

## International



## Russian jet leaves for Iraq defying UN embargo

MOSCOW, Sept 23 : A Russian plane left Moscow for Baghdad today carrying medical supplies and 100 passengers, agencies reported, the second flight in 24 hours to defy a UN flight embargo on Iraq, reports AFP.

The plane, a Tupolev 154 owned by Vnukovskiy Avialini airline, carried five tonnes of medical supplies, including disposable syringes and blood transfusion equipment, Itar-Tass reported.

The Russian delegation, including oil company representatives, deputies from Russia's lower house of parliament, the Duma, some musicians and a football team, was led by the head of the CEO oil company, Yury Chafrannik, said Interfax.

The delegation was due to spend three days in Iraq, during which the Torpedo-ZIL football team was to play a friendly match against an Iraqi team.

A Russian plane flew to Baghdad last Sunday and Russia had written to the United Nations sanctions committee overseeing

the embargo against Iraq warning that it intended to send another.

The sanctions committee, which is chaired by the Netherlands and includes the 15 permanent and non-permanent UN Security Council members, said it had not made any formal objection to the flight.

But a similar flight from France to Baghdad on Friday, provoked a sharp response from the United States State Department.

Washington accused Paris of violating a UN air traffic embargo imposed on Baghdad after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in 1990, triggering the Gulf War.

The French plane, a chartered Boeing 737-800 was carrying a 75-member delegation that included some 30 medical staff and around 40 young French sports figures.

The aircraft had left Paris after France ignored a UN sanctions committee request to delay the departure of what organisers insisted was a humanitarian

flight.

It was the first flight from France to Iraq since the Security Council imposed sanctions, including the air traffic embargo, on Iraq on September 25, 1990.

France has joined Russia and China in a divided UN Security Council, arguing that the sanctions should be ended.

Britain and the US say that the terms of UN resolutions mean an air embargo is in force against Iraq. But France, Russia and China argue that there is nothing to forbid passenger flights to Baghdad so long as they do not involve economic or financial transactions.

The organisers of the French and Russian flights have characterised their flights as humanitarian.

France accuses the United States of ignoring the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people burdened by stringent UN sanctions.

US diplomats frequently accuse Paris in private of trying to reestablish its once-vast

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee displays a book on Indo-US relations during its launch at his office in New Delhi yesterday. Vajpayee recently concluded a landmark five-day visit to the US. -AFP photo

2 ferries off Jolo intercepted, 2 Abu Sayyaf men held

JOLO, Philippines, Sept 23 : The Philippine coastguard said it stopped two ferries off the southern island of Jolo today and intelligence sources said two suspected Abu Sayyaf members were taken off one boat, reports AFP.

The MV Nickel Princely, from the southern city of Zamboanga, was bound for the southernmost Tawi-Tawi islands. It was stopped as it passed Jolo island, where Abu Sayyaf kidnappers are holding 17 hostages, and forced to dock at the wharf in the main town.

Two young men were taken off the boat escorted by heavily armed troops before the boat was allowed to proceed, witnesses said.

The coastguard later stopped another ferry bound for Tawi-Tawi, the MV Magnolia Fragrance, and forced it to dock in Jolo. The vessel was still there in the early afternoon.

**Surharto in hospital for checkup**

JAKARTA, Sept 23 : Former Indonesian president Suharto entered a public hospital here Saturday to undergo a court-ordered medical check ahead of the resumption of his corruption trial next week, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The former strongman, who has pleaded he is too ill to attend the court sessions, was driven by private car from his Jakarta home early in the morning and entered the capital's upscale Pertamina Hospital.

**Embryos lost**

LONDON, Sept 23 : Two British fertility clinics admitted today they have lost frozen embryos which they were storing to be implanted into the wombs of hopeful mothers, reports AFP.

Health Minister Alan Milburn has asked for an urgent investigation to establish how the embryos were lost, a ministry spokesman said.

Ten patients are affected, and they and their families now face an agonising wait to hear whether their embryos can be traced.

