

International

EU lifts sanctions against Serbia
Yugoslav PM resigns, new govt to be appointed

LUXEMBOURG, Oct 9: EU foreign ministers today lifted key sanctions against Serbia but retained those which directly target ousted president Slobodan Milosevic, reports AFP.

The EU has decided to lift all sanctions targeting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia since 1998, with the exception of those aimed at Milosevic and people associated with him, the ministers said in a statement.

Being lifted are an embargo on oil shipments to Serbia and a ban on commercial airline flights that has already been relaxed.

Still in place is a travel ban on Milosevic, his family and close associates, as well as a freeze on assets they have in the European Union.

The lifting of sanctions follows the popular revolt in Belgrade last week that forced Milosevic to recognise Vojislav Kostunica as Yugoslavia's newly elected president.

In Belgrade, Yugoslav Prime Minister Momir Bulatovic handed in his resignation today, paving the way for President Vojislav Kostunica to appoint a new federal government, the state news agency Tanjug reported.

Kostunica was expected to present to parliament his choice for prime minister and candidates to other cabinet posts within days.

Bulatovic, a key ally of ousted president Slobodan Milosevic, announced he was quitting following a meeting with Kostunica, who was officially sworn in Saturday following a week of protests that forced Milosevic to hand over power.

Milosevic late Friday admitted defeat in the September 24 presidential elections, ending a 13-year reign marked by wars, economic decline and corruption.

But neither Kostunica's 18-party Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) nor Milosevic's leftist coalition won enough seats to control the two-chamber Yugoslav assembly, suggesting that the new president will have to engage in political horse-trading to form the new cabinet.

Attention focused on Bulatovic's Socialist People's Party (SNP) which has been close to the former president but also was one of the first pro-Milosevic parties to congratulate Kostunica on his victory.

Kostunica has indicated he could offer the prime minister's post to the SNP although Bulatovic himself was not seen as a likely candidate.



A Belgrade woman kisses the hand of top Democratic Opposition of Serbia official Zoran Djindjic, as he arrives at the Serbian parliament yesterday for a crucial meeting to discuss possible early parliamentary elections and the dismissal of the Republic's interior minister.

On Tuesday, he had said his country was ready to "put an end to Zionism" if other Arab rulers did not defend the Palestinians.

And on Saturday, Baghdad urged Arab countries to cut ties with Israel and the United States and called for a "holy war".

Iraq donates 5 m euros to Palestinians

BAGHDAD, Oct 9: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein donated five million euros (\$4.34 million) to support Palestinian clashes with Israel and opened training camps for Iraqis volunteering to fight the Israelis, newspapers said today, reports Reuters.

The President decided to donate five million euros to Palestinian martyrs and to support the (Palestinian) uprising, the ruling Baath Party newspaper al-Thawra said, quoting a meeting of top Iraqi officials chaired by Saddam late on Sunday.

It also said Saddam ordered that military training camps open "for volunteers willing to launch Jihad (holy war) to liberate Palestine."

Saddam instructed the Iraqi Health Ministry to send medical teams and supplies to treat wounded Palestinians and said that Iraq was ready to receive and treat the injured.

At least 84 people have been killed, most of them Palestinians, and many more injured in 11 days of clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel itself.

The Iraqi president had earlier ordered his cabinet to name a school and street in Baghdad after Mohammed Durra, a 12-year-old Palestinian boy shot dead in Gaza by Israeli soldiers in a televised killing that shocked the world.

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'Sword of death' still hangs over Sharif

KARACHI, Oct 9: The sword of death still hangs over ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif as he completes his first year behind bars since being toppled from power in a military coup on October 12, reports AFP.

A high court, which has heard Sharif's appeal against the life sentence dealt to him by an anti-terrorism tribunal in April, is currently hearing a state appeal that has called for the death penalty.

Azizullah Sheikh, the 75-year old counsel for Sharif, said: "The sword or shadow of death will remain hanging over Sharif's head until decided otherwise by the court."

The charges relate to the night of the coup after Sharif sacked then-army chief General Pervez Musharraf while he was flying home from Sri Lanka.

The anti-terrorism court found Sharif guilty of trying to stop Musharraf's plane, which also had another 198 passengers onboard, from landing. The aircraft landed after the army took control of Karachi airport and Musharraf seized power.

"I am trying my best to save Nawaz Sharif," the defence counsel said.

