

World and Nation

Former hostage discusses ordeal

From Associated Press reports

DAMASCUS, Syria — Indian professor Mithileshwan Singh said Tuesday his kidnapers treated him well during 20 months as a hostage in Lebanon, but "there is no substitute for freedom" and he grieves for those still held.

His release Monday leaves nine Americans and seven other foreigners still in the hands of extremist Moslem kidnapers in Lebanon. Held longest is Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent of The Associated Press, who was abducted March 16, 1985.

Singh, a 60-year-old resident alien of the United States, was reunited with his wife, Lalmani, at the U.S. Embassy on Tuesday afternoon. He was freed Monday night in Beirut and

driven to Damascus by Syrian army officers, then turned over to U.S. Ambassador Edward Djerjian.

A special U.S. Air Force plane arrived to take him to an American military hospital in Wiesbaden, West Germany, for a medical checkup.

"Our plans, depending on logistical arrangements, are to transport him to Wiesbaden for further medical checks and then on to the U.S.," Djerjian said.

He said Singh had asked to be allowed to rest, and "given the circumstances, he is feeling relatively well." A Syrian doctor pronounced him fit to travel.

In New Delhi, the Foreign Ministry said India had worked for Singh's release through contacts "with the

Syrian government" and others.

The captive was released to the U.S. ambassador "because of the confusion that still existed" in the Middle East about his nationality, a spokesman said.

India had maintained Singh was kidnapped because his abductors thought he was an American.

Armed men dressed as policemen took Singh hostage Jan. 24, 1987, on the Beirut University College campus in Moslem west Beirut, along with Americans Alann Steen, Robert Polhill and Jesse Turner.

A group calling itself Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility, and said it freed Singh as a goodwill gesture to the United States. Nearly all the foreign hostages in Lebanon are

believed held by Shiite Moslem groups loyal to Iran.

A U.S. official in Damascus said the Americans decided to accept custody because Singh had applied for citizenship before his abduction.

Singh said Tuesday he felt "wonderful" and added: "Thank God I'm free, but I'm very sorry that my colleagues and friends are still in captivity. I hope they'll be free soon."

He was clean-shaven, dressed in a gray suit, and appeared before dozens of reporters at the Syrian Foreign Ministry after a brief chat with Djerjian. He was brought in through a back door at about 11 a.m.

Steen, Polhill and Turner were the only hostages he saw while in captivity, Singh said.

House backs Reagan's veto of more textile import curbs

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — The House on Tuesday narrowly sustained President Reagan's veto of tightened textile and apparel import curbs, bowing to claims that the legislation would mean price increases amounting to a fresh tax on consumers.

The total in favor was 11 votes short of the support that textile industry supporters had needed from two-thirds of the lawmakers present and voting.

Textile and apparel workers bused in from various points along the East Coast watched grim-faced from the galleries as the House, with at most two weeks before congressional adjournment, appeared to end the battle for textile import legislation for the rest of the year.

House bans sewage dumping

WASHINGTON — The House on Tuesday passed a much-debated bill that bans the dumping of sewage sludge in the ocean after 1992.

The measure, adopted by a 416-0 vote, sets a Dec. 31, 1992 deadline on sludge dumping by the nation's only remaining practitioners: nine sewage authorities in New York and New Jersey.

The compromise bill, climaxing a 10-year legislative effort, must now be reconciled with a differing version passed by the Senate in August.

18 killed in Burma

RANGOON, Burma — Security forces killed 18 people caught looting or stealing Tuesday,

News in Brief

government radio said, and an opposition leader appealed to Amnesty International to help bring democracy to Burma.

State-run Radio Rangoon said soldiers opened fire on a group of people looting a food warehouse in Rangoon and killed 10. Soldiers killed two more people caught stealing iron roofing in another part of the capital, the report said.

Soviet rail cars crash

MOSCOW — Runaway rail cars filled with explosives crashed into a coal train in central Russia on Tuesday, causing an explosion that killed four people, injured 280 and left hundreds homeless, Soviet media said.

The government newspaper Izvestia said the blast at 4:30 a.m. in a switching yard at Sverdlovsk sent a column of flames shooting into the sky over the city. Sverdlovsk is 850 miles east of Moscow.

Defendant gets new trial

RICHMOND, Va. — An N.C. man who was convicted of murder and sentenced to death for the July 1979 slaying of a 4-year-old girl in Sanford won a new trial Tuesday.

