

UN sanctions against Iraq may continue

WASHINGTON, Sept 8: The case for maintaining UN sanctions against Iraq has been strengthened by an "incredible array" of new disclosures on Iraqi weapons programmes, the State Department said Thursday, says AP.

Spokesman Nicholas Burns made the comment on the eve of what is expected to be a routine UN Security Council extension of sanctions against Iraq on Friday.

Among the new disclosures was a biological warfare programme that targeted soldiers and civilians for blindness, gangrene and bleeding lungs, the Los Angeles Times reported this week. The Iraqi goal was to maim their targets instead of killing them so the enemy would spend precious time and resources caring for the sick and injured.

Iraq has informed UN inspectors that it is pursuing a new policy of full disclosure on its weapons programmes and friendly ties with neighbours.

Burns said it would be inappropriate to relax sanctions against a country that "now admits that it lied and cheated."

"I don't believe there is any country that is serious in the Security Council that will support the lifting of sanctions," he said.

OPEC crude oil output rises

PARIS, Sept 8: OPEC crude oil output rose in August to 25.5 million barrels a day, up from 25.3 million in July, the international energy agency reports on Thursday, reports AFP.

It said that the new figure represented the highest production level for the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries since February 1993.

The rise was due mainly to Iran, producing 3.7 million barrels a day instead of 3.6 million in July, and to Nigeria at 2.01 million against 1.9 million barrels a day in July.

In principle, the OPEC output ceiling is 24.5 million barrels a day until the end of the year.

Japan-ASEAN economic meet today

TOKYO, Sept 8: Japanese Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto left here for Brunei on Friday to attend an economic ministerial meeting between Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), reports AFP.

Hashimoto will attend the Japan-ASEAN meeting on Saturday and return home Sunday, officials said.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Colombia's oil export earnings up

BOGOTA, Colombia, Sept 8: State oil company Ecopetrol exported 47.9 million barrels of oil between January and August, bringing in 791.1 million dollars, the company said Thursday, reports AP.

The oil export earnings are up 350.9 million dollars over earnings for the same eight month period last year.

Ecopetrol exported another 8.8 million barrels of gasoline and other refined products in the first eight months of 1995 bringing in another 182.2 million dollars, the company said.

India's sugar output rises

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Sugar production during the month ended July 15, this year was 1.78 lakh tonnes as compared to 0.64 lakh tonnes during the corresponding period last year, reports PTI.

The total sugar production during 1994-95 (October-September) upto July 15, 1995 works out to 142.27 lakh tonnes as compared to 95.02 lakh tonnes in the year 1993-94, showing an increase of 49.7 per cent, an official release said.

As many as 34 factories are reported to be in operation as on July 31 this year as against 12 on the same date last year.

To meet the requirement of internal consumption for August 1995, a quantity of 10.21 lakh tonnes of sugar consisting of 3.51 lakh tonnes of levy sugar and 6.70 lakh tonnes of free sale sugar was released as compared to 9.15 lakh tonnes released in August, 1994 showing an increase of 11.5 per cent.

No sugar was exported during July, 1995.

Russia resisting US on N-reactor sale to Iran

WASHINGTON, Sept 8: Russia is resisting Clinton administration appeals to cancel its planned sale of up to four nuclear reactors to Iran, but the State Department is urging Congress not to withhold US aid as punishment, reports AP.

Eventually, the administration hopes to persuade Moscow with strategic and economic arguments. American diplomats have been telling Russian officials for months that it is dangerous to provide nuclear technology to Tehran and that Iran cannot afford to pay for it anyhow.

A Russian delegation is due here next week and the administration hopes to break through then. But several previous attempts, including at President Clinton's summit with President Boris Yeltsin in May, have all failed.

Yeltsin agreed when he saw Clinton to Moscow to cancel sale of gas centrifuge equipment that can be used to make nuclear weapons. But since then, the prospect of selling Iran one or two reactors has gone up to four reactors, US officials said Thursday the type still was unclear.

In the meantime, the Russians have been evasive on the kinds of reactors they may sell to Iran. "We'd like them to come clean," said a US official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We don't want any modern technology going to Iran. But certain things should be ruled out right away, like the centrifuges were," he said.

On the overall problem, the official said "we never expected this thing to turn around right away. We know the Russians are quite dug in." But he said the administration hoped to convince Moscow that Iran was "not a good financial partner."

Congress is impatient, and some members may try to block aid programs in retaliation.

Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell, who chairs the appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, has threatened to block an administration proposal to spend about 250 million dollars in aid if the reactor deal goes through.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns called such threats unwise.

"US aid to Russia serves US interests," he said, "and our assistance is and has been in this administration and in the past administration designed to help foster a democratic Russia, a Russia that can make a transition successfully to market economics."

