

Temple is being constructed in pieces to put together quickly in Ayodhya

NEW DELHI, June 14: Hindu fundamentalists are preparing a temple which could be put together quickly at the site of a mosque razed in 1992, a group of Communist parliamentarians said Saturday, reports AFP.

The temple is being constructed in pieces, with stone cutting going on in a planned manner, the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted Basudev Acharya, one of the Communist MPs, as saying.

The group said sculptors were preparing pre-fabricated, carved stones which could be assembled one on top of another to raise a grand temple over the ruins of a 16th-century mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya.

Thousands of Hindu zealots tore down the mosque in December 1992 triggering bloody Hindu-Muslim violence across the country that claimed some 2,000 lives.

It was India's worst communal rioting since independence in 1947.

Death of Dodi, Diana Mohamed Al Fayed defends his conspiracy theories

LONDON, Jun 14: Egyptian multi-millionaire Mohamed Al-Fayed defended again today his conspiracy theories about the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, and his son Dodi in last August's Paris car crash, reports AP.

In a Sunday Times article written by him under the heading "I'm not paranoid," the boss of Harrods Department Store also accused the British establishment of trying to make him a pariah.

Egyptian-born Al-Fayed made it clear he believes he and his family are victims of an establishment plot that embraces the political classes, the security forces and the media.

He expressed anger with successive British governments for refusing him citizenship, and resurrected old feuds with the Conservative Party and with businessman "Tiny" Rowland over the purchase of Harrods.

Al-Fayed has repeatedly been condemned in the British press for his conspiracy theories and for his many public statements about the Paris crash and the relationship between Diana and his son.

In his article he praised French judge Herve Stephan for the way he had conducted the inquiry into the crash, saying he has "great faith in his investigation."

But he wondered whether Stephan has the necessary powers to get at the truth since he cannot "investigate possible involvement by any foreign intelligence agency."

He repeated his claim that Diana and Dodi were about to become engaged. And he said he is convinced there were people in high places determined that she should not be allowed to marry his son.

He accused the media of failing to investigate the crash properly because the establishment does not want to hear anything other than speed and booze with the blame, if possible, being put on me.

This was a reference to Henri Paul, the driver of the princess' car, who was found to have three times the legal limit of alcohol in his blood after the crash.

Paul was employed by the Ritz hotel in Paris which Al-Fayed also owns.

The establishment runs Britain as it has done for more than 300 years, Al-Fayed wrote. "The ship of state sails on in majesty having dropped its unwanted passengers. I am not paranoid, I just see things as they are."

He said he has no personal grudge against the royal family.

Suharto denies amassing fortune

JAKARTA, Jun 14: Former Indonesian President Suharto has denied allegations he amassed a fortune during his 32 years in power, a newspaper reported Sunday, reports AP.

The Republik newspaper quoted Suharto's newly appointed legal adviser, Johannes Jacob, as saying the 77-year-old former autocrat would welcome any lawful investigation into his affairs.

But, the paper said, Suharto's advisor said that any demands of the ex-president must be made through proper legal channels.

Suharto resigned last month after riots and other protests erupted amid the Southeast Asian country's worst economic crisis in three decades.

Critics have said the Suharto family amassed wealth from huge business empires which were built by abusing its influence. Many want Suharto himself put on trial to face corruption charges and some have urged the government to seize his assets, estimated to total between 20 billion dollars and 40 billion dollars.

However, Suharto's legal

advisor said he has provided documents to the government which show there was no wrongdoing by the former leader or his family. The papers were sent to Indonesia's attorney-general, who is carrying out a broad inquiry into the allegations of corruption during Suharto's rule.

In a separate interview published Sunday by the Media Indonesia newspaper, Jacob said he had been appointed to lead Suharto's legal team even though he was not an accredited lawyer.

Suharto's eldest daughter Tutut has reportedly confirmed her father's appointment to defend him.

