

# Yeltsin cancels weekly meetings for medical tests

MOSCOW, Oct 29: Boris Yeltsin has cancelled this week's meetings from his calendar to rest and be tested for impending heart surgery. He angrily punished an ex-coordinator who said he was too feeble to govern Russia, reports AP.

Yeltsin lashed out Monday at Alexander Korzhakov, his bodyguard and close friend for 11 years, accusing him of making slanderous statements and ordering him relieved of his military duties.

His offensive against Korzhakov, who has openly allied himself with ousted security chief Alexander Lebed, was the latest in a series of actions aimed at showing that Yeltsin is still running Russia despite his ailing heart.

On Monday, Yeltsin's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said the president was cancelling all his meetings and would undergo tests to prepare for surgery. He said doctors recommended complete rest during the tests.

Yeltsin had been holding almost daily meetings at a government health resort outside Moscow while awaiting multiple heart bypass surgery. The operation is expected to take place between mid-November and mid-December.

Yastrzhembsky told a Kremlin news conference that preparations for surgery "have entered their final stage" and the tests were part of the countdown.

It was not clear what kind of tests were planned, but the spokesman indicated there was no change in the president's health.

Aides insist Yeltsin is fully in charge, and that even when he is not up to meeting with people, he does paperwork, speaks on the telephone and signs presidential decrees.

Yeltsin has said that during surgery his powers will be transferred to Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, who was profiled sympathetically on national television Monday.

# Leghari calls for ceasefire, demilitarisation of Kabul

ALMA ATA, Kazakhstan, Oct 29: Pakistan's President Farooq Leghari Monday called for an immediate ceasefire between the warring factions in Afghanistan and the demilitarisation of its capital, Kabul, reports AP.

A peaceful solution to the Afghan problem must be found under the auspices of the United Nations and needs to include all ethnic and religious groups, Leghari said at a news conference.

"No one ethnic group, however large, can bring peace to Afghanistan," Leghari said.

Leghari, on an official visit to Kazakhstan, held more than three hours of talks with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who also called for a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan.

Nazarbayev said peace in Afghanistan was of primary significance to the Central Asian countries, who hope to

transport of oil and gas through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The US firm UNOCAL and Saudi Arabia's Delta are involved in a natural gas pipeline project, estimated at 2 billion dollars, which would run from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan.

The leaders of Central Asia and Russia also fear that the conflict in Afghanistan could spill over into the former Soviet Union, stirring up ethnic and tribal conflicts.

Nazarbayev and Leghari signed a joint statement on bilateral relations between their countries. Some observers had expected they would also issue a joint statement on Afghanistan, but none was forthcoming.

AFP adds: Scores of civilians have fled villages north of Kabul amid fierce overnight fighting between the Taliban militia and the forces of the ousted Afghan government.

sources said today. "Trucks-loads of civilians have been leaving the area to go to Kabul either after fighting approached their homes or fearing it might do so," a reliable source from the area said.

The latest exodus from hamlets near the frontlines separating the Taliban militia, which captured Kabul a month ago, and forces loyal to the ousted Afghan government came after an intensive artillery and heavy weapons exchange broke out between the two sides late Monday.

The battle, which lasted most of the night, however resulted in no changes on the front where the ousted regime, backed by powerful northern Afghan warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostam, appear to be bidding to retake Kabul.

The persistent thump of shells could be clearly heard here through the night as refugees — mainly women and

children — arrived in the city to take shelter with friends and family members, local said. "The fighting was very heavy and lasted for about seven hours, but the frontlines appear to have remained unchanged although some small villages in the area may have changed hands," a traveller told AFP.

No further details of the fighting — about 20 kilometres north of Kabul — nor of the number of refugees leaving the area were however immediately available here.

Amid fighting between the opposing factions, hundreds of locals north of here have packed their scant goods into trucks and vans and fled towards Kabul over the past 10 days, aid agency sources said.

Others have fled northwest towards the central province of Bamyan after the conflict between the rival sides increased in the provinces north of here, a source said.

# Kashmir CM's security chief among 12 killed

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 29: Kashmiri Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's security chief was among 12 people killed Monday by militants in the Himalayan state as federal troops were on alert following communal clashes, police said, reports AFP.

A police spokesman said Muslim militants opened fire on the convoy of Shabbaz Ahmed, deputy police chief responsible for Abdullah's security, killing him and injuring his driver.

"Ahmed was on his way to visit his relatives in downtown Srinagar when militants opened fire," the spokesman said.