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A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between Bangladesh and Midlands Power International Ltd of UK for setting up a power plant in the private sector in the city on Thursday. Joint Secretary of the Energy Ministry Nazrul Islam and Project Manager of the Midlands Power International John G Hides signed the MOU on behalf of their respective sides. —PID photo

Cuba warns against stronger US trade embargo

HAVANA, Sept 8: The head of Cuba's parliament attacked a proposal to tighten the US embargo on Cuba, saying it would make the United States responsible for "murders" and "embezzlers" protected by the new bill, reports AP.

The comments by Ricardo Alarcon, a former Foreign Minister, signaled a new line of Cuban attack on the Helms-Burton Bill, which Havana has made a centerpiece of official criticism.

The measure aims to discourage investment in Cuba by allowing US lawsuits against foreign companies who use property confiscated in Cuba after the revolution of Jan 1, 1959.

That would change the foundations of the US policy regarding its confrontation with Cuba. And Cuba is going to prepare to do the same," Alarcon told a news conference. He did not elaborate.

Mark Thiessen, a spokesman for the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, denied that the bill in any way requires the US government to espouse the claims of Cubans who have become American citizens since 1959.

In Washington, Thiessen said it merely creates a private right for them to pursue their cases against the government of President Fidel Castro.

Alarcon said Cuba had confiscated no property on Jan 1, 1959. Nor, he said, did Castro's guerrillas even have formal control of the country.

"The only ones who lost anything in this country on that day was that gang that escaped from this country with the dictator (Fulgencio) Batista, that gang of murderers, of torturers and embezzlers and associates," he told the National Assembly on Tuesday.

Alarcon claimed some of those who fled took part of Cuba's treasury with them.

He said the law would place US citizens of the time, who have 5.911 claims against Cuba, on the same footing with those who were not US citizens at the time.

The Helms-Burton Bill is co-sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms, a Republican from North Carolina, and Rep. James Burton, a Republican from Indiana. The White House has opposed it.

Many in Washington considered Batista's government corrupt and brutal, and the US government welcomed Castro at first. It began turning against him later in 1959 and in 1960 as Castro veered left, conflicts arose over US properties and protests grew over executions by revolutionary courts.

Alarcon announced what sounded like a national campaign to collect information about those who fled in the early days of the revolution.

"We are going to do everything possible to help those who have interests in determining the origin of the property of that man who is now an American," he said.

Cuba has made the Helms-Burton Bill a centerpiece of its foreign policy effort, with some success. Most US allies oppose the measure because they see its efforts to punish foreign companies who do business in Cuba as a violation of their sovereignty.

But Thiessen prescribed calm. "This is a pathetic attempt by the Cuban regime to try and strike fear into the hearts of certified claimants," he said. "They have nothing to fear from the Helms-Burton Bill."

Japan cuts discount rate to record low

TOKYO, Sept 8: Japan's central bank halved its key interest rate Friday to a record-low 0.5 per cent in an attempt to stir the nation's stalling economy, says AP.

Reports of the cut sent stocks surging. The Nikkei Stock Average jumped more than 2.5 per cent as off 11 am (0200 GMT) in heavy trading.

The official discount rate, the rate the central bank charges on loans to commercial banks, was already the lowest among major industrialized nations.

The discount rate has a strong impact on other interest rates, and a cut tends to make money more easily available to consumers and companies.

The Bank of Japan's decision came as the Economic Planning Agency warned Friday that Japan's economic stall has worsened.

Industrial production data released last week showed a 2.4 per cent drop in July from the previous month in the fourth straight month of decline.

The high yen, which remains strong against other major currencies despite a recent rise in the US dollar, has hurt Japanese exporters by making them less competitive.

The yen remained relatively stable Friday morning despite the discount rate cut, which traders said they had been expecting.

Japan's four-year slump, following its roaring economic expansion in the late 1980s, has also caused a plunge in property values and led to a string of bank and credit union failures.

Last week, Japan's biggest credit union and a large regional bank in western Japan were closed down by the government, except for withdrawals, because of massive bad loans.

The failures occurred only days after the government had announced details of a plan to dissolve another credit union which was Tokyo's biggest and the fifth largest in Japan.

Israeli firm looks for partner to fund tele project in India

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: An Israeli firm which offered a surprising 27 billion dollar bid last week to operate telephone services in India is looking for partners to fund the project, the Economic Times newspaper reported today, reports AFP.

Bezeq Telecommunications Ltd of Israel can only invest 32.8 million dollars of equity in the collaboration with an Indian partner because of a financial ceiling placed on its overseas ventures by Tel Aviv, it said.

Bezeq and India's Himal Futuristic Communications Ltd stunned rivals with their sensational offer in bids opened August 31 for private sector participation in India's telecom market.

