

USSR's 5 central Asian republics sign accord

TASHKENT (Soviet Union), Aug 15: The Soviet Union's five Central Asian Republics signed a cooperation agreement on Wednesday to marry their struggling economies and reduce their dependence on Moscow, reports Reuter.

The pact, bringing together more than 50 million people on land stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Chinese border, attempts to set up direct trading links between the republics to replace the old central supply channels, controlled by Moscow.

Those channels have broken down as the vast country moves to introduce a market economy.

Rebels kill 41 In Mozambique

MAPUTO, Aug 15: The Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) rebels killed 41 people in their attack on the southern Mozambican town of Chibuto on Friday, Radio Mozambique reported yesterday (Wednesday), says Xinhua.

Another 77 were injured and an unknown number of people were abducted, said the radio.

The radio also said that the rebels looted 77 houses and shops during the raid on the town, about 180 kilometres north of Mozambique's capital Maputo, where the Gaza provincial command of the Mozambique Armed Forces is seated.

Sharif threatens to destroy PPP

LAHORE, Aug 15: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif threatened on Wednesday to destroy the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, reports Reuter.

The premier's attack, made on the 44th anniversary of Pakistan's independence, was one of the harshest against his main political foe since taking office last November.

"My blood boils when somebody utters the People's Party's name," Sharif told tens of thousands of people brought in to the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore by special trains and buses. "I wish to strike and break it into pieces."

He earlier laid the foundation stone of a monument to mark the migration of millions of Muslims to Pakistan from India when British India was partitioned at independence in 1947.

Across the city, Bhutto was due to address a rival public rally in a show of popular strength. "She had challenged us in 1990 and was defeated," Sharif said in a reference to last October's elections which his Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) won by a landslide.

"I tell her don't throw the challenge, you will lose," he said. "You had lost yesterday and you will lose today as well."

The PPP blamed its defeat on what it called massive vote rigging after president Ghulam Ishaq Khan sacked Bhutto's government a year ago on disputed charges of abuse of power.

Sharif's attack on the PPP came only two days after the party and its opposition allies

demand fresh elections under a neutral caretaker government.

The 22 opposition groups threatened that opposition deputies in the national assembly would resign unless the demand was met.

Sharif reacted to the threat by saying: "We have many people waiting, please don't delay the resignation."

AFP adds: Nawaz Sharif and his main rival, Benazir Bhutto, held separate rallies in Lahore Wednesday in what was seen as

a show of strength on 45th independence day.

Buses, trucks and other vehicles continued to transport party supporters to Pakistan's second-biggest city, which is also known as its unofficial political and intellectual capital.

Roads were blocked at several intersections as vehicles bedecked with the tricoloured flags of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) continued to bring crowds for her much-publicised public

meeting at the historic Mochi Gate.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML), meanwhile, arranged a rally at Walton Park, ostensibly to lay the foundation stone.

But political observers said the occasion became a direct competition to pull in crowds after Bhutto, intensifying pressure on Sharif to quit, vowed earlier this month to address a huge rally in Lahore.

The former premier's challenge came after she led the

opposition leaders to a 12-hour hunger strike in Islamabad to protest what she called "black laws" — the new legislation Sharif has enacted to curb a surge in crimes.

On the eve of her public meeting, she attended an All Parties Conference (APC), here, which was attended by more than 20 political groups of varying shades, including her four-party People's Democratic Alliance.

The APC highlighted "failures" of the government in controlling inflation and unemployment, and a compromise on the nation's controversial nuclear programme under alleged US pressure.

It threatened en masse resignations of opposition deputies if the governments at the centre and the four provinces were not replaced by leaders representing a national consensus.

Bhutto gave no date while Sharif, in a countermove, succeeded in bringing the left-leaning Awami National Party (ANP) into his folds. The pro-Moscow party accepted Sharif's long-standing offer of two ministerial posts in the federal cabinet.

Sharif, who dismissed the APC as a drama, criticised the conduct of some opposition leaders who were "making efforts to damage democracy and destroy democratic institutions in the country."

Stressing that the nation stood behind him in dealing harshly with criminals he said the opposition's efforts against his government were bound to fizzle out.

A handful of subversive elements could not be allowed to play with the destiny of the nation, he said adding that his policies would usher in an era of peace and prosperity in Pakistan.

Bhutto's meeting was to last late into the night.

Observers said that because gatherings at public meetings are considered barometres of a party's popularity in Pakistan, both sides made major organisational efforts to attract large crowds.

