

International

UNSC defers punitive steps until next week
US warns Iraq of possible military action

BRIEFLY

34 die of malaria in West Bengal: Altogether 34 people have died of malaria in West Bengal since January this year...

Hashimoto leaves for KSA: Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto departed Saturday morning for a visit to Saudi Arabia...

Tunisia to amend electoral code: Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali said Friday that opposition parties would be allowed to hold 20 per cent of parliamentary seats...

Clinton chooses his library site: President Bill Clinton chose 26 acres next to the Little Rock River Market to be home to his library after he leaves office...

Pak court rejects appeal by convicted coup plotters: ISLAMABAD, Nov 8: A Pakistani military court rejected an appeal by four army officers convicted in 1996 of plotting to overthrow the former government...

Russia asks US to abandon anti-sat programme: WASHINGTON, Nov 8: Russian President Boris Yeltsin has told Washington that Russia once had the ability to down satellites...

50 killed as fighting erupts in northern Iraq: ANKARA, Nov 8: More than 50 guerrillas have been killed in the past two days of fighting between rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq...

Washington does not rule out discussion on Kashmir: Aziz Haniffa writes from Washington. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's chief spokesman James Rubin refused to rule out that the Kashmir issue would not come up for discussion...

Milosevic warns NATO Bosnian peace deal must be handled impartially: BELGRADE, Nov 8: Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic warned NATO Friday that implementation of Bosnia's peace accords must be handled with impartiality...

UNSC renews air, arms embargo against Libya: UNITED NATIONS, Nov 8: The 15-member UN Security Council on Friday renewed an air and arms embargo against Libya for failing to hand over two Libyan suspects...

Global warming Officials meet ahead of Kyoto conference: TOKYO, Nov 8: Two days of meetings by senior officials began Saturday, just weeks before the start of a major UN-sponsored conference on global warming next month in Kyoto...

Divided UNSC short on ideas how to resolve crisis in Iraq: UNITED NATIONS, Nov 8: As the crisis with Iraq ratchets up, the focus shifts to a divided UN Security Council short on fresh ideas. Several compromises have been proposed to resolve the crisis...

US tightens security at N-facilities: WASHINGTON, Nov 8: After finding security lapses in its weapons complex, the US Energy Department announced Friday it was tightening safeguards at several of its nuclear laboratories and facilities...

WASHINGTON, Nov 8: In a rising war of words, the US government warned Friday it was considering military options, including a cruise missile strike, if Iraq carries out its threat to shoot down UN surveillance planes, reports AP.

At the White House, President Clinton declared that the United States and its allies must be "resolute and firm" and that UN inspections of Saddam Hussein's weapon arsenals must resume.

Clinton said a decision on military action would wait until after a UN diplomatic delegation returns Monday from Baghdad and the United States consults with its allies.

Clinton, however, said he saw no reason to believe that Saddam was bowing to threats of sanctions or military action.

Asked if he saw any reason to hope that Saddam would comply with demands that UN weapons inspectors resume, he said, "No, I don't."

A senior Pentagon official told reporters that if Iraq shot at a U-2 — the high-altitude US reconnaissance plane used for UN inspection missions — it would be considered an act of war and met with a military response.

The flights, suspended amid Iraq's threats to expel American weapons inspectors, are expected to resume next week, Rubin said.

"We have made it clear that any attempt to shoot them

down would be a serious mistake," the State Department spokesman said, adding, "Iraq is responsible for the personnel and equipment that are doing the international community's business in Iraq. And it would be a serious mistake to put those lives and equipment in jeopardy."

Defence Secretary William Cohen said in an interview with CNN that it would be a "very big mistake" for Saddam to target the UN surveillance flights, but he declined to specify what military steps might be taken.

The defence secretary said it would be possible to increase sanctions against Iraq, including putting travel restrictions on Iraqi officials, or even providing "less relief" to the Iraqi people, apparently a reference to the oil-for-food programme that the international body has approved.

The UN inspection team "has been very successful, and that is part of Saddam's problem," Cohen said, noting that it had discovered that Iraq was developing a long-range missile that could reach from Baghdad "all the way to Paris."

Neither Clinton nor the Pentagon official indicated US military action was imminent. However, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a range of military options has already been discussed, including the use of possible

Tomahawk cruise missile strikes.

AFP from United Nations adds: The UN Security Council on Friday deferred any punitive action against Iraq until next week after Iraq refused to drop a threat to expel UN arms inspectors.