Bezeq, which holds a 26 per cent stake in the Indian venture, offered 27 billion dollars to operate basic telephone services in nine of the country's 25 states.

"But Bezeq has (now) expressed the view that other telecom companies may have to be involved as partners to fulfil the massive fund requirement for the Indian operations," The Times said.

Sixteen overseas private firms and their Indian partners bid last month for a slice of India's huge telecom market, but Bezeq breezed past its immediate rivals with its offer.

Among its closest rivals were US West, American Telephone and Telegraph, Nynex of the United States and Alcatel of France.

The Indian telecom sector began opening up in May 1994 and as part of the sweeping economic reforms launched by the government of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao.

India has one of the lowest telephone densities in Asia and there are just eight million telephone lines in the country of 900 million people.

US Senate panel votes to end Commerce Deptt

WASHINGTON, Sept 8: A Republican proposal to kill the Commerce Department, which promotes US exports around the world, was approved by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, putting the measure in position for action by the full Senate, says AP.

Thursday's 5-3 vote was along party lines.

The Clinton administration said it expects the agency to survive when the battle reaches the Senate floor.

Proponents of bills to abolish Commerce say it is a sprawling, top-heavy bureaucracy that spends more than a dhs 4 billion a year on some 100 loosely related programmes that duplicate the work of other federal agencies.

The department conducts a wide variety of domestic and international activities, including many related to US business and investments abroad.

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown said some Republican committee members voted in favour of the measure as a courtesy to Sen. William V. Roth Jr, the panel chairman and chief sponsor.

"I'm confident there will be a Commerce Department basically in the same form," Brown told reporters. "We will still be in business and likely stronger than ever."

He said the proposal to dismantle the agency is symbolic "trophy hunting" and is "absolutely ludicrous" because it would mean there would be no voice in the Cabinet defending the interests of the business community.

The plan to eliminate the Commerce Department would preserve some of its parts, shifting offices to other federal departments.

The Governmental Affairs Committee defeated amendments aimed at keeping the department intact.

Democrats said Glenn's bill could be a vehicle for preserving the department when the time comes for a floor vote.

House Republicans are pushing similar measures they say would save tax payers about 8 billion dollars over the next five years.

Roth said, "The people want a government that works better and costs less. The time has come to take the bold and decisive action needed to fulfill that mandate."

Exchange Rates

Following are the Sonali Bank's dealing rates to public for some selected foreign currencies effective on 7th & 8th Sept '95. (Figures in Taka)

Table with columns: Currency, Selling (TT & OD, IC), Buying (Clean, Sight, Transfer). Includes US Dollar, GBP, DM, F Franc, C. Doll, CHF, Jap Yen, IRS, Pak Rupee, Iranian Ryal, and A: T. (DOC) US Dollar Spot Buying Tk.

LISSANCE RATE: 30 Days 38.6124, 60 Days 39.3293, 90 Days 39.0463, 120 Days 38.7632, 180 Days 38.1971

C) US Dollar sight export bill 3 months forward purchase: To be deducted Tk. 0.15 from O. D. sight export bill buying rate.

D) US Dollar 3 months forward sale: Add cushion of Tk. 0.20 with BC selling.

Table with columns: Currency, Selling (T.T. & O.D.), Buying (O. D. Transfer). Includes S Ryal, UAE Dirham, Kuwaiti Dinnar, D Gulder, S Krona, Malaysian Ringgit, Singapore Dollar.

Shipping Intelligence

Chittagong Port berth position and performance of vessels as on 07.9.95

Table with columns: Berth No., Name of Vessels, Cargo, L Port, Local Call, Date of Arrival, Leaving. Lists various vessels like Banglar Doot, Ocean Envoy, Fillo, Kinabalu, Orange Moon, Noble Star, Song Lin, Hang Shun, Harvest, Yui-Istua, Aristotelis, Banglar Urm, Fong Yun, Sintra, Lanka Mahapala, Maricoula, Anting, Mun Su Bong, Four Winds, Wawasan Setia, A Goncharov, Tanary Star, Banglar Shourabh, Banglar Jyoti, Banglar Sampad, Amore.

Vessels Due at Outer Anchorage

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Date of Last Port Arrival, Local Call, Local Agent, Cargo, Loading Port. Lists vessels like Britoil-9, Mikhail Stenko, Irim 23/8, Capa Henter-V, Robert Lee, Andreas-V, Consistence, Sagar, Sidi Bishr, Halez, Panther, Fong Shin, Nardin Star, Ocean Voyager.

Vessels at Kutubdia

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, Last Port, Local Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival.