Newspaper office raided in Madras: 2 killed

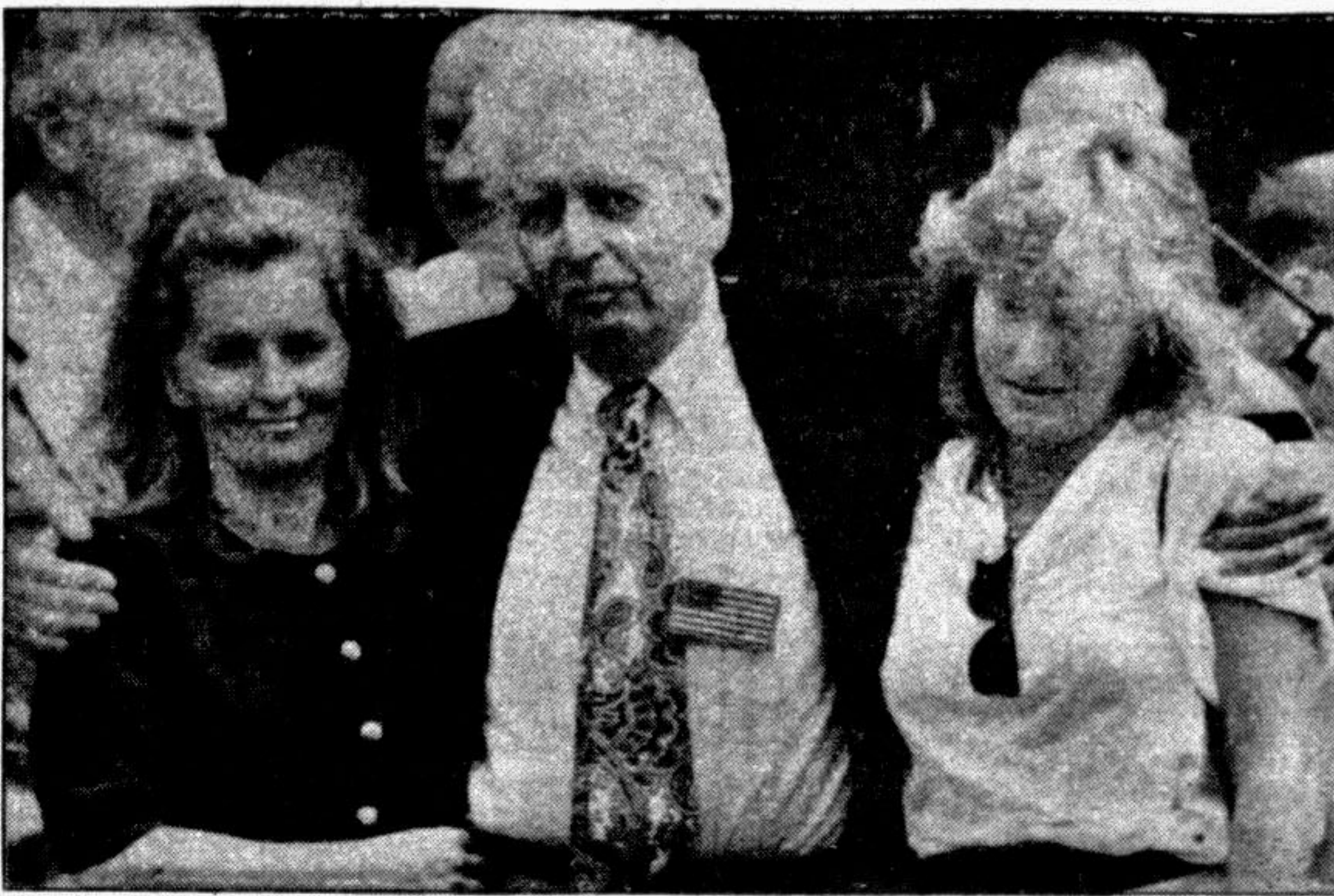
NEW DELHI, Aug 15: A group of 20 people raided a local news weekly office and stabbed to death two employees in Madras today (Wednesday), the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

An unspecified number of staff with the Tamil language weekly, *Tharasu*, were seriously injured, PTI said.

Shyam (eds: one name), Editor of the weekly, alleged the attack was the work of activists from the Sri Lankan Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

He said the LTTE activists had raided the office with the backing of supporters from the local Tamil population due to differences with the weekly's editorial stance.

However, there was no official confirmation of the editor's claims.



BOSTON: US former hostage Edward Tracy embraces his daughters Monica (L) and Margrot August 14 on his arrival at Boston's Veterans Hospital. Tracy was held hostage in Lebanon for five years and is in Boston for medical treatment. — AFP/UNB photo

India denies reports of parades, flag hoisting by Kashmiri militants

SRINAGAR, Aug 15: Five persons including two militants were killed while some senior state government functionaries narrowly escaped an attempt on their lives Wednesday, reports PTI.