The newspaper Kompas quoted her as denying earlier reports that Suharto had engaged a team of foreign lawyers to protect him from allegations of wrongdoing.

President B J Habibie, a longtime friend who served as a Cabinet minister and vice president before replacing Suharto, has warned Indonesians not to seek unlawful retribution against the former leader.

NATO plans air manoeuvres near Kosovo border today

BRUSSELS, June 14: NATO plans air manoeuvres near the border of Kosovo on Monday to warn Yugoslavia of tough consequences if it does not call off its military crackdown on ethnic Albanians in the province, reports Reuters.

As NATO mustered resolve for another possible intervention in the Balkans three years after bombing Bosnia's warring Serbs into submission, France and Russia clung to hope for a diplomatic solution in Kosovo.

But French President Jacques Chirac warned all means, including military means would have to be used if attacks on Kosovo Albanians continued and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said pending talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic would be crucial to the outcome.

A C-130 Hercules on loan from NATO member Norway will be making twice-daily flights into Tirana from Sarajevo until Tuesday, hauling mattresses, blankets, kitchen utensils, fuel cans, candles and plastic sheeting.

Ironically, the supplies for the victims of the latest Balkan crisis are coming out of stores put together for those who suffered in the last conflict in the former Yugoslavia — the 1992-95 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Sarajevo in particular survived on just such airlifts during its 43-month siege under Serb guns.

Saturday's first flight was already underway when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) announced a show of force by 40 warplanes over Albania and Macedonia on Monday in a warning message to Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to back off in Kosovo.

"We are stockpiling for a possible mass influx from Kosovo," Tham Meechubot, head of mission for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Albania, said at Tirana's sleepy airport as the Hercules was being unloaded.

"We hope it will not happen, but we don't want to be caught off guard," he told AFP.

Young boys played in the grass by the runway and a stray dog wandered by as the first 4.7 tonnes of supplies was rolled off the grey Hercules under a bright sun and a stiff breeze that whipped the cargo's plastic wrapping.

White trucks took the material away to a warehouse on the other side of Tirana, from where it will be transported on to Albania's rugged interior for distribution.

"Maybe tomorrow (Sunday) we can send two or three trucks up north," said UNHCR spokeswoman Maki Shinohara.



In recognition of his life to public service, President Clinton is presented an honorary doctorate by Portland State University president Daniel Bernstine during graduation ceremonies in Portland, USA, Saturday. President Clinton spoke to the 3,000 graduates about the importance of America's ethnic and cultural diversity and immigration issues. — AP/UNB photo

India can't forswear its missile dev programme

NEW YORK, Jun 14: India cannot forswear its integrated missile development programme if its neighbours continue to engage in import and development of ballistic missiles, a top Indian official has said, according to India Abroad News Service.

India has not had an intermediate range ballistic missile test for the past three years, Jaswant Singh, tipped to be the next foreign minister, said. "It's some of our neighbouring countries that are engaging in development, import and testing of ballistic missiles... if that continues, I cannot forswear the possibility of the integrated missile development of India being called off," he said.

Singh was responding to a question, in an interview aired in "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer" yesterday on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), whether India would conduct more missile tests in the near future. During the interview, Singh answered a host of questions ranging from India's plans about deployment of nuclear weapons to whether India looks towards China, even more than Pakistan with some trepidation.

"I can't understand any circumstances about India using these nuclear weapons," Singh said, when asked whether he could imagine under which circumstances India would nuclear weapons.

"In today's world they really have a deterrent capability. All that India has done is to acquire autonomy over a strategic autonomy, considering the kind of vacuum that had come into existence in the South Asian region when you examine the totality of new nuclear security."

As to whether India expected "this kind of expectation and condemnation," he said: "I don't think it is condemnation."

"What you call condemnation to us really arises from lack of appreciation of what the extent and true nature of India's security concerns are," he added.

