

Mir's oxygen generating systems working again

MOSCOW, Aug 26: The Mir's oxygen-generating systems were again working Tuesday and the crew was following a brief scare that occurred when the station's air supply units went down, Russian space officials said, reports AP.

Mission control spokesman Valery Lyudin said both the main and backup oxygen-generating systems were down simultaneously Monday due to electrical and mechanical problems.

The problem was first reported Monday in the United States by the American space agency NASA, which said the situation was potentially very serious.

There was a great deal of confusion overnight Monday because Russian Mission Control was not answering its phones and did not release any information.

However, Russian officials said Tuesday morning that the problems were fixed at around 10:30 pm Moscow time Monday night (1830 GMT), before the two Russians and one American on board went to sleep.

"Everything was fixed last night," Lyudin told the Associated Press.

When Russian officials spoke with the crew Tuesday

morning, they confirmed that the oxygen systems were working properly.

The primary Elektron generator shut itself down Monday after it began overheating, NASA spokesman Ed Campion said from the Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Even when both oxygen systems go down, Mir has enough oxygen to last several days, Campion and Russian officials said. But if they system couldn't be fixed, the crew would have to abandon ship in the attached Soyuz capsule.

There have been repeated problems with the new Elektron generator, carried up by space shuttle Atlantis in May. But it was the first time since February that a crew had had serious trouble with the backup system, in which solid-fuel canisters are ignited to produce oxygen.

One of these canisters burst into flames in February, filling the station with smoke and almost causing the crew to evacuate.

The cosmonauts were trying to ignite a canister, or candle, Monday when the system failed, according to NASA. They replaced the igniter mechanism but the canister still would not burn.

Arafat won't 'kneel' Japan urges Israel to lift closure of Palestinian territories

TOKYO, Aug 26: Japan urged Israel Monday to lift the crippling closure of the Palestinian territories as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began his visit here with a call for stronger bilateral economic links, reports AFP.

In a two-hour meeting with Netanyahu, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto stressed the Palestinians would be able to take part calmly in the peace process once they attain "economic self-reliance and stability," Japanese officials said.

"Pessimism is spreading among Arabs and Israel should take positive steps to curb this move," Hashimoto was quoted as saying.

But the appeal was swiftly rebuffed by the visiting Israeli premier, who blamed Yasser Arafat's Palestinian self-rule authority for failing to try and stop terrorism emanating from its territories, the officials said.

Hashimoto called on the Israeli prime minister to lift the economic sanctions as soon as possible saying they could "invite antagonism against Israel," the officials said.

Netanyahu was quoted as replying that he wished to end the closure but that "We have no choice but keep it in force as long as terrorism exists." "In this regard we request Japan to cooperate with us," he said.

Israel has imposed a strict seal around the West Bank town of Bethlehem and villages around it, preventing all movement in, out and between the areas.

It is the only Palestinian city under an "internal seal" since a July 30 suicide bombing in Jerusalem, but there is also a wider, more general closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu has steadfastly refused to end the sanctions unless the Palestinians self-rule security forces arrest scores of Islamic militants who Israel says are planning further attacks.

He arrived here Sunday on a four-day visit, accompanied by Israeli business leaders for a trip focused on boosting economic links. He is to leave Wednesday for South Korea.

Netanyahu was only the second Israeli prime minister to

visit Japan, which has depended on Arab countries for its oil needs and tried to play a middle man with its economic might in the Middle East peace process.

Meanwhile, the United States renewed Monday its call to Palestinians to cooperate with Israel in fighting terrorism as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pondered plans for her Mideast trip.

Albright discussed the need to press Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to cooperate with Israel during a conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, he added.

Washington hopes that "progress in the coming days" will allow Israel to release funds it is withholding from the Palestinian Authority, the spokesman said.

PTI adds: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Monday said Israel is using "inhuman" measures against his people and vowed that they will not "kneel" despite the pressure on them after the closure of West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Despair increases health risks in middle-aged men

DALLAS, Aug 26: Middle-aged men who feel hopeless or think of themselves as failures may develop atherosclerosis, the narrowing of the arteries that leads to heart attacks and strokes, faster than their more optimistic counterparts, researchers report, reports AP.

