

Russia for warmer ties with US, China, India

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent warm wishes for the New Year to some of his closest allies Monday, urging even warmer ties in the coming year with US President George W. Bush, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Chinese leader Jiang Zemin.

"Relations between Russia and the United States have gained the status of a real partnership," Putin told his US counterpart.

"We succeeded in doing a lot this year on all the points of the vast Russian-US cooperation program," Putin said in a letter received by the Kremlin press service.

"The year that awaits us will be just as intense and full of responsibilities," he said, adding that he

hoped for a "dynamic and fruitful" relationship with Bush.

Bush and Putin met several times this year, affirming a close personal relationship despite growing differences over US threats of military action against Iraq, a traditional ally of Russia.

In his letter to Vajpayee, Putin said 2002 was "extraordinarily intense and fruitful" for Russo-Indian cooperation, following the two leaders' summit earlier this month.

The two forged closer ties during Putin's visit to Beijing earlier this month, when Russia and China -- both permanent UN Security Council members -- came out against unilateral US military action against Iraq and agreed on a host of other issues.



The trainees for Certificate in Education and Management Programmes pose at the graduation ceremony of the Aga Khan Education Service, Bangladesh, held at the BRAC Centre auditorium in the city yesterday.

India accuses NSCN of violating ceasefire

AFP, Guwahati

Indian security forces Monday accused a frontline tribal separatist group of jeopardising peace talks by violating a ceasefire in the northeastern state of Nagaland.

"In a blatant violation of the ceasefire, the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) had attacked one of our patrol parties killing a soldier," said a statement from the Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Nagaland.

"There were several instances when NSCN cadres were spotted with arms outside their designated camps."

Led by guerrilla leaders Thuingaleng Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu, the NSCN entered into a ceasefire with the federal government in August 1997 to bring an end to more than 55 years of violent insurgency.

Despite the ceasefire, the NSCN continues to hold on to a substantial cache of weapons, and its armed cadres reside in seven designated camps.

The NSCN, fighting for an independent tribal homeland, has held several rounds of peace talks

with the government in various southeast Asian cities.

The latest round of talks between the NSCN leadership and the government's chief interlocutor K Padmanabhaiah was held in Italy in November.

Nagaland chief minister S.C. Jamir also accused the NSCN of violating the truce.

"Despite the ceasefire, the NSCN has looted bus passengers, fired on security forces, besides moving out of their camps with weapons, although they are not supposed to do so under the ceasefire agreement," the chief minister said.

"We have arrested a substantial number of NSCN cadres who were found guilty of committing offences. The ceasefire is not a licence for the NSCN to kill, loot and extort."

New Delhi lifted a ban on the NSCN in November, 12 years after the organisation was declared illegal.

The accusations of ceasefire violations come at a time when the two top NSCN leaders, who have been in exile for the past decade, are expected to arrive in India for crucial talks with federal authorities next month.

War against Iraq S Arabia won't give base facility to US

AFP, Riyadh

A senior Saudi official denied reports of a secret promise by Riyadh to make its airspace and bases available for use by the United States in the event of war against Iraq, in remarks published Monday.

"This report is untrue. The kingdom's position on this issue has been very clear from the start," Deputy Defence Minister Prince Abdulrahman bin Abdul Aziz told Okaz daily.

The New York Times on Sunday quoted senior US military officials as saying Riyadh would make its airspace, air bases and an important operations centre available to the United States in a possible war with Iraq.

Saudi Arabia was the main staging area for American forces in the 1991 Gulf war, but conflicting public statements by top Saudi officials over the past several months have cast doubt on Saudi Arabia's assistance against Iraq, American commanders told, the Times they have been given private assurances in recent weeks

that they will be allowed to run an air war against Iraq from a sophisticated command centre at Prince Sultan Air Base outside Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital -- the same command post that ran the air campaign in Afghanistan.

They said refuelling, reconnaissance, surveillance and cargo planes would be allowed to fly from Saudi bases, using Saudi airspace on the way to missions in or near Iraq.

