

Arafat wins King Fahd's support to deal with new Israeli govt

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, July 30: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat left Saudi Arabia on Monday after winning support from King Fahd and other senior officials in dealing with Israel's new government, reports AP.

Official Saudi sources said Arafat's meeting with Fahd last Sunday, the first between the two men since May 1995, focused on the future of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's negotiations with Israel, which have been stalled since Benjamin Netanyahu's election May 29.

Fahd and the Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Sultan, both pledged their support for the legitimate rights of Palestinians and their right to decide their own fate," said official sources close to the royal court.

Both said they backed an independent Palestinian homeland with Jerusalem as its capital, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Fahd told Arafat that "the kingdom will not rest and will give every support to the Palestinian cause on the international and Arab level to back Palestinian negotiations with Israel," the sources said.

Netanyahu, Israel's new right-wing prime minister, has publicly stated his opposition to the creation of an independent Palestinian state and vowed to keep Jerusalem as the Jewish state's eternal and undivided capital.

Such pronouncements have caused considerable anxiety among Arabs, and Saudi Arabia last month voiced concern over that it called Netanyahu's uncompromising policies.

Jerusalem is holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews alike. It is home to Islam's third-holiest shrine, which makes its fate of paramount interest to Saudi Arabia, site of the faith's holiest shrines in Makkah and Medina. Saudi Arabia views itself as a champion of the world's 1 billion Muslims.

Key Tamil parties ask govt to hold peace talks with Tigers

COLOMBO, July 30: Sri Lanka's mainstream Tamil parties today urged the government to resume unconditional peace talks with Tamil Tiger separatists, in a bid to end the country's prolonged ethnic conflict that has killed more than 50,000 people, reports AFP.

Three of the parties from the Tamil majority north and east of the country ridiculed the government for insisting that the Tigers should surrender a large quantity of weapons before beginning further negotiations.

"Looking at ground realities, it is necessary for the government to speak to the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)," said Joseph Pararajasingham of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

The comments from the Tamil parties came two days after Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar ruled out further talks with the LTTE unless it surrendered a substantial

quantity of arms and renounced violence.

"All other Tamil militant groups including ours laid down arms in 1987," said Dharmalingam Siddhathan of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). "What do we have to show to our people? What have we achieved?"

The TULF's Pararajasingham added: "The other militant groups surrendered their weapons in 1987. But they achieved nothing. How can one expect the Tigers to emulate them?"

The TULF, which has five members of parliament, was the first group in Sri Lanka to advocate an independent state for the island's two million Tamils in the 1970s — a demand later taken up by militant groups such as the Tigers.

The TULF as well as five militant groups gave up the cause of separatism in 1987 when they accepted an India-Sri Lanka pact which sought to end to a bloody drive for a Tamil Homeland in the north

and east. The LTTE, however, rejected the accord, took on the Indian Army deployed in Sri Lanka's north and east, and has since developed into a major military force determined to carve out a separate country, which would be known as Eelam.

The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) which controls the local body in the eastern Tamil — majority town of Batticaloa, echoed the sentiments of the other mainstream groups.

AP adds: Troops cleared land mines and booby traps, while exchanging mortar fire with Tamil rebels around a northern town captured by the military in its latest offensive, the Defence Ministry said Tuesday.

"Having chased away the civilians from the area, the terrorists had set up explosive devices and antipersonnel mines in order to hinder movement of the security forces," said Maj. Tilak Dunuwilla.

Mufti Sayeed resigns from Janata Dal, Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI, July 30: Mufti Mohammed Sayeed today resigned from the Janata Dal and other party posts and from the membership of the Rajya Sabha, reports PTI.

In a letter to the Janata Dal president, Sayeed said he was also resigning from the post of chairman of the JD Parliamentary Board.

Sayeed said Kashmir situation had been mishandled and alleged there was no inner party democracy in Janata Dal.

Sayeed said all forms in the party had been rendered non-functional or inefficient.

Decisions on important matters and major political issues were taken "arbitrarily" and presented to parliament as fait accompli, he said.

Sayeed said he would be writing separately to the chairman of the Rajya Sabha about his resignation from the membership of the House.

Strike paralyses underground rail system in London

LONDON, July 30: London's underground rail system was almost paralysed by a drivers' strike on Monday, forcing some 1.6 million commuters to use buses, cars or their feet to get to work in the capital, reports Reuters.