People who expressed high levels of despair had a 20 per cent greater increase in atherosclerosis over four years, according to a report in the August issue of the American Heart Association journal Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology.

"This is the same magnitude of increased risk that one sees in comparing a pack-a-day smoker to a nonsmoker," lead author Susan Everson said Monday.

"People need to recognise that this sense of giving up that many people feel has strong cardiovascular consequences. Steps should be taken to try to change their situation so the gain hope or become more optimistic," said Everson, an associate research scientist at the Human Population Laboratory of the Public Health Institute in Berkeley, California.

Earlier studies have associated helplessness with heart disease, heart attack and death from heart disease. This latest study, however, sought to exam-

ine the influence of helplessness earlier in the disease process, while the arteries were in the process of narrowing.

The findings, while not unexpected, are still noteworthy, said Dr. Marty Sullivan, a cardiologist and associate professor of medicine at Duke University Medical Centre.

This is one of the first studies of humans that has looked at the actual atherosclerosis process, and has shown a strong relationship," he said. "I am not surprised that we have now demonstrated that psychosocial factors may play a role."

Atherosclerosis is a progressive disease in which fat, cholesterol, cellular waste products and calcium collect in the blood vessels, reducing their ability to deliver oxygen and nutrients.

Exactly how helplessness speeds up artery narrowing isn't yet clear, Everson said. She noted that depression, anxiety and other types of psychological stress can affect the body's central nervous system, influencing the production of stress hormones.

For Everson's project, men participating in a larger heart-disease study in Finland were questioned about their outlook on life.

Taliban arrest over 100 ethnic minorities in Kabul

KABUL, Aug 26: Afghanistan's Taliban rulers arrested more than 100 people, most of them ethnic minorities, in a midnight raid on a Kabul neighborhood Tuesday, police and residents said, reports AP.

Residents said about 50 police officers backed by tanks and armored personnel carriers arrived in the hillside community around midnight.

One woman, too frightened to give her name, said armed police officers banged on her door, entered and took away her male relatives.

The police told residents they were arresting men suspected of gambling and smoking hashish, which are both banned under Taliban law.

But officials at a nearby jail, where most of the men were being held for questioning later Tuesday, refused to say why the roundup took place.

The Taliban Islamic army is battling a northern-based opposition coalition, made up mostly of Afghanistan's minority Tajiks, Shite Muslims, Pashtuns and Uzbeks. Most Taliban are from the majority Pashtun ethnic group.

Taliban leaders in the past have accused minority groups of supporting the coalition.

In a civil war that is increas-

ingly taking on ethnic overtones, Taliban authorities have ordered a series of sweeps through minority neighbourhoods in Kabul, arresting hundreds of people.

Most detainees were released within 24 hours, but foreign aid agencies say more than 100 minority residents of the beleaguered Afghan capital are still being held at Kabul's notorious Third Directorate prison.

The underground compound in the Security Ministry is flooded with sewage and infested by rats and insects, aid workers and former inmates have said.

Other detainees have been moved to jails in the Taliban's southern seat of government in Kandahar, 300 kilometres (180 miles) southwest of Kabul, according to aid agencies.

Meanwhile, the opposition coalition led by ousted defence chief Ahmed Shah Massoud continues to pressure the Taliban army.

An offensive last month brought Massoud's forces to within rocket range of Kabul. Taliban authorities have tightened security around the city, increasing the number of checkpoints for travelers coming and going from Kabul.



Refugees from the Middle East and South East Asia rest in a school in the village of Badoluto, near Catanzaro, on Monday. At least 446 illegal immigrants including more than 100 women and children, landed on Italy's southern coast overnight, police said Tuesday. Most of those detained were Turkish and Iraqi Kurds, but others were from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Police was unable to say exactly how many immigrants disembarked on the Calabria coast near the town of Catanzaro, as they believed some 100 managed to flee after landing, including the crew of the boat they came with.

BRIEFLY

Mother Teresa turns 87: Hundreds of school children and members of Indian and foreign volunteer organizations gathered in Calcutta Tuesday to wish Mother Teresa a happy 87th birthday, AP says from Calcutta.