In Washington US President Bill Clinton urged the international community to stand "firm and resolute" towards Iraq to prevent President Saddam Hussein from producing weapons of mass destruction violation of a UN ban.

Noting that UN envoys dispatched by UN Chief Kofi Annan were returning to New York from Baghdad, Clinton said that once they had reported back, "then the international community must decide what to do."

In comments to reporters here British Ambassador Sir John Weston also stressed that UN envoys would first have to report fully to the council.

And then the council will have to meet again very quickly after the weekend for the next steps, he said.

Annan is to brief the council on Monday on the results of his mission's talks in Baghdad on Friday, after his three envoys failed to persuade the Iraqi leadership to rescind a decision to expel the inspectors, he handed the matter back to the Security Council.



Each couple of brides and bridegrooms co-nibble and apple at a mass wedding beside the noted scenery spot West Lake in Hangzhou, capital of eastern Zhejiang province, in China Friday. 106 youths are to link their happiest moment in life with the lake and the red apples. — AP/UNB photo

Kim vows to back fair polls: SEOUL, Nov 8: South Korean President Kim Young-sam said today he would try to prevent mudslinging in the country's presidential election campaign, and he vowed to back fair polls, reports Reuter.

"I will use all the government's powers to change this campaign climate where defamation and distribution of false information is committed," Kim said in a nationally televised address.

Kim quit the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) on Friday to ensure a fair presidential election and concentrate on running the country. He is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term in the December 18 election.

He left the party he founded after NKP presidential candidate Lee Hoi-chang demanded he leave.

But political analysts said Kim had in fact jumped into a power struggle between the NKP and party renegades who have formed the rival new party by the people.

The opposition has accused President Kim and the presidential blue house of backing the new party and its candidate Rhee In-je who defected from the NKP in September.

Kim, who enjoyed wide popularity at the beginning of his term, has been reduced to a lame duck following a scandal this year which landed several of his close aides in jail.

Prosecution rests its murder case against Kasi: FAIRFAX, Va, Nov 8: The prosecution rested its murder case on Friday against Mir Aimal Kasi, who is charged with killing two men and injuring three others in a shooting rampage outside CIA headquarters, reports Reuter.

Jurors were dismissed until Monday as lawyers for the prosecution and defence discussed the wording of instructions to the panel.

Kasi's lawyers called no witnesses in this phase of the trial, but did not formally rest their case. The case is likely to go to the jury on Monday following instructions from Virginia Circuit Judge J Howe Brown and closing arguments.

Kasi, 33, of Quetta, Pakistan, has pleaded not guilty to 10 charges stemming from the attack outside the US spy agency's headquarters in McLean, Virginia, on January 25, 1993.



Former prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto gestures as she addresses an audience during a speech at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government, Friday in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Benazir, who is currently leader of the opposition Pakistan People's Party, lived in Massachusetts while attending Radcliffe College in the 1970s. — AP/UNB photo

UNSC renews air, arms embargo against Libya: UNITED NATIONS, Nov 8: The 15-member UN Security Council on Friday renewed an air and arms embargo against Libya for failing to hand over two Libyan suspects wanted in connection with the Lockerbie bombing, diplomats said, reports AFP.

The decision to keep the sanctions in place came at the Security Council's regular four monthly review.

The move came despite intensified Libyan lobbying, and after the British government proposed the dispatch of observers to Scotland to counter Libyan accusations that a Scottish trial would not be impartial.

Libya has been under a UN arms and air embargo since 1992 for refusing to hand over the suspects wanted in connection with the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland which killed a total of 270 people.

But Libyan authorities have resisted surrendering the two to Britain or the United States, on the grounds that a fair trial would not be possible.

In recent months they have won considerable Arab and African backing for their proposal for the trial to be held in a "neutral" country, but this has been rejected by Britain and the United States.

Libyan Ambassador Abuzed Dorda called for an open Security Council meeting this week to discuss the deadlock, but the proposal was rejected, Western diplomats said.

Dole takes over as head of Intl Commission on Missing Persons: WASHINGTON, Nov 8: Former Senator Bob Dole took over on Friday as head of the International Commission on Missing Persons, and pledged to do his utmost to help relatives of 40,000 people missing in the Balkans learn their loved ones' fate, reports Reuter.

"We cannot bring those who were squandered (in the Bosnian war) back to life, but we can ease the burdens on those who survived by letting them know what happened to their loved ones, by bringing those responsible to justice and by never letting this happen again," he said at a news conference.