"He received bullet injuries on his head and shoulders and died on the way to hospital. His driver was also critically injured in the attack."

Witnesses said Ahmed's car was badly damaged in the attack which occurred at about 7.00 pm (1330 GMT). Police immediately cordoned off the area.

There were three cars following Ahmed but the militants targeted the first car in which Ahmed and his family members were travelling, a witness said. "All the family members escaped unhurt."

The police spokesman said early Monday militants also shot dead 11 people in the Himalayan state and kidnapped a member of a security unit from Srinagar.

"Two people were killed by militants in northern Baramulla district, four in southern Pulwama district and five in Srinagar," he said. "A border security force personnel was kidnapped by militants in Srinagar."

The attack on the deputy security chief came five days after militants killed two policemen and injured four others in a car bomb attack outside a high-security hostel housing newly-elected state politicians in Srinagar.

# BRIEFLY

**Russian DPM to hold talks with Gowda:** Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Davydov Monday announced he will hold talks with Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda about a joint project to build nuclear reactors, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Davydov, here on a five-day visit and who will also address a world economic forum summit on India's prospects Tuesday, said Russia was ready to help build two reactors in the country. Davydov, who is also Russia's minister of foreign trade, said both projects would have a one million kilowatt capacity but that, while sites had been identified, India had yet to give the green light.

**5 sailors missing in China:** Five Chinese sailors are missing and feared drowned after they fell overboard in a storm off the southern coast, according to reports reaching Beijing yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

Their cargo ship hit rough seas off the coast of Guangxi province on the evening of October 23 and a total of 10 sailors fell overboard. The Nanfang daily reported in its October 26 edition.

**Gaddafi arrives in Tunisia:** Libyan leader Colonel Moamer Gaddafi arrived in Tunisia Monday for a "working visit" of several days at the invitation of Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, AFP reports from Tunis.

Tunisia's Foreign Ministry said his visit — the exact length of his stay has not been specified — was part of normal bilateral relations between the two North African neighbours. Diplomatic sources said his trip would also help ease Libya's international isolation, including a 1992 UN embargo over Tripoli's refusal to extradite two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan-Am plane over Lockerbie, Scotland.

**British critic Tinker dies:** Jack Tinker, the irrepressible theatre critic of Britain's Daily Mail newspaper, died Monday of a heart attack, the newspaper said. He was 58. AP reports from London.

A diminutive man with an expansive wit and writing style to match, Tinker became Mail critic in 1972, a year after joining the tabloid newspaper. Prior to that he had spent a year as a feature writer and then as a deputy editor on the now-defunct Daily Sketch. He began his journalism career on the Evening Argus in the southern coastal town of Brighton.

**Colombian drug trader jailed:** A brother of the leaders of the Cali drug cartel has been sentenced to 10 years in prison for drug trafficking, according to news reports, AP reports from Bogota.

A judge on Monday sentenced Jorge Rodriguez Orjuela, 49, whose brothers Roberto and Miguel lead the world's largest drug syndicate, to 15-2 years in prison but reduced the punishment to 10 years because he confessed and cooperated with authorities. He must also pay a 90 million peso (US\$ 90,000) fine. In Colombia, judges remain anonymous for security reasons.

**Road mishap kills 2 in Japan:** Two Japanese businessmen died in a six car pile-up on a major toll road west of Jakarta Monday, a Japanese diplomat said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

The two men identified as Yoshimi Shirasaki, 53, and Kunishiro Tanaka 47, died instantly on Monday when their van slammed into a truck in front which had braked suddenly. A small truck, two buses and another truck then slammed into the back of the van, on the Cikampek-Cawang toll road west of Jakarta, the Jakarta Post reported.

**51 students jailed in ROK:** South Korea's court yesterday sentenced 51 radical students to jail terms of up to three years for their violent roles in a pro-unification campaign demonstration in August, AFP reports from Seoul.

But the Seoul district court passed suspended jail sentences on 59 other students. "Aspirations for reunification alone cannot justify their acts against law and order," senior judge Min Hyong-Ki said in his ruling, describing their behaviour as "prominent."

**Noted astrologer 'Madame Soleil' dies:** "Madame Soleil," France's best-known astrologer whose forecasts were broadcast nationwide for decades, has died, associates said Monday. She was 83. AP reports from Paris.