Teresa's a great feeling to have witnessed 50 years of Indian independence, Mother Teresa told the well-wishers, speaking from a balcony of the Calcutta headquarters of her Missionaries of Charity order. She added that she was in good health. The nun, who won the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize for her service to the poor, started the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta soon after India won independence from Britain in 1947.

7 die as house collapses in India: Seven persons including a woman, were killed and five injured when a house in which they had taken shelter from heavy rain collapsed in Sanchoer town in Jalore district Monday police said, PTI reports from Jaipur.

Police said a group of 18 pilgrims from Gujarat on way to Rameoora town was staying in a tent at Sanchoer. When the heavy rain lashed their tent they took shelter in a house under construction, whose walls and roof collapsed on them police said.

Vietnam to execute 8 drug traders: Eight drug traffickers sentenced to death in March will be executed in Hanoi after Sept. 2, official media said Wednesday, AP reports from Hanoi.

The eight, who lost an appeal of their sentence in May, were the key players of Vietnam's biggest drug syndicate, masterminded by Vu Xuan Truong, a police captain with the Interior Ministry's anti-drug squad. Eight other defendants received life in prison. Another six people received prison terms ranging from one year, suspended, to 20 years. Under Vietnamese law the eight sentenced to death can still file pleas for mercy from Vietnam's president of Vietnam, though their appeals are likely to be rejected.

Ex-president to quit politics in SA: Former President FW de Klerk is resigning from politics, the South African Press Association reported Tuesday, AP reports from Cape Town.

Citing National Party sources, SAPA said he would step down as party leader and quit politics at a meeting Tuesday morning of the group's executive organization. The Cape Town Afrikaans daily, Die Burger, reported earlier that De Klerk informed his nine provincial leaders on Monday afternoon that he would formally resign on Tuesday to make room for a new party leader.

SPLA kills 30 troops: The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) on Monday announced that it had begun an assault in the central Nuba mountain region, killing 30 government soldiers and taking a garrison, AFP reports Addis Ababa.

For the first time in three years, the forces of the SPLA in the Nuba mountains started an offensive in the west... and captured the strategic NIF garrison, Magda, a week ago, SPLA spokesman Yasser Arif told AFP. Arman, speaking by telephone from the Eritrean capital Asmara, said that 30 soldiers of the government backed by the National Islamic Front (NIF) had been killed and many others wounded.

10 die in Thai flood: Severe flooding in southern Thailand has killed at least 10 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless, Thai officials said yesterday, Reuters reports from Bangkok.

The number of deaths has increased from six to 10 and we expect the number will go higher, an official at the civil defence centre in Bangkok said. "At the moment the information is coming in very slowly because communications have been cut." The official said at least six other people were missing due to the floods, triggered by several days of heavy tropical rains that trapped up to 8,000 people in their houses in the hardest hit areas.

Robber sentenced to death in Sudan: A Sudanese court sentenced a man to death and another to amputation of a hand and leg for armed robbery, the independent Al-Akhabr Al-Youm daily reported Monday, AP reports from Khartoum.

Hun Sen pledges to quit if he fails to restore stability

PHNOM PENH, Aug 26: Despite staging a coup that has ignited a new outbreak of civil warfare, strongman Hun Sen vowed Tuesday to return security and stability to Cambodia and pledged to give up power if he fails, reports AP.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony for business students, Hun Sen declared he would not present himself as a candidate for elections he has promised for May 1998 if his programme to restore security is not implemented.

Hun Sen claimed he had a long-term strategy to crack down on rampant crime that has emerged in recent years, including drug trafficking, armed robberies and kidnappings.

"If I cannot succeed, it would be useless for me to remain in office for another term," said Hun Sen, who deposed his co-premier in a tense coalition, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, in a coup July 5-6.

Hun Sen's larger, better-equipped military forces chased Ranariddh's partisans to the border with Thailand as he consolidated undisputed control of the capital.

However, the prince's men have put up a stubborn defense of the border village of O'Smach for the past two weeks, defying Hun Sen's orders to his generals to capture it. About 22,000 civilians have fled the fighting to Thailand.

Hun Sen's regime has refused to acknowledge the fighting continues, claiming for over a week O'Smach 350 kilometres (200 miles) northwest of the capital, has fallen. Reporters at the border confirm Ranariddh's forces remain in the town.