They also expressed confidence that the Saudis would ultimately allow attack missions, which are more politically sensitive, to be flown from their soil.

Prince Abdulrahman reiterated Saudi commitment to supporting the "UN decision regarding the imposition of the no-fly zone over southern Iraq."

"This is well-known to all... The kingdom is committed to the UN resolutions like all other countries. (but) We are not concerned with any thing else," he said in reference to the Times report.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal last Tuesday re-

newed the kingdom's rejection of a threatened US war against neighbouring Iraq, saying Riyadh would not take part in any military action.

"If the UN Security Council sanctions war against Iraq, this requires cooperation by all countries... But this does not mean all countries must take part in military action. Obviously, we will not take part in military actions," Prince Saud said.

"There has been no change in the duties of foreign troops in the kingdom since the end of the 1991 Gulf war."

Saudi Arabia houses some 5,000 US troops as well as British and French jets at Prince Sultan Air Base in al-Kharj, 80 km south of Riyadh.

The Times said Saudi officials over the past two months have quietly permitted US warplanes based in the kingdom to bomb targets in southern Iraq in response to Iraqi violations of the no-fly zone there. Previously, those missions were flown out of Kuwait, according to the daily.

NWFP to ban New Year celebrations

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistan's conservative North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has banned "unethical" New Year celebrations and vowed to crack down on un-Islamic behaviour during the holiday, local media reported Monday.

"The government is determined to ensure that no unacceptable activity takes place on the eve of the New Year," a senior official was quoted as saying.

"Any violation would be dealt with severely," the unidentified official told the Statesman newspaper, adding that cocktail and dance parties as well as music shows popular on previous holidays would be forbidden.

Areas of the provincial capital Peshawar where the holiday has been observed with vigour in recent years would be under particular scrutiny, it said.

NWFP saw a dramatic takeover in October elections by the far-right Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of Islamic parties that includes supporters of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban.

The MMA campaigned on promises to enforce Islamic Sharia law and in support of the withdrawal of US forces based in Pakistan in the campaign against international terrorism.

Since coming to power, the province's leader Akram Khan Durrani has launched an anti-obscenity drive which includes a campaign against gambling, pornographic and unlicensed movie theatres, and reinforcement of an existing ban on alcohol.

Serb president steps down to pave way for war crimes trial

AFP, Belgrade

Serbia's President Milan Milutinovic, the last close ally of former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic still in power, officially ended his term of office at midnight Sunday, thereby losing his immunity and paving the way for a trial at the UN war crimes court in The Hague.

Ljiljana Benac-Santic, a top official with the electoral commission, said on Saturday the law required Milutinovic to step down five years to the day after he took the oath of office before the Serbian parliament on December 29, 1997.

Officials had earlier said Milutinovic's mandate would end on January 5, 2003.

Yugoslav authorities have so far refused to hand over Milutinovic to the UN war crimes court, where Milosevic is currently on trial, arguing that he enjoys immunity from prosecution as long as he remains head of state.

But top Belgrade officials have repeatedly hinted that once out of office, Milutinovic will be arrested and extradited if he does not surrender to the court voluntarily.

By late Sunday there had still been no official confirmation that Milutinovic had left office and Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who gave a news conference on a telecoms deal with Italy, declined to comment on the issue.

China launches 4th unmanned spacecraft

AFP, Jiuquan

China early Monday successfully launched its fourth unmanned spacecraft, the "Shenzhou IV", from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest Gansu province, state media reported.

The official Xinhua news agency said the spacecraft was sent into a preset orbit by a Long March F' carrier rocket, which blasted off at 00:40 am (1640 GMT Sunday).

Before the launch, would-be Chinese astronauts used the craft for training, sources in charge of the space program told Xinhua.

The launch of the "Shenzhou IV", or "Divine Vessel IV" is considered the latest dress rehearsal for China's eventual launch of a manned spacecraft.

While it remains decades behind the United States and Russia in space technology, the Chinese Communist Party appears to view putting an astronaut amongst the stars as an important prestige project. The launch came during a visit to China by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

In May, official Chinese media said a longer-term aim of China's fiercely ambitious space program was to establish a base on the moon in order to exploit its mineral resources.