In response to interviewer Elizabeth Farnsworth's question if he was surprised by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's statement that "the payoff for India and Pakistan was mutual insecurity, decreased prosperity, a harvest of fear at home and condemnation abroad," Singh answered in the negative.

"I am not so much surprised as disappointed," he said. "I am disappointed not because of the sentiment... by really by the unrestrained language employed," he said.

"It is — whether we are secure or not is — an assessment which is a sovereign function."

Egypt will try to mediate between Eritrea, Ethiopia

CAIRO, Jun 14: Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak will try to arrange a cease-fire between Eritrea and Ethiopia in an attempt to find a peaceful solution to their border conflict, Eritrea's foreign minister said Sunday, reports AP.

"President Mubarak has assured us that he will do his best (to) try to contact the other party (Ethiopia), and try to bring both parties to a cease-fire and peaceful solution," the minister, Haile Woldeyesae, told reporters after meeting Mubarak here.

He said Eritrea welcomes Mubarak's initiative.

On Friday, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin met with Mubarak in Cairo and said his country will not negotiate as long as Eritrea occupies Ethiopian lands.

The United States and Rwanda are also trying to resolve the conflict but have made no progress.

Border war between the two Horn of Africa countries broke out May 6 when Ethiopia accused Eritrea of occupying a swath of land along their border. The two sides differ over where Italy, the former colonial power, drew the border.

Immigrants good for America, says Clinton

PORTLAND, Oregon, Jun 14: The latest wave of legal immigration could "threaten the bonds of our union" if Americans fail to make room for the new arrivals, US President Bill Clinton said here Saturday, reports AP.

Speaking at a college graduation ceremony, Clinton said immigrants "are good for America" because they contribute to the economy and link it to economies around the world.

At the same time, the influx of new people presents "challenges" to the United States by their sheer numbers and diversity, he said.

"Each year nearly one million people come legally in America, today, nearly one in the people in America was born in another country," Clinton said.

"Today largely because of immigration, there is no majority race in Hawaii or Houston or New York city, within five years, there will be no majority race in... California, and in a little more than 50 years, there will be no majority race in the United States," he said.

"No other nation in history has gone through demographic change of this magnitude in so short a time."

'E Timorese should decide their own fate'

DILI, Indonesia, June 14: One of East Timor's most influential figures appealed Sunday for the release of a jailed rebel chief and said the people of the Indonesian-controlled territory should decide their own political future, reports AP.

Bishop Carlos Belo, who won the Nobel Peace prize in 1996 for his efforts to bring peace to the former Portuguese colony, also appeared to harbour doubts about the sincerity of recent conciliatory moves by the Indonesian government.

Pushing a nationwide agenda of democratic reform, Indonesian President B J Habibie last week suggested special status for East Timor, which would entail some measure of autonomy.

"I'd like to see first. Not only promises," Belo said after early morning Mass in an open-air chapel on the grounds of his Dili home. "It could be a transitional solution... The definite solution should be said by the people here."

However, Habibie will likely reject calls for a referendum on self-determination in East Timor. In an interview with The Associated Press on Saturday, he ruled out the possibility of independence for the disputed territory.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and annexed it a year later, snuffing out most armed resistance in the following years. Human rights workers say tens of thousands of people died.

Belo, a sharp critic of the Indonesian government, urged the government to release Xanana Gusmao, a separatist guerrilla leader, and other political prisoners.

Arrested in 1992, Gusmao is serving a 20-year sentence in a prison in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital. Habibie has said he is considering freeing Gusmao.

Indonesia released a dozen activists from a jail on Friday, but Belo said all detainees must be freed in order to bring peace to the rugged, half-island territory of 800,000 people.

"All of them" should be released, Belo told reporters.

In demonstrations this week in Dili, the capital of East Timor, thousands of university students waved banners and chanted slogans in favour of a vote on independence.