During fertility treatment, embryos can be frozen and stored for up to 10 years. They are fertilised in the laboratory and then implanted back into the womb in cases where couples cannot conceive naturally.

The clinics involved are the private Hampshire Clinic, in Basingstoke, south of London, and the nearby North Hampshire Hospital.



A French delegation of 75 members including some 30 medical staff and the same number of athletes arrive aboard the first Paris-Baghdad flight, since a UN embargo was imposed in 1990, at Baghdad Saddam International Airport on Friday. The Euralair charter flight (background) left Paris after France ignored a UN request to delay the departure of what the organisers insisted was a humanitarian flight. -AFP photo

## Sanctions on Serbia to be lifted if Milosevic toppled

**Y'slav polls begin today**

BERLIN, Sept 23 : Sanctions on Serbia will be lifted if the opposition topples Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Sunday's elections, the stability pact coordinator for Southeast Europe told Bild newspaper's Sunday edition, reports AFP.

"It is clear that if the democratic opposition wins the elections, sanctions against Serbia will be lifted," Bobo Hombach wrote in the daily paper.

It should be equally clear that if Milosevic steals the victory from his nation, we must not punish the people," Hombach added.

Yugoslav Prime Minister Momir Bulatovic said that Milosevic would complete his current four-year term regardless of the outcome of Sunday's vote.

No matter what the electoral results are, the Yugoslav president has a mandate until July next year," Bulatovic said in a statement.

Vojislav Kostunica, the main opposition challenger for the presidency, poured scorn on the

result.

"While many of us believe that the overwhelming majority in Serbia want the long night represented by Milosevic's regime to come to an end, I am not sure that is a view entirely held by Mr Milosevic," Patten told journalists.

Western fears of Milosevic shenanigans were backed by legal experts who warned that constitutional reforms adopted here in July did not specify a timetable for an incumbent president to step down.

Western fears were mounting ahead of Sunday's elections in Yugoslavia that President Slobodan Milosevic is planning to have all he could to steal the election, Europe kept up pressure on the embattled Yugoslav president Friday.

The European Union, which has already called on the Yugoslav electorate to vote Milosevic out of office, announced that Belgrade had refused to allow a delegation of EU deputies to observe the elections.

Following comments Thursday by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that Milosevic would do all he could to steal the election, Europe kept up pressure on the embattled Yugoslav president Friday.

The European Union, which has already called on the Yugoslav electorate to vote Milosevic out of office, announced that Belgrade had refused to allow a delegation of EU deputies to observe the elections.

**11 feared dead as ROK boat sinks**: Eleven crew members were missing feared dead Saturday after a South Korean fishing boat capsized off the west coast, police said, AFP reports from Seoul.

At 5.50 am, Joowon, was found overturned in the Yellow Sea off the western island of Soheuskan by a maritime police vessel early Saturday following an all-night search, Yonhap news agency reported. Police said they had knocked on the boat and there was no response. Helicopters and other vessels were still searching for survivors.

**6 to die for kidnapping**: China has sentenced six men to death for kidnapping 240 women and selling them to farmers desperate for wives, in one of the country's biggest cases of human trafficking, AFP reports from Beijing.

The men were sentenced by a court in China's eastern Jiangsu province Friday, along with 12 of their accomplices, who were handed sentences of six years in prison to life imprisonment, the China News Service said. The case is considered the biggest case of kidnapping and selling of women, the news service said.

**1 killed in Maluku Islands**: One person was killed and 27 injured after renewed violence in the Indonesian Maluku Islands on Saturday, a Christian source there said, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Muslim raiders on speedboats attacked the Christian village of Bia on the island of Saparua. They were armed with mortars, rocket launchers and rifles. Sammy Welleruni, a lawyer working with the Maranatha church in Ambon, told AFP by phone from nearby Ambo

**Blast kills 1 in Kanpur**: At least one person was killed in a powerful explosion overnight in the northern Indian city of Kanpur, the Press Trust of India reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

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## Japan, ROK stress on US role for regional stability

ATAMI, Japan, Sept 23 : Japan today provided full support for South Korea's budding detente with Stalinist North Korea as among the three nations' leaders underlined the US role in reducing tension on the Korean peninsula, reports AFP.