State counsel Raja Gureshi said all the appeals were likely to be decided within the next few weeks.

Sharif, 52, has accused Musharraf of a personal vendetta against him, a charge vehemently denied by the military ruler.

At every press opportunity, Sharif and his supporters have complained about the former politician's treatment in jail.

"The whole year has been a nightmare, starting from October 12, it is still continuing," Sharif's wife Kulsoom Nawaz said in an interview with AFP.

Appearing tense and tough, Kulsoom at her residence in Lahore said: "Musharraf is carrying out a personal vendetta against my husband."

Sharif has been "severely mentally tortured. But the military was unable to prove a single allegation against him," she said.

"Guilty is not my husband, guilty is General Musharraf who has violated the constitution by overthrowing an elected government, she added.

"It has been a traumatic year for me as a wife, mother and grandmother," Kulsoom said, recalling that after her husband's arrest last year, she was not told of his whereabouts for a month.

"As a wife I miss my husband and as a mother it pains to see my son Hussain Nawaz still in prison without a charge after one year. As a grandmother I wish Hussain would have been there when his son went to school for the first time last month."

Sharif's brother Shahbaz, a former chief minister in Punjab province, celebrated his 50th birthday in Landhi prison in Karachi last week.

"It was a quiet experience," he told AFP.

"The country is passing through a difficult time," said Shahbaz, who was acquitted along with five other co-accused in the hijacking case but remains in custody on corruption charges. The state has appealed the acquittals.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee waves to people on his arrival at the domestic airport in Bombay yesterday. The prime minister is in the city for a knee joint replacement surgery to be performed today.

Elite Bombay hospital turned into fortress for PM's surgery

BOMBAY, Oct 9: Bombay's elite Breach Candy Hospital resembled a fortress today, amid frenzied last-minute preparations for the arrival of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee for knee surgery, reports AFP.

Vajpayee, 73, was scheduled to fly in to Bombay later in the evening and drive straight to the hospital where his arthritic left knee will be replaced on Tuesday.

Security at the hospital was turned over to the Special Protection Group (SPG) on Sunday, with local police sharpshooters taking positions on rooftops near the hospital.

Police sniffer dogs and bomb detection units have been going over the hospital the past couple of days.

Vajpayee and his entourage will occupy the entire seventh floor of the building where a special operating theatre and intensive care unit have been set up.

The Prime Minister's Office will also function out of the seventh floor during his week-long hospitalisation.

The operation will be carried out by New York-based orthopaedic surgeon Chittaranjan Ranawat.

The hospital, located in an elite part of south Bombay, overlooks the Arabian Sea and security for Vajpayee will include coast guard and police patrol boats, as well as navy divers taking positions just off the coast.

Entry to the hospital has been restricted from Sunday. Staff have been issued special identity cards and patients will be allowed only one visitor per day.

Top police officials including city police commissioner Mahesh Narayan Singh were at the hospital all day Monday fine-tuning the security details.

"We are taking all necessary security precautions. Nothing is being left to chance during the prime minister's stay here," Singh said.



Armed police escort election officials yesterday as they take ballot boxes to the provinces to conduct today's parliamentary polls. Over 1,700 poll-related violent incidents have been reported in the five-week long run up to the election with at least 58 people killed in violence. Voters will elect the 11th parliament since independence from Britain.

Lanka goes to polls today amid tight security

COLOMBO, Oct 9: Sri Lanka's further tightened security arrangements ahead of Tuesday's parliamentary polls amid fears of more bloodshed as 61 people were confirmed killed during campaigning, election monitors said, reports AFP.

A record 1,726 cases of vote-related violence had been reported to independent monitors during the five-week campaign period with at least 61 people killed in attacks.

Attacks by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas, who are not running for election, had claimed the lives of 41 people, the private Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) said.

"This campaign has proved to be both qualitatively and quantitatively more violent than the 1999 presidential election, where the total number of incidents reported was 1,483," the CMEV said.

CMEV spokesman Arjuna Parakrama said they feared there could be more bloodletting on polling day as there was a clear trend indicating more weapons being used in the run up to the election.

Police said they had taken strict measures to prevent party supporters congregating around the 9,500 polling stations amid reports that armed groups were planning to capture booths and stuff ballot boxes.

"My message to the voter is to go early and cast the vote," opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe told reporters here. "We know where the government is trying to use thuggery, but we are ready to meet any challenge."