US tightens security at N-facilities: WASHINGTON, Nov 8: After finding security lapses in its weapons complex, the US Energy Department announced Friday it was tightening safeguards at several of its nuclear laboratories and facilities. The measures include more guards, new alarm systems and additional training, reports AP.

Energy Secretary Federico Pena said two internal reports found "no immediate danger to nuclear material at any DOE site" but revealed security shortcomings at a number of weapons facilities.

The investigations by the departments Office of Oversight and the Office of Security Affairs found "exploitable weaknesses" in security at the Pantex weapons facility in Texas, the Rocky Flats facility in Colorado, and two weapons laboratories — Los Alamos in New Mexico and Lawrence Livermore in California.

Washington does not rule out discussion on Kashmir

Aziz Haniffa writes from Washington

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's chief spokesman James Rubin refused to rule out that the Kashmir issue would not come up for discussion when Albright visits India later this month.

"I wouldn't rule out that the subject comes up," Rubin said, "but it's certainly not a central theme of her trip."

Rubin, who was announcing the dates of Albright's trip to South Asia, was asked if Kashmir would be part of her agenda during her talks with Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and senior Indian officials or if all the discussions would centre only on bilateral issues.

Earlier, senior officials had said that Albright would be visiting Kashmir during her trip, even though her former Czechoslovakian diplomat, had written one of the most highly acclaimed books on Kashmir in the 1950s, during which he travelled to Kashmir and spent several days in India and Pakistan and talked to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani leader Mohammed

Ali Jinnah.

Rubin said Albright would leave for Doha, Qatar, on November 16 to attend the economic summit of Middle East nations on November 17 and then take wing to Pakistan, where she is expected to spend a day.

She is slated to spend November 18 and 19 in India, during which she is expected to squeeze in a trip to Agra to see the Taj Mahal and then take off to Dhaka, Bangladesh, for half a day on November 20 before turning around and heading off to Vancouver, Canada, to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

Rubin said, "The precise schedule is still being worked out." He said, "In Pakistan, she will encourage the government's commitment to democratic development, human rights, religious tolerance and work with the Pakistani government to end the conflict in Afghanistan."

"In India," Rubin said, "she will be continuing our dialogue on strategic issues begun last month by Under Secretary (of State for Political Affairs Thomas) Pickering, celebrating our shared democratic heritage and advancing our objectives on environmental issues, particularly global warming."

In Bangladesh, the spokesman said, "she will encourage the further consolidation of democracy, promote further progress on development, women's empowerment and child labour issues."

Administration sources acknowledged that the global warming issue would be a priority item on her agenda as much as the other issues, because of its immediacy vis-a-vis the Climate Change summit later this month in Kyoto, Japan.

Wirth, testifying before the House Subcommittee of Energy and Power about the status of the international climate change negotiations, said, "Unless the developing countries meaningfully participate, the United States will not assume binding obligations."

— India Abroad News Service

Milosevic warns NATO Bosnian peace deal must be handled impartially

BELGRADE, Nov 8: Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic warned NATO Friday that implementation of Bosnia's peace accords must be handled with impartiality and without the West imposing solutions, reports AFP.

The statement from the Yugoslav presidency, quoted on Yugoslav radio, followed a meeting between Milosevic and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana.

Solana, accompanied by supreme allied commander General Wesley Clark, arrived in Belgrade from the Bosnian capital Sarajevo as part of a day-long visit to the region.

His tour was intended to put pressure on Milosevic to do more to meet his commitments under the Dayton Peace Accords that he signed in 1995 to end the Bosnian war NATO officials said.

However, Milosevic's statement said that all questions regarding implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords would have to be "solved through agreements, cooperation and confidence without partiality and imposing solutions."

But US and British diplomats maintain that would be tantamount to rewarding someone for breaking the rules.

Even before the latest crisis, the Russians and the French had been suggesting that the council should offer incentives to the Iraqis rather than threaten them over the inspection issue.

That was the reason those countries — along with Egypt, Kenya and China — refused to support a resolution last month threatening to ban Iraqi officials from travelling abroad to punish them for non-compliance.

Russian and French diplomats, for example, have said privately the council should

cancelled inspections when the Americans are turned back.

Butler has refused, arguing that Iraq must not dictate terms.

"This is fundamentally a very serious challenge to the authority of the Security Council of the United Nations," Butler said Friday. "I don't think the Security Council of the United Nations has faced a more serious challenge, maybe since it was created."

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