of her brain after examining pictures of the wrong patient's skull, officials disclosed Thursday, reports AP.

Rajeswari Ayyappan was in stable condition Thursday at a Manhattan hospital where she was transferred four days after the botched May 26 surgery.

Mrs. Ayyappan was brought from India to the renowned Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre for an operation to remove a malignant brain tumor. But the surgeon involved made two mistakes, the centre said in a statement.

First, he brought another patient's diagnostic films into the operating room. He then opened the 59-year-old woman's head and began searching her healthy right temporal lobe for the tumor, the centre said.

Sloan-Kettering spokeswoman Christine Westerman declined to say how long the surgery continued before the mistake was realised. The doctor's surgical privileges were suspended, and he was stripped of his administrative role at the facility, she said.

"Our standards of patient care were not met in this case," said Dr. Joseph Simone, the hospital's physician-in-chief. "We have acknowledged that a mistake was made, and we have extended a heartfelt apology to the patient's family."

Protest fishy way!

WELLINGTON: Smelly fish and a pile of rubbish were delivered to the French Embassy here yesterday in a Commonwealth protest at French plans to resume nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll, reports AFP.

Led by Gabriel Tehiarahi of Tahiti, a Pacific delegate to the Commonwealth non-governmental organisation forum which has been meeting here, about 70 signing protesters marched to the central city building housing the embassy.

Police barred them from going up to the 13th floor embassy but Counsellor George Ayache, who came down to the foyer, had rubbish tipped at his feet.

Tehiarahi, who demanded France remove its rubbish from Mururoa, then handed him both a petition to President Jacques Chirac and the rotting fish.

India allows ICRC's access to detainees in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, June 23: India, in a move towards greater transparency in strife-torn Kashmir, agreed on Thursday to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to detainees in the region, reports Reuter.

An ICRC statement said a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the committee and the Indian government allowing it "access to all persons arrested and detained in relation with the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir."

"The purpose of ICRC visits is to monitor the conditions of detention and treatment of detainees," the statement said.

Hospital and police sources say at least 20,000 people have died in a five-year-old separatist war between the region's Pakistan-backed

Muslim guerillas and Indian security forces.

The ICRC statement said the visits would help restore contact between the inmates and their families. The ICRC's findings and reports would be transmitted only to the authorities concerned, the statement said.

The ICRC was invited in March, 1994 to assess humanitarian needs in the northern Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The statement said the agreement reached on Thursday was in response to the ICRC's offer of services to the Indian authorities.

Major apparently confident of winning party polls

LONDON, June 23: Whoever challenges John Major for the Conservative Party leadership next month, it's the wounding — not the winning — that counts, reports AP.

Major's big danger would be failing to win outright the July 4 ballot he set in motion by resigning the party leadership on Thursday. If he comes up short, that would open the way for a big-name challenger to enter a second-round contest on July 11 to become party leader and thus prime minister.

Telling critics "to put up shut up," Major challenged his rebellious opponents among rank-and-file legislators to step forward. He was apparently confident that he has

the heavyweights in his 22-member Cabinet fenced in, at least for the first round.

"The guy does have guts and it's now for all these carping critics to decide what to do," Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke, Major's pro-European treasury chief, said. "I think he will succeed in stamping his authority on the party again."

Under party rules, Major must get at least 50 per cent of the votes of the 329 Conservative Party members of the House of Commons, and be 15 per cent ahead of his nearest rival to win the first ballot outright.

While Clarke led a rush by Cabinet members to profess loyalty, right-wing dissidents

opposed to closer integration of the European Union began feverish maneuverings to pick a challenger.

Among the most likely contenders was ex-treasury chief Norman Lamont.

He was fired by Major in 1993 and feels he was a scapegoat for the then-sinking pound's ejection a year earlier from the exchange rate mechanism linking important European currencies.

Most of a dozen headline dissident Conservative legislators who have plagued Major for three years learned of his sudden move while at an anti-European rally under the slogan, "Europe — The Battle For Britain."

"John Major is a nice guy, but I think he is a loser," said legislator Tony Marlow after the rally at Malvern, 100 miles (160 kms) northwest of London.

Marlow was one of eight legislators whom Major temporarily suspended from the Conservative caucus in the Commons after they voted against a treaty on closer union in December.

It seemed likely they would put up a challenger by the June 29 deadline for nominations.

Margaret Thatcher, Major's right-wing predecessor who quit after failing to win enough first round votes in a 1990 leadership challenge, indicated how long she

thought Cabinet loyalty will last if he suffers the same fate.

"I doubt if any member of the Cabinet will challenge him," she said in a television interview from Paris, adding after a pause, "on the first round."

A second round ballot on July 11 would likely bring in Major's Trade Secretary, Michael Heseltine, 62, a flamboyant politician on the left of the party who precipitated the Thatcher downfall, and Employment Secretary Michael Portillo, 42.

Portillo, the youngest member of the Cabinet, is also widely regarded as the most right-wing and anti-European.

Pakistan denies new CIA report

ISLAMABAD, June 23: Pakistan on Thursday denied a new CIA report that it had received important components for an M-11 missile system from China, reports AFP.

"There is no correctness in these charges," a foreign office spokesman here told reporters following the claims in a US newspaper.

"The Americans have not been able to come up with any evidence" to suggest that Pakistan had acquired the parts, the spokesman added.

Xinhua adds, Pakistan foreign office spokesman today denied any secret deal was struck between Pakistan and India at Simla to accept the line of control as a permanent border.