President Chandrika Kumaratunga, whose people's Alliance Party (PA) is seeking a second six-year term, appealed for a free and fair election and said she had instructed police to take strong action against offenders.

However, police said that the separatist Tamil Tigers could still make an impact on voting day by escalating attacks against government forces in the island's north east or resorting to suicide bombings elsewhere.

The LTTE has targeted ruling party meetings with two suicide bomb attacks which had claimed the lives of at least 35 people. Another seven died in an earlier suicide bombing in Colombo last month.

Elections in some areas under rebel control would amount to a "farce" as at least 250,000 people would be prevented from reaching the ballot boxes by Tigers guerrillas, the CMEV said.

Elsewhere token ballot boxes had been placed in "utterly inaccessible" areas for ordinary citizens, the centre lambasted.

The election is monitored by several international observer groups, including 74 delegates from the European Union who will help to supervise the balloting.

The EU monitors had expressed concern at the escalating violence and called on the authorities to fully investigate complaints against ruling party supporters in at least one instance of a shooting.

The Marxist JVP, or People's Liberation Front, said they were concerned the government would launch a propaganda war against them after the campaigning period closed on Sunday.

"We have no forum to counter these allegations," JVP spokesman Wimal Weerawansa said. He warned of an uprising if the ruling party resorted to dirty tricks.

"There will be strikes and demonstration as this country has never seen before if the government tries to rig the elections."

Autonomy issue to dominate Kashmir assembly session

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 9: The autumn session of the Kashmir State Assembly opened amid tight security today, with regional autonomy the issue on everyone's mind, reports AFP.

Roads leading to the assembly building in the Kashmir summer capital Srinagar were closed off, with heavy patrolling by paramilitary police and bomb squads with sniffer dogs.

Police launches also patrolled the stretch of the Jehlum River where it passes the state legislature.

In its last session the assembly, dominated by Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's National Conference (NC) party, adopted a resolution that called for complete autonomy for the state, except in the areas of finance, defence and communications.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's cabinet rejected the proposal on July 4, saying it was a first step towards secession from India.

The NC is a minor member of Vajpayee's ruling coalition and Abdullah has come under heavy pressure from within the party to withdraw from the alliance following the cabinet decision.

BRIEFLY

Plane makes emergency landing: A Pakistani passenger plane with 44 people on board made an emergency landing at the Lahore International Airport when its rear wheels failed to open, an airport official said on Monday, AP reports from Lahore.

No one was injured in the incident Sunday, but the Pakistan International Airlines propeller plane damaged a wing when it slammed into the runway upon landing, said Mohammed Tariq, a senior PIA official. The aircraft circled Lahore for 35 minutes while the pilot tried to open the rear wheels, he said.

Rift Valley Fever death toll 64: The death toll from Rift Valley Fever in Saudi Arabia has risen to 64 since it was first reported on September 11 in the south of the kingdom near the border with Yemen, according to the health ministry, AFP reports from Riyadh.

The symptoms of Rift Valley Fever include haemorrhage fever, encephalitis and eye problems, although human deaths are rare, according to experts. It is usually contracted from mosquitoes, but by contact with the blood, bodily fluids or organs of infected animals.

Storm Keith kills 6 in Mexico: At least six people are dead, three missing, 6,000 injured and 35 communities cut off by floods in northern Mexico in the wake of Tropical Storm Keith, Tamaulipas state officials said Sunday, AFP reports from Mexico City.

The storm's heavy rains "have caused five rivers to swell," creating floods and mudslides, the National Water Commission said in a statement. In the town of Xicotencatl, some 850 km northeast of Mexico City, a small home was leveled after a river flooded on Saturday, killing four adults and two children, state officials said.

Wahid sacks army, navy chiefs

JAKARTA, Oct 9: In the latest reshuffle in Indonesia's divided, confused armed forces, President Abdurrahman Wahid today sacked the chiefs of the army and navy and replaced them during an afternoon ceremony, reports DPA.

The reshuffle, which had been anticipated for several days, comes as the Indonesian Defence Forces (TNI) continues an internal power struggle while simultaneously resisting attempts to subjugate it to civilian rule.

Army General Tyasno Sudarto and navy Admiral Achmad Sutjipto were the latest casualties, but it remained unclear why they were sacked. They were replaced by deputy army chief General Endriantono Sutarto and navy Admiral Inbroko Sasrowiryo.