A joint news conference held after talks between Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and South Korean leader Kim Dae-Jung, Mori welcomed the bright mood of reconciliation on the peninsula in five decades.

"I will fully support" Kim's policy of engaging North Korea, which is "the basis of these forward-looking moves," Mori said.

"We agreed to persevere in our efforts to coordinate among Japan, South Korea and the United States" on policy towards North Korea, the prime minister

Two sides have remained technically in conflict since the 1950-1953 Korean War, which ended in a truce and no peace treaty.

Japan meanwhile is to hold another round of talks with North Korea in October as they bid to put decades of animosity behind them and establish diplomatic relations.

## Taliban consolidate hold on newly-won territory

ROUTE for soldiers of opposition military commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Masood receives most of his military and food shipments from Tajikistan through the Al Khanum makeshift bridge, the station said.

But a spokesman for Masood, Mohammad Habeel, denied the fall of Al Khanum, saying Taliban supply base and crossing point on the main Oxus River, north of Takhar province, severing a key

route for soldiers of opposition military commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Taliban mouthpiece, Radio Sharat said the religious fighters

Friday captured the Al Khanum

supply base and crossing point

on the main Oxus River, north of

Takhar province, severing a key

## Twin bomb blasts kill 7 in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Sept 23 : Seven civilians were killed and six wounded in two separate bomb explosions in Indian-administered Kashmir today, a police spokesman said, reports AFP.

Both blasts occurred in the village of Sangal丹, around 15 km northeast of the Kashmir winter capital Jammu.

Security reinforcements were rushed to the area which was soon cordoned off as police began a door-to-door search.

## Israeli counter-terrorism experts in Kashmir

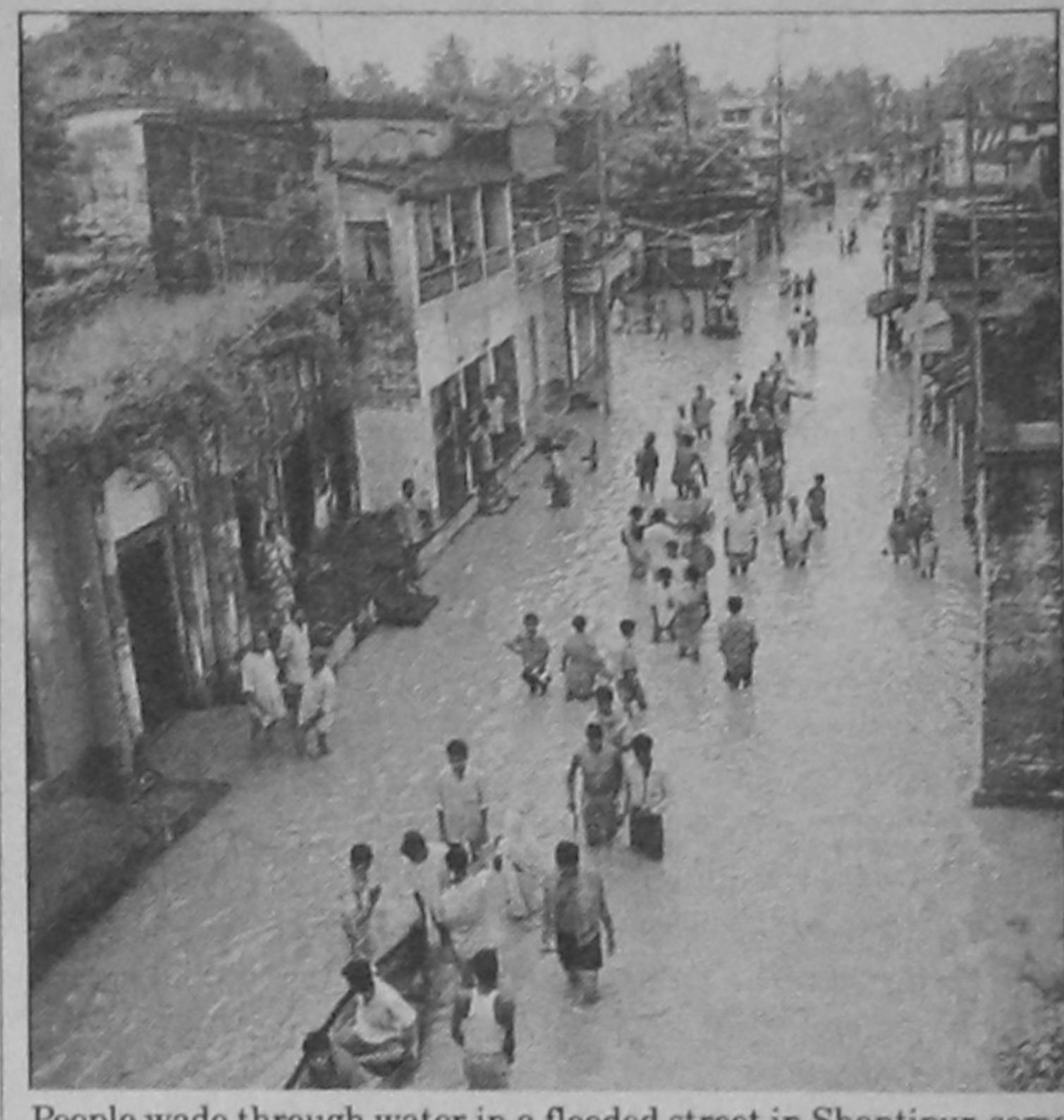
NEW DELHI, Sept 23 : A team of counter-terrorism experts from Israel are touring Kashmir on the invitation of Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani, The Times of India reported today.