Compared with the previous three unmanned space capsules launched between 1999 and March this year, Shenzhou IV "represents China's most sophisticated and fullest preparations to finalizing its goal of manned space flights," official media quoted Chinese Aerospace Science and Technology Corp. president Zhang Qingwei as saying last month.

SALE NOTICE

BANGLADESH SHILPA RIN SANGSTHA
HEAD OFFICE
BSRS BHABAN
12, KAWRAN BAZAR C/A
DHAKA
LAW DEPARTMENT

NOTICE FOR SALE OF MORTGAGED ASSETS AND PROPERTIES OF M/S NAAZ COLD STORAGE LTD., KASHINATHPUR, PABNA

The mortgaged assets and properties of M/s Naaz Cold Storage Limited, Kashinathpur, Pabna, will be sold in terms of Article 34 of Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha Order, 1972 read with the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (Direct Sale of Mortgaged Property) Rules, 1981 on "as it is where it is" basis and on the basis of "Cash Payment" to realise the BSRS's outstanding loans and dues of Tk 181.619 million (Principal 12.987 million & interest and others 158.632 million) as on 01-01-2002 together with further interest and charges till realisation from the above named company and its directors listed at para-4 hereinafter.

02. The lenders may submit their tender for the purchase of the entire properties mortgaged with BSRS's as a whole or for land, building and machinery separately.

03. Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha will not assume any legal obligation whatsoever on behalf of the company and/or its directors in respect of any dues/claims of government and/or autonomous bodies such as WASA, local municipality, electric and gas supply authorities, land revenue and other creditors for which the company is liable.

04. The following persons are the directors of the company:

- (1) Mr Md Nurul Islam
S/o Alhaj Jonab Ali;
- (2) Mrs Shaheda Islam
W/o Mr Md Nurul Islam;
- (3) Mrs Shahnur Islam
D/o Mr Md Nurul Islam;
- (4) Mr Md Moirul Islam
S/o Mr Md Nurul Islam;
- (5) Mr Md Tariqul Islam
S/o Mr Md Nurul Islam;
- (6) Mrs Shahida Kabir
W/o Mr Shamsul Kabir; and
- (7) Mr Md Shamsul Kabir
S/o Mr Abdul Haye

05. Description of Properties:
About 1.60 acre of land situated at Plot No. SA 38 and 39, Mouza-Shibpur, PS and Sub-Registration Office-Bera, Kashinathpur, Pabna together with an industrial unit capable of storing 2500 tons potatoes and having 9600 sqft. Cold Storage Chamber, 2400 sqft. precooling room, 1875 sqft. machine room, 300 sqft. generator room, 400 sqft. office room, 2000 sqft. sorting shed, 1440 sqft. water tank for condenser, 800 sqft. guest room, 2000 sqft. varendah, 400 sqft. store etc.

06. The details of the mortgaged assets and properties and tender schedule containing the terms and conditions of sale may be obtained on payment of Tk 250.00 (non-refundable) from the Assistant General Manager, Law Department, BSRS, Head Office, Dhaka. The intending tenderers/buyers who are interested to inspect the project assets may contact the Assistant General Manager, Law Department, Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha, Head Office, Dhaka.

07. The intending tenderers/buyers may submit their tenders/offers in sealed cover in the tender box kept at the BSRS's Head Office, Dhaka by 2.00 PM on the 26/01/2003 accompanied with earnest money @ 5% of the tendered amount (refundable in case the offer is not accepted by the BSRS) in the form of scheduled Bank's Draft/Pay Order drawn in favour of the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha and payable at Dhaka.

08. The tender will be opened on the 26/01/2003 at 2.30 PM at the BSRS above mentioned Head Office, Dhaka in presence of the tenderers, if any.

09. The successful tenderers shall have to deposit 50% of the tendered amount within 7 (seven) days and the balance within 30 days from the date of acceptance of the tender. In case of failure in making the payment of the tendered amount as aforesaid within the stipulated time the earnest money, 50% of the tendered amount (including earnest money) or any amount of the tender money deposited shall be forfeited and the mortgaged assets and properties will be eligible for resale.