Germaine Soleil, who reputedly advised the late President Francois Mitterrand and other public figures, died at her home Sunday night from natural causes, said Jean-Jacques Lachaud, an editor at Paris-based radio Europe. "She was very discreet about who her clients were but had many people from the political world, actors, theatre people, the world of finance," Lachaud said.

**S'pore-Australia to hold talks:** Senior government ministers from Singapore will meet their Australian counterparts Wednesday for trade and security talks, AP reports from Canberra.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the two-day inaugural Singapore-Australia Joint Ministerial Committee would provide an opportunity to further develop the already mature and substantial links between the two nations. "The meeting will provide a valuable opportunity to work together on APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) and WTO (World Trade Organisation) matters, especially in the lead up to the APEC meetings in the Philippines and the WTO Ministerial meeting in Singapore later this year," Downer said in a statement.

**31000 Indonesians die from AIDS:** As many as 31,000 people die each year in Indonesia from the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), The Jakarta Post yesterday quoted a research report as saying, Reuters reports from Jakarta.

The research figure was nearly 500 times that estimated by the government. The report by the University of Indonesia's Centre for Health Research put the country's annual AIDS death toll at between 12,000 and 31,000 people. It said the figures differed widely from government estimates because the latter comprise only reported cases.

**2 IRA suspects held:** Police arrested two men Monday in connection with IRA mortar bomb attacks on Heathrow Airport in 1994, AP reports from London.

**Minor quake strikes in Japan:** An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.0 struck Ibaraki prefecture (state) on Tuesday. There were no reports of injuries or damage, AP says from Tokyo.



"Bangladesh day" was observed at the recently — held Tehran International Trade Fair on October 7, 1996, in Tehran, Iran. Bangladesh Ambassador Syed Muazzem Ali hosted a reception on that occasion which was attended by Presidential Adviser Murteza Alvi, senior Iranian trade officials, leading importers and exporters and ambassadors of various countries.

# ME still boils after 40 yrs of Suez War

CAIRO, Oct 29: It's the eve of an American presidential election. The Middle East is in more than its usual turmoil, and the United States is pushing negotiations to keep tensions from boiling into armed conflict, reports AP.

It may sound like today's world, but the year was 1956. The president seeking re-election was Dwight Eisenhower. And the turmoil that erupted on October 29 was the Suez War.

Forty years later, the Arab-Israeli struggle drags on. But the Middle East chessboard has been turned a few times. In an example of how times have changed, France was Israel's ally and chief arms supplier in 1956. Today, it is

urging creation of a Palestinian state and is seen by Israelis as pro-Arab. Shimon Peres, later Israel's most dovish prime minister, was then an Israeli defence official who helped secure British and French collusion in Israel's invasion of Egypt.

The war started after Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser took over the Suez Canal on July 26 and set up his own company to run it. He needed the canal to help finance building the Aswan High Dam, because Britain and the US had reneged on pledges of financial support.

The seizure of the canal was a blow to the old colonial powers Britain and France, who

had helped build it. And the United States saw it as a threat to world shipping. Eisenhower, running for re-election on a peace platform, feared American voters would oppose a war that smacked of colonialism. He urged diplomacy first — and he definitely wanted no invasion before Election Day.

During a long, hot summer of meetings, France, Israel and Britain launched a plan to thwart Nasser. Israel would invade Egypt's Sinai, and the French and British would step in under the guise of protecting the Suez Canal. In the bargain, Europe would regain control of the canal, the main sea passage to Asia.

# Cairo bldg collapse 60 bodies still untraced

CAIRO, Oct 29: Using cranes, shovels and their bare hands, rescue workers pulled 15 survivors Monday from the ruins of a collapsed 12-story apartment building in a Cairo suburb, but dozens more were still missing, reports AP.

By nightfall, a total of 15 bodies had been found in the rubble of the concrete-block and plaster building, which collapsed Sunday in Helwan, an upper middle-class residential and commercial suburb on the east side of Cairo.

Police said more than 60 others were still unaccounted for. Six people were rescued Sunday.

# Bangalore to host Miss World pageant as scheduled

NEW DELHI, Oct 29: The 1996 Miss World pageant will be held as scheduled in the Indian city of Bangalore despite an attack on an office which once housed the organisers, newspapers said today, reports AP.

The Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Ltd (ABCL), the organisers, blamed unruly elements for Sunday's vandalism. A previously unknown group, "Indian Tigers," claimed responsibility.

Unidentified men threatened employees and smashed computers, windows and furniture at an office which was until recently occupied by ABCL, not realising the company had moved its base to a cricket stadium where the pageant is to be held.