The strike — the third joint stoppage in two weeks by two transport unions over working hours — left travellers with an hourly service on only two London underground lines. There were no services at all on other lines.

More strikes are planned for August and September.

Blast at mosque in Kashmir: 4 die

SRINAGAR, July 30: Four people died and 70 were injured Monday when a grenade exploded inside a packed mosque in India-administered Kashmir, police said, reports AFP.

The police earlier said two were killed and 50 injured in the grenade blast which occurred at 2:00 PM (0830 GMT) at the Hazrat Abu Bakr Mosque, packed with thousands of musallies, in Rauchi, 70 kilometres (42 miles) from Srinagar. Twelve of the injured were children, the police said and added the explosion occurred when the men were celebrating the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad (SM).

Twelve of the injured were rushed to a Srinagar hospital in critical condition.

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US plans to provide 3rd naval frigate to Egypt

WASHINGTON, July 30: The United States plans to provide a third naval frigate to Egypt for 106 million dollars as cost of Washington's effort to improve the defence of that Middle East Arab ally, the Pentagon said on Monday, reports Reuters.

Defence Department officials said they expected no opposition from Congress to the plan to transfer the fully outfitted frigate USS Gallery from the US Navy to Egypt. It would be paid for out of annual US military support funds to Cairo officials said.

China sends 2 HR activists to labour camps without trial

BEIJING, July 30: Police have sent two human rights activists to labour camps without trials and detained a third for more than two months for signing petitions to the government, a human rights group said Tuesday, reports AP.

At least eight other dissidents around the country have been sent to labour camps this year for making appeals through petitions, Human Rights in China said in a statement.

Petitions are legal and should not be used as grounds for sending dissidents to labour camps, the New York-based rights group said.

Wang Donghai and Chen Longde were detained on May 27 in Hangzhou, in Zhejiang province in eastern China, after they petitioned China's national legislature for the release of political prisoners and democratic reforms.

Perry on secretive trip to Riyadh US to seek increased security measures for its troops in KSA

WASHINGTON, July 30: Defence Secretary William Perry left Monday on a secretive trip for Saudi Arabia to discuss ways for Riyadh to help pay for increased security measures for US troops based there, defence officials said, reports AP.

Perry also intended to visit US forces stationed in nearby Kuwait, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Saudi sources told The Associated Press that Perry would inspect a site where some American troops will be moved as a precaution against more terrorist attacks following one last month that killed 19 US airmen.

Perry will head straight for the Al Khair air base after arriving in Riyadh, 50 miles (80 kilometres) to the north, and then meet with Saudi King

Fahd in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, said the sources, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Pentagon's public information office declined to disclose the secretary's travel plans, as it normally does, or even confirm whether he was leaving the country.

"The defence secretary is looking after the security and welfare of the troops," said a statement issued by his office.

Perry's spokesman, Kenneth Bacon, could not be reached for comment. He was described as being out of town for the week.

Perry returned over the weekend from a four-day visit to Australia. While there, his plans to visit Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain on his way home leaked to the news media, and the Mideast portion was cancelled.

Hours before talks in Geneva China carries out 45th nuclear test

BEIJING, July 30: China carried out its 45th nuclear test Monday and immediately announced a moratorium, just hours before negotiations on a test ban treaty were set to begin in Geneva, reports AP.

"The Chinese government hereby solemnly declares that it will start a moratorium on nuclear testing effective from July 30, 1996," the official Xinhua news agency said.

"Such an important decision by China is not only responsive to the appeal of the vast number of non-nuclear weapon states, but also a concrete action to promote nuclear disarmament."

In a statement, China called on nuclear powers to drastically cut their stockpiles and formalise through an "international convention" the banning and destruction of all such weapons.

Until such a ban is in place,

it said, countries with nuclear weapons should "undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and commit themselves unconditionally" not to threaten their use against non-nuclear countries.

Gunbattle claims 10 in Lahore

LAHORE, July 30: At least 10 people died and 20 were wounded in a gun-battle between two rival groups in Lahore on Monday night, police said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

They said the two groups exchanged fire for more than 90 minutes in the congested Balajanj area of the city, which is capital of Pakistan's central province of Punjab. The dead included some passers-by.

A police official said there were no immediate arrests.

BRIEFLY

26 killed in Turkey road mishap:

Twenty-six people died and 23 were injured when a lorry and a long distance coach collided in northwestern Turkey yesterday, Anatolian news agency said. Reuter reports from Ankara.