Disarmament 'roadmap' Butler holds talks with senior Iraqi officials

BAGHDAD, June 14: UN Chief weapons inspectors Richard Butler held talks with senior Iraqi officials here Saturday on the disarmament "roadmap" Iraq will need to follow for an eventual lifting of economic sanctions, reports AP.

Saadun Hammadi, the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, urged Butler's UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) meanwhile to quickly wrap up its activities and insisted that Baghdad "fulfilled all its requirements."

"The coming and going of inspectors and the pretext put forward by UNSCOM (to maintain sanctions) cannot continue," Hammadi told Iraqi television.

"The Iraqi people, the Arab masses, Muslims and free men around the world will fight with all their strength against the hostile policies (of UNSCOM)," Hammadi added following a session of Parliament.

The Iraqi Parliament adopted a resolution in October threatening to cut off all cooperation with UNSCOM and Iraqi leaders warned in April that maintaining UN sanctions would have "serious consequences."

Butler, who arrived here Thursday as the head of an 18-member delegation for a five-day visit, met twice on Saturday with a team of Iraqi officials headed by Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz.

DPRK still facing shortages of food, intl experts warn

BEIJING, June 14: North Koreans still face "precarious" food shortages and the summer months will be critical for the Stalinist state a starving population, international experts warned here today, reports AP.

"The food supply situation remains precarious. We have travelled extensively and we can say that the food crisis is not over," said Abdur Rashid, the head of a Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) mission.

"We are particularly concerned about prospects over the next two critical months, as stocks become exhausted," Rashid said.

He added that "the public distribution system has ceased functioning in many areas since March."

Before the end of the latest food aid, rations had been reduced to 100 grams of food each day for adults, compared to normal needs of 450 grams, Rashid told reporters after a 10-day tour of the north.

He added that North Korean authorities were stockpiling international food aid against the threat of more severe famine.

Cartoonist Reg Smythe dies

LONDON, Jun 14: Reg Smythe, who created the world's most politically incorrect cartoon character Andy Capp and drew him for more than 40 years, died on Saturday. He was 81, reports Reuters.

Smythe died of cancer at his home in northeastern England, according to Mirror group newspapers in London, who began publishing the Andy Capp strip in 1957.

The exploits of Andy and his long-suffering wife Flo were syndicated to 1,700 newspapers in 48 countries and even turned into a musical and a TV serial.

Smythe lived in the northeastern town of Hartlepool and faxed his work to the Mirror, where it appeared seven days a week.

Nada Lukic, centre, cries over coffin of her son, killed policemen Zivorad Lukic before his funeral in the village of Balovac, some 30-km north of Pristina Saturday. Lukic was killed together with another colleague Branko Karavelic on Friday. — AP/UNB photo

Indian heatwave death toll now 3028:

The death toll from India's worst heatwave in half a century reached 3,028 on Saturday after 58 more people died, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, AFP says from New Delhi.

Forty-four of Saturday's deaths were reported in the eastern state of Orissa, which accounts for half the country-wide toll. The coastal state received its first spell of monsoon rains Friday, lowering the temperature. Nearly 950 deaths have occurred in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

Grenade blast claims 6 in Yemen:

A hand grenade exploded in a crowded market Saturday, killing six people and wounding 18, when a vendor pulled the pin while giving change, AP reports from San'a.

The grenade was fastened to the belt of Hassan Azar, a dealer in qat, a locally grown narcotic, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. Azar was among the dead. The explosion occurred in Al-Houta, about 35 km, north of the southern city of Aden.

Iranian minister in Qatar:

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh arrived in Qatar on Saturday on the second leg of a tour of Gulf Arab oil producing state whose economies are suffering from a drop-in oil prices to near nine-year lows, Reuters reports from Doha.

Zanganeh, who arrived in Doha from Kuwait, held talks with his Qatari counterpart Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah who said the talks focused on the agenda of the June 24 meeting of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) meeting.