The Pioneer newspaper quoted an ABCL statement as saying the proposed contest would go on despite the attack.

# India won't frame common civil code for its 900m population

NEW DELHI, Oct 29: The Indian government has no desire to frame a common civil code for its 900 million population as it does not want to hurt the sentiments of minorities, a newspaper said today, reports AP.

A government counsel informed the Supreme Court here Monday that it was the government's long-standing policy not to meddle with the personal laws of minority communities.

"Bringing in a uniform civil code will necessarily involve changes in the personal laws of the minority communities," The Hindustan Times quoted the counsel as saying.

"It has been the consistent policy of the government not to interfere on its own in the laws of the minority communities unless the initiative for the changes come from those communities," he added.

The official stand came in the wake of a 1995 appeal by the Supreme Court for a new uniform civil law for all Indians, triggering a fierce controversy in the country.

Hindus, who constitute more than 80 per cent of India's population, are governed by Hindu laws in subjects such as marriage, divorce and inheritance.

These are sanctified by parliament and are applicable to members of three other religions — Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism, who together form just four per cent of the population.

India's nearly 120 million Muslims, the largest minority, and Christians, who form less

# 13 more BJP MPs of Gujarat join Vaghela's faction

NEW DELHI, Oct 29: Thirteen more Hindu nationalist legislators in the western Indian state of Gujarat have defected to a rebel leader ahead of a vote in the local assembly, newspapers said Tuesday, reports AP.

The 13 switched support to Shankersinh Vaghela, who last month left the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), toppling its government, the Asian Age said.

# Most residential bldgs in Central Asia's capitals quake-prone

ALMA ATA, Kazakhstan, Oct 29: Half of all residential buildings in Central Asia's capital cities were poorly constructed and could collapse in a severe earthquake, a seismic expert said Monday, reports AP.

Igor Itskov, an expert on seismic-resistant construction, said there is a high probability of a severe earthquake somewhere in the five former Soviet republics in Central Asia within the next 20 years.

# Ghali struggling to appoint special UN envoy World's biggest refugee camp created in eastern Zaire

MUGUNGA, Zaire, Oct 29: The biggest refugee camp in the world was created Monday in a sprawl of green, red and blue tents covering four square miles (10.5 square kilometres) of a rough slab of volcanic rock in eastern Zaire, reports AP.

The population of the Mugunga camp swelled to twice its size when nearly 200,000 Rwandan Hutus fled here from their old camp after it was attacked Saturday by Rwandan army soldiers of the Tutsi ethnic group.

Looking out over the blue of Lake Kivu, the camp has a population of 420,000. Its residents are tired, hungry and potentially violent. And overworked humanitarian workers are worried — about security, about having enough to feed the hungry, and about preventing disease.

After two years as refugees, the newcomers quickly set about rebuilding their lives. Smoke hung over the camp as Hutus lit fires to cook maize and unpacked their bundles of ragged clothes. Children hid from the sun under umbrellas

while parents built shelters from tarps and tree trunks. Aid workers hurried to organize sanitation and food, hoping to prevent an outbreak of cholera like the one that killed 50,000 Rwandans in eastern Zaire in 1994. The terrain of hardened lava made it difficult to build badly needed latrines.

"In this situation, there is always a risk of an epidemic, especially of diarrhoea or cholera," said Dr Cathy Lyons of the Dutch Doctors Without Borders.

Adding to the urgency is the enormous concentration of refugees, more than 420,000 in two adjoining camps that have merged into one, said Lino Bordin, head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees office in Goma.

"It is the biggest refugee camp in the world," he said. Katala camp, near Goma in eastern Zaire, is the world's second-biggest camp, with 202,000 people, UN officials said.

With so many frustrated, hungry, scared people in one place, the greatest concern is for security, first for the refugees, then for the local population.

"The atmosphere is potentially explosive," Bordin said. The attack this weekend on the refugee camp in Kibumba was one of the worst in eastern Zaire since 1994, when the former Hutu-extremist government in Rwanda launched a genocide that killed at least 500,000 people, mostly Tutsis. Rwandan Hutus and their army, badly beaten by Tutsi rebels, fled to Zaire and Tanzania.

The Kibumba camp is empty now. Only a few elderly, ill and handicapped refugees are still on the move, walking slowly along the rough road of soot that winds around a volcano to Mugunga. Along the road are banana plantations razed by the Zairian army to give it a clear view of the approaching Rwandan enemy.