10. The BSRS reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders/offers without assigning any reason whatsoever. The BSRS also reserves the right to negotiate with any bidder to increase tendered amount.

Assistant General Manager
Law Department
Phone: 9110781

Militant threat forces women to don burqas in Kashmir

AFP, Rajouri

Women in this violence-torn southern district of Indian Kashmir are stocking up on burqas after shadowy threats in the name of an Islamist group demanding they cover up.

The scare in Rajouri district, about 170 km west of the winter capital Jammu, has intensified after three teenage girls were killed December 19, two of them beheaded.

Police said the girls were targeted because their fathers were Indian paramilitaries, but residents believed the slayings were retaliation for their liberal dress.

Posters began appearing last week in Rajouri, signed in the name of the pro-Pakistani rebel group al-Badr warning of serious consequences if women do not don all-covering burqas and men

do not sport beards.

Mohammad Sadiq, a clothing merchant in Rajouri, said he has sold 5,000 burqas since the posters went up.

"And we've received orders for 15,000 of them," he said.

Tailors, eager to make a profit, have jacked up the fees for stitching a burqa from 100 to 200 rupees (from two to four dollars).

Mohammad Aslam, a government employee, said he was bringing in burqas from New Delhi at 150 rupees a piece.

India's junior minister of defence, Chaman Lal Gupta, visited the area at the weekend and accused rebels fighting to end New Delhi's rule over Kashmir of turning to Taliban-like measures.

"Militants have started enforcing the dress code as part of their plan to carry out a Talibanisation of Muslim-dominated areas

of troubled Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

While Kashmir historically has practised a liberal brand of Islam, many rebels hold a hardline ideology developed during the jihad, or "holy war," against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

A senior police official here said the threats also helped the rebels to "register their presence."

The major rebel groups in Kashmir rarely issue such dictates on personal behaviour, although a year after the 1989 launch of the insurgency, the "Allah Tigers" ordered the closing down of cinemas, liquor shops and beauty parlours.

Today there are only two movie theatres and two licensed liquor shops in the summer capital Srinagar, the focal point of the insurgency. All of them operate under tight security.

Israeli army destroys houses in Hebron

AFP, Hebron

The Israeli army early Monday destroyed the houses of two Palestinian gunmen who killed four students in a nearby settlement close to the southern West Bank city of Hebron, witnesses said.

Soldiers used bulldozers and dynamite to raze the homes in Durra of Mohammed Shahin and Ahmed Ayed al-Fakh, both 20, who were themselves shot dead by soldiers during their attack on the Otmiel settlement on Friday night.

The attack was claimed by the Islamic Jihad militant group.

Witnesses in the town just southwest of the flashpoint city of Hebron said Durra was put under army curfew and that troops arrested five members of the two men's families in dawn raids.

Three other Palestinians were arrested the day before in the town, where soldiers on Friday night destroyed two other houses belonging to an Islamic Jihad militant, although it did not specify if the move was retaliation for the bloody attack.

The families of the gunmen said Sunday their slain relatives were engineering students at a local college.



ASM Rob inaugurates the council of JSD-backed Chhatra League at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

DHAKA TODAY

Award giving ceremony

An award giving ceremony and cultural function will be held on the occasion of National Children's Day. Venue: Shishu Academy. Time: 11.00am.

Dialogue

The Samaj Rupantar Adhyayan Kendra organises a dialogue on "Closure of Adamjee Jute Mills and the future of industrialisation in Bangladesh". Venue: Planning and Development Academy auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

Cultural function

A discussion and cultural function organised by the IDEB Sangkritik Goshthi will be held on the occasion of Victory Day and New Year's Day. Venue: IDEB seminar room, Kakrail. Time: 4.00pm.

Seminar on PRSP

The concluding ceremony of a seminar titled "Environment and Poverty Issue in Bangladesh PRSP" will be held with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. The Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Environment, Economics and Poverty Programme organised the seminar. Venue: BRAC Inn Centre, Mohakhali.