Vessels at Outer Anchorage

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, Local Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists vessels like Kiso Maru, Tiger Ace, Banglar Gourab, Banglar Moni, Padma, Sargodha, Chawo, Kuluwo, Banglar Brbe.

Vessels Awaiting Instruction

Table with columns: Name of Vessels, Cargo, Local Call, Local Agent, Date of Arrival. Lists vessels like Mir-1, Yamburenko, Loyal Bird, Pattu, Banglar Basari, Banglar Asha, Tug Hyundai IT-112.

Movement of Vessels for 8 & 9.9.95

Table with columns: Outgoing, Incoming, Shifting. Lists vessels like Kinabalu E, Fong Yun, Jyoti, W Setia, N Star, Urm, F Wind, B Shourabh, Sintra, Stenko.

The above were the shipping position and performance of vessels of Chittagong Port as per berthing sheet of CPA supplied by BRC Group, Dhaka.

Asia business briefs

With an initial investment of one million dollars, Sony Indonesia started operation on September 1.

Established in 1992, Sony Electronics manufactures various audio products for export while Sony Manufacturing is expected to begin production of various electronic products for domestic sales by the end of this year.

Previously, the marketing of Sony products was done by a licensed manufacturing and marketing company.

Mitsubishi Materials, which has paid a dividend of 2.50 yen for both the first half and second half of its fiscal year over the past two years, had predicted dividends of the same amount for the current fiscal year.

SINGAPORE: An agreement between Mexico and Singapore for the avoidance of double taxation that was signed on November 9, 1994 came into effect Friday.

A statement from the Ministry of Finance said it was designed to facilitate greater cross-flows of trade, investment, technical know-how and expertise between Singapore and Mexico to strengthen bilateral economic links for the benefit of both countries.

MANILA: Philippine Airlines on Friday announced it will pull out of 42 unprofitable domestic routes to cut losses until such time the government's Civil Aeronautics Board approves its petition for a fare increase.

PAL's move is expected to 35 local destinations. PAL recites that losses from these domestic routes with the use of the 54-seater Fokker-50 aircraft totalled 622 million pesos (23.9 million dollars) for the fiscal year ending March 1995.

Total net loss for PAL for the fiscal year was 1.72 billion pesos (66 million dollars).

PAL had been charging the third lowest domestic fare in the world at 55 dollars over a flight distance of 500 kilometres — higher only than China's 42 dollars and Saudi Arabia's 45 dollars, the airline said in the statement.

Even if the plane is full, PAL said it still loses 50,000 pesos (1,923 dollars) per flight from the Fokker-50s.

Thailand to keep inflation under 5.2 pc this year

BANGKOK, Sept 8: Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa has assured Thai bankers that inflation will be kept under 5.2 per cent this year despite recent figures show that it is rising, a government official said Friday, reports AFP.

Banharn told top bankers at a breakfast meeting Thursday at his official residence that his administration would use price controls rather than broad new monetary policies to keep inflation in check, the officials said.

Chaiyawas Wibusawadi, an assistant governor of the Bank of Thailand (BOT), agreed, saying, "we have to staunchly implement micro-measures."

The central bank initially forecast 4.8 per cent inflation for the year, but revised that to 5.0 per cent and then to 5.2 per cent as monthly inflation rates continued rising.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures inflation, rose 5.8 per cent year-on-year in July.

India's sugar output rises

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lars, business Standard newspaper reported Friday.

The increase means that India has added eight billion dollars to its external debt since last fiscal year that ended on March 30, 1995.

The Business Standard's report based on official data is more than the projections made by Washington-based Institute of International Finance which has put the debt at 95 billion dollars.

India, a nation of 900 million peoples, imports 40 per cent of its petroleum needs. The other imports include fertilizer, chemicals and iron.

The federal government will invite global bids for setting up private captive power plants to all major ports in the country. Surface Transport Minister Jagdish Tytler said Friday.

India has 11 major and 175 minor ports.

The power plant will have capacity to generate 12 to 20 megawatts of power each. The plants will be allowed to offer excess electricity to areas around the ports on commercial basis.

SINGAPORE: Singapore Airlines announced Friday

that it will operate a weekly flight between Hangzhou in eastern China and Singapore from November 1, replacing a service now offered by SilkAir, a subsidiary of Singapore's national carrier.

The change results from a change in SilkAir's fleet to smaller planes that do not have the range to operate non-stop between Singapore and Hangzhou.

Hangzhou will be Singapore Airlines' fourth destination China, along with Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

JAKARTA: Sony Corp said Friday it is strengthening its presence in Indonesia by setting up a joint venture with a local company, PT Bintangmulia Senaperkasa, to market Sony products here.

The venture, called PT Sony Indonesia, is Sony's third direct investment in the country, after PT Sony Electronics Indonesia and PT Sony Manufacturing Indonesia.