It said a bus travelling from the eastern Black Sea city of Trabzon to Istanbul and the lorry crashed head on near the town of Espipazarn. The injured were taken to two nearby hospitals, Anatolian said.

Assad meets Arab League secy gen:

Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad on Monday met with Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid in the town of Latakia on the Mediterranean Coast, officials said, AFP reports from Latakia.

Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara was also present during the meeting, said president's spokesman Jibril Kuriyeh without giving further details. Abdel Meguid and Shara discussed on Sunday the basis of the process," the official Sana news agency said.

AIDS cases rise in 45 pc in Singapore:

A total of 58 Singaporeans were found infected with the virus that causes AIDS so far this year, a 45 per cent rise over the same period last year, the Health Ministry said Tuesday, AP reports from Singapore.

The latest findings raise to 477 the number of Singaporeans who have contracted the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, the virus that causes AIDS, since 1985. Of them 222 have developed full-blown AIDS, including 155 who later died, a ministry statement said in its semi-annual AIDS update.

2 quakes strike Japan:

Two small earthquakes rocked western and Southern Japan early yesterday morning although there were no reports of casualties or damage, the Meteorological Agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

The agency said the first quake struck the western prefectures of Fukui and Shiga at 4:36 a.m. (1936 GMT) and measured 4.1 on the Richter Scale. Its epicentre was 20 kilometres (12 miles) underground in Shiga prefecture.

Blast kills one in Algeria:

A bomb explosion in a tea house in the Algerian capital killed one person and injured 10 others on Monday, Algerian security services said, AFP reports from Algeria.

The home-made bomb exploded at 12:50 P.M. (1150 GMT), according to a security services statement, quoted by the Algerian official press agency. Security services evacuated the area around the "Chateaufort" tea house in the El Biar district of Algiers and closed to a police station.

35 rebels surrender in Myanmar:

Myanmar's state-run radio Monday reported the surrender of 35 anti-government insurgents to military authorities last month, AFP reports from Bangkok.

The guerrillas included militant pro-democracy students, ethnic Karen and Rakhine minorities, Radio Yangon said in a despatch monitored here. The rebels have themselves up with their weapons in three Myanmar army regions in June, the radio added.

US wants Iran to withdraw its troops immediately from northern Iraq

WASHINGTON, July 30: The United States wants Iran to "withdraw its troops immediately" from northern Iraq State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Monday, reports AP.

Responding to reports that Iranian ground troops, air strikes and artillery had struck at Iranian Kurdish rebels, Burns stated that "there is nothing to justify an Iranian incursion into northern Iraq."

Burns said that the State Department had "no information that would independently confirm the size of the degree of this incursion" but added that "there is no place for Iranian involvement in this area."

According to the rebels, some 2,000 Elite Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops crossed the border last week an engaged Iraq-based Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK) fighters.

An unidentified Iranian commander told the official

news agency IRNA that the artillery bombardment left as many as 20 "important members" of the DPIK dead.

Around 2,500 refugees, almost all of them women and children, flooded to offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil, UNHCR officials said.

The fighting occurred after Iran gave DPIK rebels a deadline of 8 p.m. (1600 GMT) Monday to leave its main camp near Koi Sanjaq, 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the Iranian border, but the group vowed to ignore it.

The Elite Revolutionary Guards, quoted by the official IRNA news agency, issued a statement saying the operation Sunday against the bases of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK), had "ended with success."



Rioters face off with police (background) in a central Jakarta throughway, as buildings in the background burn after being set ablaze by supporters of ousted Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) leader Megawati Sukarnoputri Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

Jakarta calm, army still on patrol

160 opposition activists missing after anti-govt rioting

JAKARTA, July 30: Nearly 160 opposition supporters are missing after weekend anti-government rioting that left at least two people dead, a party official said Tuesday, reports AP.

The violence erupted after police raided the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party, arresting scores of supporters of pro-democracy leader Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Police said Tuesday that they have 215 people in custody. It wasn't clear how many of them may be among the missing.

Laksamana Sukardi, a board member of Megawati's party, said 158 members were being sought by their families. Sukardi complained that po-

lice and hospitals won't give out information.

Their families are very worried. They don't know where to go, and we fear for their safety," Sukardi said.