Fighting was light Tuesday, but a Reuters television cameraman at the border was grazed by a bullet. A wounded resistance fighter was allowed into Thailand for medical treatment.

The National Assembly earlier Tuesday opened debate on legislation aimed at demilitarizing the armed forces before next May's elections.

How free and fair those elections will be is considered a crucial test for whether the international community will accept Hun Sen's government.

The prince — now in exile in Bangkok — was voted out of

office after the coup by the Hun Sen-controlled National Assembly and was replaced by Ung Huot, the foreign minister, widely seen as a puppet.

In an attempt to create legitimacy for his rule, Hun Sen has promised the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which has tried to mediate an end to the crisis, that he will hold elections.

Ranariddh would be barred from participating, however, unless he undergoes a trial on Hun Sen's accusations that he illegally brought weapons into the country and was planning to use former Khmer Rouge guerillas to stage terrorist attacks.

Cracking down on rampant crime could increase Hun Sen's popularity. He has ordered officials to close illegal casinos, seize illegal weapons and rid the highways of illegal police and army checkpoints used to shake down travelers.

Hun Sen, who has more than 1,500 bodyguards — said that regulations were being drafted to determine the number of guards allowed for businessmen, politicians,

India's bid for permanent seat in UNSC unacceptable, says Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Aug 26: Pakistan Monday strongly opposed India's bid to secure a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council saying it is unacceptable on moral, legal and diplomatic grounds, reports AP.

How come India seek membership in a council through backdoor, whose resolutions it has persistently violated with impunity and it is unacceptable Pakistani Minister for Information and media development, Mushahid Hussain said.

Mushahid, who was addressing a two-day conference on fifty years of Kashmir dispute at Muzaffargarh in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK), called upon the world community to block India's entry into Security Council as it is the only country in this part of the world which has physically expanded its borders.

This is the first time that a Pakistani minister has openly opposed India's bid to get a permanent seat in the Security Council, earlier, Pakistan was indirectly opposing the move by advocating the theory that instead of permanent members, the non-permanent member category should be expanded.

Sharif to meet Clinton in NY Sept 22

ISLAMABAD, Aug 26: Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will meet US President Clinton in New York on September 22 to discuss "substantive issues", including the status of the India-Pakistan dialogue in the light of the recent border skirmishes, Pakistani officials said, according to India Abroad News Service.

Pakistan-China relations, the U.S. support to Islamabad's dealings with the International Monetary Fund, the Afghan situation and terrorism are also expected to figure in the discussions, officials said.

The meeting is expected to be "more than ceremonial," officials here say. Sharif is visiting New York to attend the 52nd session of the UN General Assembly.

A Foreign Ministry official told IANS the Sharif-Clinton meeting will not be part of the ceremonial meetings Clinton will hold with visiting dignitaries on the first day of the Assembly. It will be held separately at some other time and venue.

Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral has reportedly declined to advance the date of his visit to New York to coincide with the visit of President Clinton.

Battle for key town in north Lankan troops, Tigers exchange mortar fire

COLOMBO, Aug 26: Sri Lankan troops and Tamil rebels exchanged mortar fire as the army regrouped Tuesday for a final assault to capture a town, control of which is crucial in the government's efforts to push the rebels further north, reports AP.

"Operation Certain Victory" began four months ago to gain control for a land route to the isolated Jaffna Peninsula, where 500,000 people have to be sent food by a sea.

The military said five days of fighting last week for Pullyankulam town, on the main northern highway killed 360 guerrillas and 48 soldiers. The area is 235 kilometres (146 miles) north of Colombo, the capital.

But the rebels said Tuesday that only 70 of their fighters were killed. They did not comment on military casualties.

Since fighting began, only one-third of the 70-kilometre (45-mile) road through rebel territory has been captured. The fighting has killed 1,200 rebels and 600 soldiers and wounded 2,000 soldiers. Details for rebel injuries were not available.

Both sides often delay reporting their actual death tolls or exaggerate casualties to keep up morale.

It is impossible to verify the claims since the government does not allow journalists into the area.

The military offensive has stalled several times as the army struggles to replace casualties. Fierce fighting has deterred young men from joining voluntarily and there is no conscription. The military does not give details of recruitment.

The number of rebel fighters has also declined. The military estimates that the rebels have about 4,000 fighters.