The team is headed by a top official from the Israeli prime minister's office, it said, adding that other members of the group include senior Israeli police com-

manders and military intelligence personnel.

There was no immediate confirmation of the report but The Times said the team will prepare a feasibility study of India's security needs in Kashmir.

The newspaper said the Israelis will also visit other areas in India which are plagued by insurrections.



People wade through water in a flooded street in Shantipur, some 110 km north of Calcutta on Friday. More than a hundred people have died and over a million made homeless in West Bengal by sudden floods after 72 hours of continuous downpour. -AFP photo

## WHO prescription for a long life

GENEVA, Sept 23 : Walking is the easiest and most convenient way to ward off cardiovascular diseases, which contribute to one-third of all deaths worldwide, the head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Friday, reports AFP.

In a statement released in preparation for Sunday's World Heart Day, WHO Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland said cardiovascular diseases were killing more people in Europe and North America than any other ailment, a situation which could soon plague other regions of the world.

"By 2010, heart disease is expected to be the number one cause of death in developing countries," she said. "It should not be so. For the most part, it is preventable and controllable."

The Junta also issued a chilling warning that opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi could face an uncertain fate if she kept up her "confrontational" ways.

The moves come one day after Aung San Suu Kyi was escorted from Yangon central station

where she was stopped from boarding a train to the northern city of Mandalay.

His detention came as a tight security cordon was placed around Aung San Suu Kyi's house, preventing the NLD leader from leaving her home and receiving any visitors, witnesses said.

However, junta officials stressed to AFP that no charges were filed against any NLD leaders, but said the leadership needs to remain under detention to allow the situation in Yangon to calm down.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch called Saturday for concerted action against the Myanmar junta, following the detention of the deputy leader of the opposition party and the de facto house arrest placed on Aung San Suu Kyi.

Human Rights Watch today called for immediate international pressure on Burma to lift new government restrictions on the opposition party, the rights group said in a statement received here.

## Suu Kyi may face uncertain fate, warns Myanmar junta

HR Watch calls for action against Yangon

YANGON, Sept 23 : Myanmar's junta today detained the deputy leader of the opposition National League for Democracy party (NLD), Tin Oo, and placed a tight security cordon around the home of Aung San Suu Kyi preventing her from leaving her home and receiving any visitors.

The Junta also issued a chilling warning that opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi could face an uncertain fate if she kept up her "confrontational" ways.

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