The population explosion has hit hard, said Mashako Mamba Seb, mayor of the regional capital of Goma, nine miles (15 km) away from the expanding camp. "They're brought diseases, ruined the economy, destroyed the environment," he said of the refugees.

The UNHCR has provided buses to take the refugees home. But the buses stood nearly empty Monday. Most of the refugees have refused to return to Rwanda, fearing Tutsi reprisals from the massacre two years ago.

AFP adds: UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali was still struggling Monday to appoint a special UN envoy to Zaire to address the ethnic turmoil that afflicts eastern Zaire. At least the diplomats have been asked to take the position of UN special envoy to Zaire, but all three declined the offer, according to UN diplomats here. The UN has not confirmed that report.

"It doesn't take 24 hours to find a mediator, especially for such a complex crisis," UN spokesman Ahmed Fawzi told AFP.

Boutros-Ghali Friday urged the convening of an international conference to solve the "regional war" in the volatile great lakes region of central Africa.

Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, is known to his detractors as "Mr. 10 per cent," a reference to the alleged commission he charges potential business people.

Benzar also faces accusations of corruption — against her, her government and her husband, whom she recently made investment minister.

"One doesn't know how far all these stories of corruption are true, but if they are doing even one-third they should be ashamed," said Aziz Sadiqi, a human rights activist and political analyst.

Her new Minister of Science and Technology Nawaz Khokhar was arrested for allegedly defaulting on a 14 million 14 dollars loan. He switched loyalties, joined Benzar and was appointed a minister.

The economy is in a tailspin, with the International Monetary Fund withholding 80 million dollars in emergency money until Pakistan gets its financial house in order. Specially, the IMF wants Pakistan to reduce its deficit to 4 per cent by next year.

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A model wears a red mini dot cotton barbie in the showing of the Betsy Johnson Spring 1997 fashion collection Monday in New York. Fashion week runs through November 1 in New York. — AFP/UNB photo

# Benazir faces enemies all around halfway through her term

ISLAMABAD, Oct 29: The opposition is demanding her resignation. The Supreme Court is ordering her to stop interfering in the judicial system. And the newspapers are filled with stories of scandal and corruption in her administration, reports AP.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has set herself up on the international stage as a moderate leader of an Islamic state, a woman to be reckoned with in a society dominated by men. But at home, halfway through her term of office, she faces enemies on all fronts.

Opposition parties criticise her for not curbing ethnic and religious violence and for failing to rein in special interest groups. And for the past two days, the federal capital has been under siege by a right-wing religious party demanding her

resignation on charges of rampant corruption and incompetence. Helmeted riot police and soldiers in khaki uniforms patrolled Islamabad's tree-lined streets on Monday. Heavy machine guns took aim from grass-covered knolls across from the white marble legislature. Armored personnel carriers and jeeps mounted with machine guns were parked nearby.

The protests did not erupt into a bloodbath, as some feared. But Benazir's already battered image again was wounded.

She has few allies. The president, once a solid friend and supporter, has so distanced himself that many people believe he may use his constitutional powers to dismiss her. Every day another of Benazir's opponents urges him

to do just that — to appoint a neutral caretaker government and call fresh elections. In the last 10 years of Pakistan's shaky democracy, presidents have dismissed two elected governments, including Benazir's in 1990. And the odds diminish that her government will survive this time, until elections scheduled for 1998.

Already, Benazir has faced sectarian violence, her own brother's death in a hail of police bullets, and the relentless violence in Karachi, the country's biggest city and financial capital.

"Another two years of this and the country will collapse," said Sartaj Aziz, a former finance minister and secretary general of the main opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League.

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elections were held and Benazir came to power. Since then, impatient presidents, army chiefs and bureaucrats have either dismissed governments or forced them to resign. Thrown out abruptly in 1990 after only 20 months in office, Benazir used mass demonstrations to orchestrate the early dismissal of her successor, Nawaz Sharif.

And she vows never to be ousted again. "I am here, this government is here until 1998 and it is not going anywhere. We are here to clean up this mess," she said in a recent speech to Parliament.

Sadiqi agrees: "That precedent has to be established," he said. "If again a government is toppled midway it will be the greatest blow to the development of democracy in Pakistan."

But despite the scandals, Sadiqi says Benazir should be allowed to see her term through — if only to give democracy a fighting chance Pakistan.

The army ruled for 25 years of Pakistan's turbulent 49-year history. It wasn't until the last military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, died in a mysterious plane crash in 1988 that the first free