Government troops were hunting for rebel mines and booby traps Tuesday, as they prepared to move forward again, military officials said.

Israeli troops demolish 4 Palestinian houses

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Aug 26: Israeli soldiers demolished four Palestinian houses on Monday, sparking clashes with stone-throwing youths, witnesses said, reports AP.

The houses had been built without permission, according to the Israeli authorities, which virtually never authorise the construction of Palestinian homes.

The soldiers opened fire with tear gas and rubber bullets at youths who pelted them with stones after two houses were torn down in Nahalin village near the West Bank city of Bethlehem, witnesses said.

When the owner of one of the homes, Hamza Fanun, refused to leave the house, the soldiers removed him by force, dragging him on the ground for 20 metres (yards) and hitting him, his nephew said.

During the clashes another resident, Fahima Ahmed Mussa, 50, collapsed from a nervous attack and was briefly hospitalised, hospital sources said.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities also tore down two homes in the Al-Zaim neighbourhood of East Jerusalem in a continuation of a campaign which has

demolished over 40 homes in the West Bank and Jerusalem this month.

The two homes in Al-Zaim were owned by Mohammed Abu Al-Hawa and Sherif Shweiki and had total of 20 people living in them, said the Jerusalem Media and Communications centre, a Palestinian research group.

The second home in Nahalin was owned by Mohammed Shakarne Ghayada, residents said. Five other homes owned by his and Fanun's relatives have also received demolition warnings.

Israeli military administration spokesman Peter Lerner said: "All procedures were scrupulously observed. We asked the owners to stop the work begun without permits, but they did not heed our warnings and we had to intervene."

Last week, Palestinian Local Administration Minister Saeb Erakat said Israel had destroyed 39 homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this month in a wave of demolitions launched in a security seal imposed on the territories since July 30.



Florida Governor Lawton Chiles (C) speaks to the press after signing a settlement deal with the US tobacco industry worth 11.3 billion USD on Monday in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Florida settlement is the largest ever in a tobacco suit and will be used to recover public funds used to treat sick smokers and finance anti-smoking campaigns.

Kabila's forces didn't massacre refugees in May: Mandela

PRETORIA, South Africa, Aug 26: President Nelson Mandela said Monday he believed that Congolese President Laurent Kabila's forces did not massacre tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees in May, reports AP.

"He assured me that this allegation was false and that at no time did his own people get involved," Mandela said at a news conference with Kabila. "I have no reason whatsoever to doubt him".

Human rights officials have accused Congolese troops of killing as many as 200,000 people as they swept Kabila to power in May. UN officials are investigating the reported massacre.

Kabila said his troops only killed Mobutu's soldiers, not civilians.

from one of Africa's most respected leaders is an important prize for Kabila, who overthrew former President Mobutu Sese Seko in May.

Mandela had not met with Kabila since the Congolese leader rose to power.

Other African leaders traveled to Kinshasa in July to denounce a UN attempt to investigate claims of refugee massacres by Kabila's forces.

But South African officials declined to attend, saying Mandela was tired from a recent trip to the Far East and Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad had recently visited Congo, South African officials said.

After months of government resistance, the UN investigating team arrived in Kinshasa Sunday.

At Kabila's insistence, a team leader originally proposed by the UN was changed because of alleged bias against the new government. Kabila also demanded that the team not only look into events since the start of Kabila's rebellion in September 1996, but also investigate atrocities dating back to 1993 allegedly committed by Mobutu's forces.

"We have been waiting for those people a long time. We are having doubts about their own brief," a smiling Kabila told the press briefing in Pretoria.

Most of the people believed killed were Rwandan Hutus who had fled into eastern Zaire in 1994 to escape reprisals,

Kenneth Kaunda seeks Mandela's help to save his life

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 26: Former Zambian president Dr Kenneth Kaunda, yesterday appealed to South African President Nelson Mandela to save his life from the Zambian security forces, reports PTI.

Dr Kaunda, who was shot and wounded on Saturday, as heavily armed police opened fire at an opposition rally near capital Lusaka, said he would talk to President Mandela about the threat to his life and the absence of a democracy in Zambia.

Kenneth Kaunda seeks Mandela's help to save his life