A three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said Robert Henry McDowell was denied due process by the prosecution's failure to reveal evidence that could have raised questions in jurors' minds about the charges against the defendant.

Shuttle in good post-flight shape, NASA says

From Associated Press reports

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — After nearly 65 Earth orbits, Discovery's post-flight condition was as good or better than any space shuttle, although debris gouged six heat-shield tiles, apparently during liftoff, a NASA official said Tuesday.

There was no damage to the orbiter's brakes, landing gear or tires, John "Tip" Talone said.

Discovery sat inside the 100-foot-tall "mate-demate device," a framework where it gets serviced for a piggy-back jet ride home Saturday to Florida.

"The crews are working, and they will work 'round the clock until the orbiter leaves," said Ted Ayers, deputy site manager for the National

Aeronautics and Space Administration's Dryden Flight Research Facility here.

Discovery landed Monday on the hard clay bed of Rogers Dry Lake at this Mojave Desert air base, capping a nearly flawless flight that was America's first manned space mission since the Challenger tragedy in 1986.

"The vehicle looks beautiful," Talone, the shuttle processing director, said during a news conference. "It looks probably as good or better than any vehicle we've brought in here."

Six tiles near the right wing must be replaced because of a 12-inch-long, 6-inch-wide, 1/2-inch-deep gouge

apparently caused by debris during the shuttle's launch last Thursday, Talone said. He added that the tiles weren't missing, as Ayers said earlier.

Talone said officials weren't yet sure if the debris was ice that formed on the outside of the shuttle's external tank, which contains supercold liquid fuel.

"There's a minor number of traditional dings" on some other tiles, caused by the impact of tiny particles during liftoff and landing, he added.

After preliminary inspection found no damage, the shuttle's brakes were shipped to B.F. Goodrich in Ohio for a closer look, he said. The brakes were improved because of brake and tire damage during previous missions.

Officials explain secrecy of reactor incidents

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Serious mishaps over 20 years at a government plant in South Carolina that produces materials for nuclear weapons were kept secret for national security reasons, federal officials said Tuesday.

But the situation is changing, in part due to pressure from Congress, they said.

One senior Energy Department official has compared the attitude toward safety at the Savannah River facility near Aiken, S.C., to that which led to the explosion of the shuttle Challenger on Jan. 28, 1986.

"There has always been a mindset, a culture, that we are doing work that is important for national security and perhaps that may override any obligation toward public accountability," Will Callicott, a spokesman for the Department of Energy, said Tuesday.

Since taking office in 1985, Energy Secretary John Herrington "has given heightened attention to the area of environmental safety and health," for the first time placing these issues in the hands of an assistant secretary, Callicott said.

E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. runs the Savannah River facility

under contract for the Energy Department. The plant, which has five reactors, produces plutonium and tritium, which are used in making nuclear weapons.

According to a 1985 memorandum, 30 "reactor incidents of the greatest significance" occurred there and were not disclosed to the public.

One of the most serious was the melting in November 1970 of a rod used to start an atomic chain reaction, causing radioactive contamination of an adjacent room.

Energy Department officials said Friday they had not been informed of the incidents, but on Monday

senior department spokesman C. Anson Franklin said those statements were incorrect and that the incidents had been reported to the department's regional office in Aiken.

He said the information apparently had not been relayed to headquarters from the regional office.

The reactors at Savannah River were closed after the most recent incident in August, and had been scheduled to reopen on Tuesday. But Energy Department officials assured members of Congress last week that production would not resume until safety was assured, possibly after 30 to 45 days.

Police

from page 1

system, he will work with others to make necessary changes to do "what is right."

Bowler, who is white, said he felt the same way about the meeting.

"He (Hardin) comes across as a very, very fair man," Bowler said. "He didn't push us out the door when our time was up. I feel that he is going to help us."

Bowler said he and Edwards told Hardin that morale within the department has gotten worse since the grievance process began last year and that administrators have not attempted to alleviate the problem.

Edwards said they discussed the possibility of starting an employee mediation system, which would allow University employees to hear other employees' grievances and to work out a solution with the supervisor involved. This would give employees an alternative to the Employee Relations Committee, she said.

"I want to tell every employee and student, black or white, that the dream is still alive at the University of North Carolina through Paul Hardin," she said. "This man gives me hope."

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