"From an organisational point of view, we need to replace these officers," Air Vice Marshall Graito Usodo, the TNI spokesman, told Deutsche Presse-Agentur DPA.

Asked whether the officers were doing their jobs properly, Usodo said, "No."

Replacements at this level are commonly related to power politics with the presidential palace and TNI, as loyalties and alliances ebb and flow. The announcement of the reshuffle was delayed during the weekend, reportedly because Wahid and the top brass disagreed over the president's candidate for new deputy army chief.

During the ceremony at the palace, Wahid reiterated promises to modernise the TNI's antiquated defence systems, but warned that its days of dominance in Indonesian political affairs were over.

"The government will provide additional equipment to the TNI and improve the soldiers' welfare, but that does not mean a revival of militarism," Wahid said.

The TNI, in particular the army, was the country's most feared and powerful institution during former president Suharto's 32-year regime, playing a central role in politics as well as effectively running far-flung provinces.

However, the pro-democracy movement that led to Suharto's downfall in 1998 stripped away much of the military's luster, and it was soon being publicly castigated for its past human rights abuses.



Polish President wins second term

WARSAW, Oct 9: President Aleksander Kwasniewski easily won a new five-year term in an election that proved his popularity as a champion of average Poles struggling with the painful shift from communism to a market economy, reports AP.

Partial official returns from Sunday's election showed Kwasniewski winning 55 per cent of the vote in the country's third popular presidential election since communist rule ended in 1989.

None of the 11 hopefuls, including legendary Solidarity founder Lech Walesa, mustered even a third as many votes.

With the rest of the measures we already take to preserve species," Even some critics of cloning say the ACT researchers may have stumbled upon a positive use of the technology.

"There are no moral problems with this," said Michael Grodin, a professor in Boston University's School of Public Health who has opposed advances that could lead to the cloning of humans.

Bessie was one of 32 cows implanted with the fused eggs, and the only one to bring an embryo to near-term.

Three others came close, but researchers removed the embryos midway through the pregnancy to make sure the fetuses were developing.

Scientists close to success in cloning extinct animal

BOSTON, Oct 9: Meet Bessie, who could soon be the first cow to give birth to a cloned ox. If she delivers the rare Asian gaur growing inside her, she will herald a stunning new way to save endangered, or even recently extinct, animals, reports AP.

The bovine surrogate mother is carrying the gaur fetus on a farm near Sioux City, Iowa, and is expected to give birth to "Noah" next month.

"He will be the first endangered animal we send up the ramp of the ark," said Robert Lanza, the vice president of medical and scientific development at Advanced Cell Technology, and one of the lead authors of a study published Sunday in the journal

Cloning. "This is no longer science fiction. It's very, very real."

Scientists had previously shown it is possible for one species to give birth to implanted embryos taken from a similar species. But this is the first time they have combined that technique with cloning.

Using a technique developed by ACT in Worcester, scientists removed the DNA from one of Bessie's eggs and fused the egg with a skin cell taken from a living gaur, producing a genetically gaur egg that would be accepted by Bessie's immune system.

Noah doesn't have a father. Before being implanted in Bessie's uterus, the egg was artificially induced to begin divid-

ing without being fertilized.

The technique could not be used on long-extinct species because the DNA donor cells must come from a live animal, one that has been dead for less than five days, or one that has been frozen since its death.

The goal of the research is to use the cross-species cell transfer technology to reprogram human cells for medical purposes, said Michael West, chief executive officer of ACT.

Until then, if Noah's birth is successful, developers say the technique could be used to repopulate rare animal species.

The Spanish government has given ACT approval to clone the bucardo, a newly extinct Spanish mountain goat. The last bucardo died earlier this year and was immediately frozen. Researchers also are considering rare animals such as the African bongo, the ocelot and the giant panda.

"We're not trying to build a big Noah's Ark and save every animal, but we want to point the way for how this can be done," he said.

However, animal preservationists fear the public will prefer the less-costly cloning techniques and pull funding for expensive breeding and habitat protection programmes.

"The danger is that this could be seen as an alternative," said John Rennie, editor of Scientific American magazine. "But cloning is just one more tool to use along

Advertisement for Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL) International Re-Tender Notice. Includes details about a consultant for design and construction supervision of a condensate fractionation plant at Rashidur Gas Field. Lists terms and conditions for the tender.