The rioting was a rare outburst of popular frustration with President Suharto, who has ruled Indonesia for 30 years and rejects growing calls for greater political freedoms in this nation of 200 million people.

Megawati, 49, is the daughter of the late President Sukarno, ousted by Suharto in 1966. She isn't an immediate threat to Suharto, but he apparently is afraid of her movement — supported by her father's admirers — could challenge his authority.

The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, a human rights group, said it has received nearly 80 reports from families of missing persons.

"We also have difficulties in getting information from the police and the hospitals but we are still pursuing," Munir, an official of the group who like many Indonesians uses only one name, told The Associated Press.

Reuter adds: Indonesia's capital Jakarta was calm today after a weekend riot which was followed by a series of bomb threats.

Regular morning rush-hour traffic flowed through the city of 10 million people although troops armed with assault rifles were still on patrol.

Gunmen try to kill Chechen rebel chief of staff Chechen separatists blame UN for criminal indifference

MOSCOW, July 30: Chechen separatists accused the United Nations on Monday of turning a blind eye to Russian genocide in the 19-month-old war, while a notorious rebel commander warned of more bombings on Russian railways, reports AP.

Railway officials announced they were tightening security on the country's trains following the discovery Sunday of the fourth bomb in 10 days. Only one has exploded and no one was hurt.

The rebels issued a statement accusing the UN of a double standard on Chechnya according to which "Russia is always right, even if it is not," the Interfax news agency reported.

"The passive or neutral stand taken by the United Nations toward today's genocide against the Chechen people could be considered a re-

sult of the negative qualities and mercenary interests of UN Secretary General (Boutros) Boutros-Ghali," the statement said.

The war has left more than 30,000 people dead, most of them civilians — both Chechen and ethnic Russian.

A man identifying himself as Chechen guerrilla leader Salman Raduyev, who was reported killed last spring, vowed Monday to continue using terrorism in the fight for independence from Moscow.

Speaking to journalists in a mountain village in southeastern Chechnya, Raduyev said representatives of separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev came to see him Sunday and asked him to stop terrorist acts, but he refused, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Threatening to wage "rail war" against Russia, Raduyev has claimed responsibility for

the bombs planted at railways and also for two Moscow trolley bus bombings earlier this month, which injured 33 people.

Reuter from Grozny adds: Gunmen tried to assassinate Chechen rebel chief of staff Aslan Maskhadov on Monday and Russian forces warned of fresh bombing in the break-away region as flickering hopes of peace looked increasingly faint.

Between five and seven unidentified attackers opened fire on Maskhadov's car near the village of Nohzay Yurrt in southeast Chechnya.

The silver-haired Maskhadov, one of the few separatist fighters regarded by Moscow as an acceptable negotiating partner, escaped unhurt in what the sources described as a carefully planned terrorist attack.

Clinton, Republicans move to shape package of anti-terrorism tools

WASHINGTON, July 30: Seeking to calm a jittery nation, President Clinton and Republican leaders have begun shaping a package of anti-terrorism tools, including more wiretaps and authority to prosecute terrorists as racketeers, reports AP.

"When we are attacked ... we come together," the president declared, beside Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

But their sober White House meeting ended without agreement on an anti-terrorism package. Scheduling a Capitol Hill meeting Tuesday, both sides expected a swift accord in response to the bombing at the Olympics and the explosion of TWA 800.

"We need to move as quickly as we can," Clinton said.

"This unites all Americans," said Gingrich, whose home state of Georgia is hosting the Olympics.

The bombing Saturday, which killed a woman and injured more than 100 people, came 11 days after a suspected bomb brought down a TWA jumbo jet at a cost of 230 lives.

The tragedies emboldened Clinton's push to expand law enforcement's wiretap authority and study the safety of putting traceable markers — called "taggants" — in explosives.

The measures were dropped by Congress from an anti-terrorism Bill Clinton signed April 24, Gingrich indicated Sunday his resistance was softening.

Democrats predicted the taggants study was not likely to survive opposition from Repub-

licans and the National Rifle Association.

Still, Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he might support the study, although he called taggants a red herring. Better would be making the FBI responsible for airport security, said Hatch.

Clinton and the leaders agreed to hold partisan fire at least until Tuesday morning, when White House chief of staff Leon Panetta meets with lawmakers to seek an agreement.