Palestinian held with knife:

A young Palestinian with a knife in his hand was arrested Sunday in a Jewish neighbourhood of Jerusalem after he entered a girls' school and tried to stab one of the students, police said, AP reports from Jerusalem.

A taxi driver who saw the incident fired some shots into the air with a pistol and the young man ran off. Passersby chased him and overpowered him, police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said.

Gaddafi offered assistance for India's nuclear programmes

NEW DELHI, June 14: Libyan leader Moamer Al Gaddafi offered to pay India eight billion dollars for a nuclear device following New Delhi's first nuclear test 24 years ago, the Times of India reported today, reports AP.

The daily quoted defence expert Bharat Karnad as saying Gaddafi "made two attempts to obtain nuclear weapons technology," between 1974 and 1978 but was rebuffed by then prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Homi Talayerkhan, who was envoy to Tripoli during this period confirmed the report.

He said Gaddafi initially did not respond favourably to the detonation, summoning him and expressing surprise that a peace loving country like India should have carried out a nuclear test.

"I told him that the test was for peaceful purposes and was for the welfare of the people Talayerkhan said. Gaddafi then suggested that Libya could help India in its nuclear programme, this suggestion was forwarded to Mrs Gandhi and it was rejected."

A former atomic energy expert said the Libyan strongman had also approached India for "reprocessing technology" which could be used to make a bomb.

NATO backed Pak N-programmes?

Moscow, June 14 - A report of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, parts of which have been leaked to the press, throws light on the history of Pakistan's nuclear programme and the "secret assistance" Islamabad allegedly received from member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

The report, titled "New challenges after Cold War: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," was prepared by the Foreign Intelligence Service (FRG) — the partial successor to the KGB of the Soviet era — when it was headed by Yevgeny Primakov, the current Russian Foreign Minister.

The report also states that India is one of the few developing countries capable of building nuclear reactors independently and carrying out all main operations in the framework of the "nuclear fuel cycle," including processing of used fuel.

By the end of 1995, while India had plutonium reserves for making 60 to 100 nuclear weapons, Pakistan had the potential to produce around ten devices, the Russian intelligence report says.

It claims that then West Germany played a special role in setting up a factory for production of nuclear raw materials in Pakistan in the year 1974, although the two countries had no official agreement for cooperation in this area.

German specialists, flouting their country's export laws, had rendered illegal assistance to Pakistan in building a factory to enrich uranium in the town of Multan in 1980, it claimed.

In 1984, according to the report, Pakistan set up its industrial enrichment factory at Kahuta which can produce enough uranium fuel every day to make 12 atomic devices.

The report claims that in 1988, Pakistan set up its second uranium enrichment factory in a place close to Islamabad. That complex apparently also produces other important components of nuclear devices.

While the Germans helped Pakistan in getting enriched uranium, two other NATO countries — Belgium and Canada — assisted it in installing the capacity to produce heavy water, the report claims.

It says a Belgian company helped install a facility to produce heavy water at Multan. In the past several years, Pakistan has brought about considerable change in its nuclear research programme by giving emphasis to defence requirements, it adds.

In order to sustain the nuclear complex, Pakistan has created a huge state structure which is engaged in "secret procurement of materials" needed for its programme from foreign countries through clandestine operations, the report claims. This Pakistani state organisation gives special attention to obtaining required technology and material from the U.S., it says.

The report gives details of Pakistani purchases of a variety of sensitive equipment and devices from Britain, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, France and the U.S. More than 70 companies from Germany alone have supplied the latest electronics, compressors, vacuum furnaces, serconium and equipment required for production of special uranium violating the country's export laws, it claims.

The report has not been fully published in the press, but the part which has been already leaked to the media is conspicuously silent about China's role in promoting Pakistan's nuclear programme.

It says Dhruv is the most powerful among India's at least eight nuclear research reactors which has been completely built by Indian scientists and is believed to be the main unit for producing weapons grade plutonium.

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