Seminar

The Jatya Sangbadik Sangstha will hold a seminar on "The role of journalists and newspapers in establishing a violence-free society". Venue: National Sports Council auditorium. Time: 3.00pm.

Award giving ceremony

An award giving ceremony and discussion will be held on the occasion of 7th death anniversary of journalist Monajatuddin. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3.30pm.

Workshop

A workshop on "Higher Education in USA and Accreditation Board for Engineering & Technology", organised by the Directorate of Continuing Education, BUET, and Intel Bangladesh Association, USA, will be held. Venue: Council Bhaban, BUET. Time: 9.30am.

AGM

The annual general meeting of the Bangladesh Homeopathic Medicine Manufacturers' Association will be held. Venue: Association office, Naya Paltan. Time: 3.00pm.

Discussion

The Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organises a discussion to mark the 17th founding anniversary of Rokeya Sadan, a rehabilitation centre for women and children run by the Parishad. Venue: Mahila Parishad office, Segun Bagicha. Time: 10.00am.

Lions joint meeting

A joint meeting of the regional and zonal clubs under the Lions Club International District 315-B1 will be held. Members are requested to attend the meeting. Venue: Lions Heart Chinese Restaurant. Time: 6.30pm.

Rotary Ramna

Regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Ramna will be held. Members are requested to attend the meeting. Venue: "Candle Light", Road # 27, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.30pm.

Bhawayiya Academy

The Bhawayiya Academy will hold a meeting of its executive committee to discuss Eid reunion and Bhawayiya festival. Members are requested to attend the meeting. Venue: Conference room of the RAIL Bhaban, Abdul Gani Road. Time: 3.30pm.



Fall in night temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain dry over the country today.

Met office said, moderate to thick fog may occur over northwestern part and river basins and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country during midnight till morning.

Mild to moderate cold wave may continue over Rajshahi division and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Tangail, Mymensingh, Srimongal and Comilla.

Night temperature may fall slightly over the country. Country's highest temperature 26.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and lowest 08.8 degree at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:22pm today and rises at 6:42am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were

| City/Town | Temperature in Celsius | | Humidity in percentage | |
|-------------|------------------------|------|------------------------|---------|
| | Max | Min | Morning | Evening |
| Dhaka | 22.2 | 11.7 | 87 | 76 |
| Chittagong | 26.2 | 12.7 | 76 | 46 |
| Rajshahi | 20.0 | 10.0 | 100 | 89 |
| Khulna | 24.2 | 12.1 | 88 | 64 |
| Barisal | 23.8 | 10.7 | 93 | 75 |
| Sylhet | 24.2 | 11.6 | 94 | 73 |
| Cox's Bazar | 25.2 | 13.6 | 71 | 67 |



Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Chairman Maj. Gen. (Retd) Z A Khan speaks at the annual general meeting of the BDRCS in the city yesterday.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines

ZIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KURMITOLA, DHAKA, PHONES: 8914771-9, 9812700-9 CABLE: AIRBANGLA TLX: 642649 DABG BJ

BIMAN BANGLADESH AIRLINES STORES AND PURCHASE DIRECTORATE

REF: DACPF/INT'L TENDER/03/CORRIGENDUM/2002-03 DT: 28-12-02

SUBJECT: CORRIGENDUM OF TENDER NO. DACPF/INT'L TENDER/03/2002-03

This refer to our Int'l Tender Notice No DACPF/Int'l Tender/03/2002-03 Dated 05-09-2002 published in the daily newspaper for the procurement of Aircraft Air Conditioning Van Qty : 01 & Aircraft Push Back Tow Tractor Qty: 01. All participants are requested to note following amendments:

"Tender will be closed on 18-02-03 at 1100 hrs (LT) and tender will be opened on 18-02-2003 at 1400 hrs (LT). Tender schedule will be sold up to 17-02-2003."

All other terms and conditions of the advertisement will remain unchanged.

Dy General Manager (Purchase)
Stores & Purchase Directorate
GD-1130