The White House later released Clinton's proposed package, which included initiatives to:

- Expand authority for wiretaps, including the so-called "rowing wiretaps" that allow police to tap into all telephone lines belonging to suspected terrorists. A related

idea would allow the attorney general to approve emergency wiretaps for 48 hours on suspected terrorists, a power already given in organised crime and national security cases.

A rare grouping of conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats fear the wiretap proposals would encroach too heavily on personal liberties.

Allow the FBI to get information on suspected terrorists from hotels, telephone companies and storage facilities in foreign counterintelligence cases.

Allow suspected terrorists to be prosecuted under federal racketeering laws, making them subject to asset forfeiture and longer sentences.

Make it easier to trace telephone numbers, called by suspected terrorists. — Make it tougher for sus-

pected terrorists to encrypt their communications to avoid detection by police.

The taggants study was approved in the April legislation, but was not funded.

Clinton wants money for the study, wants it speeded up and wants it to include the possibility of putting the tracing materials in black and smokeless powder, commonly used in making bombs.

Several other proposals are floating in Congress, including making it illegal to post bomb-making instructions on the Internet, expanding funding for the FBI and getting the military involved in nuclear and chemical terrorism.

"The main thing is, we need to get the very best ideas we can to try to strengthen this country's hand against terrorism," Clinton said in a photo

session with Republican leaders.

Attorney General Janet Reno was leaving for Paris after the meeting to attend a multinational conference on terrorism. The administration planned to push its allies to adopt global standards on airport security, identification numbers on vehicles and vehicle parts, passenger manifests and cargo manifests.

The United States also wants to study possible exchanges of forensic information, such as fingerprints of suspected terrorists.

"We know increasingly this is a global challenge," said Sandy Berger, Deputy National Security Adviser. "The problems that we have faced here are manifest, as well, on the streets of Moscow and Tel Aviv and Tokyo, and throughout Europe and elsewhere."

Nuclear test ban treaty India hardens stand at final round of Geneva talks

NEW DELHI, July 30: India won't be pushed into signing a nuclear test ban treaty, India's foreign minister said in an interview published Tuesday, as it took a tougher position into another round of treaty negotiations in Geneva, reports AP.

Earlier, India said it would not stop other countries from adopting the treaty.

But on Monday it made clear to the 61-nation Conference on Disarmament that it will block the treaty if the accord includes a provision making India's signature necessary.

"We are a proud nation. We are not going to let anyone push us around," Foreign

Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said in an interview published Tuesday in the Times of India. "We are willing to disagree and differ."

India wants the treaty to contain a timetable for the five nuclear powers — United States, Britain, France, Russia and China — to dismantle their nuclear arsenals.

"Diplomacy does not proceed on pressures. Pressures are applied on satellites, not on sovereign nations," he was quoted as saying.

On Monday, a senior Foreign Ministry official told Indian reporters that the government had decided to block the treaty because of the "entry into force" clause.

Off the Record

Tired of life!

KATHMANDU: One of the oldest men on earth is tired of life and wants an early death, reports Reuters.

"Oh, God, it's too long a life. I am tired," Bir Narayan Choudhury, 139 years old, told the Kathmandu Post newspaper in his Himalayan village of Khanar in eastern Nepal.

"God listen to my prayer" the newspaper quoted him as saying on Monday. "Give me instant death."

Choudhury has defied the law of averages in the world's only Hindu kingdom, one of the poorest nations in the world with an average life expectancy of 54 years.

Where do they spend rest of the year?

BHUBANESWAR: Lakhs of olive ridley turtles visit the Gahiramatra Beach in Orissa's Kendrapara district twice every year for mass nesting and then disappear into the sea, reports PTI.

But where do they spend the rest of the year? It has remained one of the enduring mysteries of nature which researchers have been trying to unravel for decades without making much headway.

First they tied red balloons with long strings attached to the turtles to follow them in the sea. But the balloons soon burst or the turtles dived vanishing underwater with the balloons.

Attempts were made to trail the marine animals with boats, but it did not succeed and efforts at telemetry also failed, says eminent expert and Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University, Dr Priyambada Mohanty-Hajmadi.

The endeavours of a turtle expert from Drexel University in the USA, Dr Pamela Plotkin has however, opened an altogether new visit in scientifically tracking the turtles who are believed to be roaming the oceans for the last 150 million years.

Dr Plotkin attached satellite transmitters on the back of olive ridleys which visited two beaches in Costa Rica and monitored their movement.