Thirty one suspects including two Pakistan trained militants, were arrested and curfew was imposed in Baramulla, Anantnag and parts of Srinagar.

Denying reports of parades and flag hoisting by militants in connection with the independence day of Pakistan, government spokesman told reporters that some militants hurriedly collected at two places in the city on Tuesday and managed to get themselves photographed to show that they had held parades on Pakistan independence day as announced by them.

No such parades took place in Srinagar or elsewhere in the valley on Wednesday and suitable precautionary measures were taken to deal with the situation.

Meanwhile Izrahil group, a new militant outfit claimed responsibility for the abduction of Mr S L Khosla, branch manager of New India Assurance Company. Mr Khosla, 38, was picked up from his Mideny Road office on Tuesday by four armed youth who broke into his office.

AP from New Delhi adds: Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao Thursday called on separatist rebels in the states of Punjab and Kashmir to eschew violence and pledged to work with them to resolve their grievances.

The Prime Minister's speech to the nation on the

Mujahideen kill 20

ISLAMABAD, Aug 15: Afghan Mujahideen launched a rocket attack on Kabul the day after missile struck a crowded bus killing at least 20 people, Afghanistan's official Bakhtar news agency said today, reports Reuter.

Four rockets were fired from hills around the Afghan capital yesterday, wounding four people in residential areas.

On Tuesday one rocket hit a bus, sending shrapnel and shards of glass scything through the vehicle and nearby shops. About 34 people were injured.

Bakhtar, accused the Pakistan Army of supplying the rockets to the Mujahideen, who are trying to topple the Soviet-backed government in Kabul.

44th anniversary of independence made no promises of amnesty to the rebels. But his remarks were a departure from the usual hard line followed by the government.

They also split out for the first time the course the 55-day-old government will follow in tackling the insurrections launched by religious minorities.

"I want to make it clear, nothing will be gained by terrorism," Rao said after unfurling the national flag on the entrance to the 16-century Red Fort in the heart of the capital.

The rebels "can never realize their objectives in this way," he said. "Let them come forward, we can all find a solution. There is no problem to which a solution cannot be found."

In both states, militants called for a boycott of celebrations marking the anniversary of independence.

In Punjab, a rich farming state, at least 3,750 people have been killed this year in a relentless war by Sikh rebels to form an independent homeland.

Muslim separatists in the picturesque Kashmir valley have been fighting for independence since the beginning of 1990.

Bakhtiar persuaded Shah to leave Iran

PARIS Aug 15: Shapur Bakhtiar, stabbed to death with an axe at his home outside Paris on Thursday lived in fear for his life since fleeing Iran 12 years ago after serving just five weeks as Prime Minister, reports Reuter.

Bakhtiar (76) became a focus for opposition to Iran's Islamic republic and the rule of the Ayatollahs during his exile in France and was sentenced to death in absentia by the Tehran authorities.

He survived an assassination attempt in 1980 when four Arabs attacked his flat shooting dead a police man and a neighbour. He lived under permanent guard, mounted by four French policemen and his own security men.

Bakhtiar said he was puzzled when President Francois Mitterrand, seeking improved relations with Iran, last July freed Anis Naceache, the Lebanese guerilla who led the raid.

A moderate pragmatist who always believed in a need for compromise, Bakhtiar was the focus of a group of anti-Khomeini dissidents in 1980. He announced the formation of a national resistance movement to help overthrow the Islamic republic.

The structure of our national economy is shattered, laws and order discredited, women treated as slaves, minorities oppressed, tongues tied and pens broken, he said at the time.

He remained in touch with his homeland through a network of supporters in Iraq, coded messages and letters, he dreamt of return in to power under a restored monarch and believed the era established by the late

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was doomed.

Bakhtiar was the fourth and last in a succession of Prime Ministers appointed by Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in a desperate attempt to save the monarchy.

A former deputy leader of the Opposition, he took control of a country seething with resentment against the Shah and mounting support for Islamic leader Khomeini.

But Bakhtiar's liberal

Westernism was as unwelcome as the Shah's modern tendencies. he resigned in despair after governing for a stormy five weeks his compromise policies collapsing as Khomeini swept to power.

He disappeared and remained in hiding for five and a half months before resurfacing at Paris airport. His life as an exile had begun.

He was killed at his home in the western suburb of Suresnes, on the bank of the Seine,

where he lived quietly with his family. His son, who joined the French police raised the alarm when he failed to reach Bakhtiar by telephone.

Like many middle class Iranians of his generation, Bakhtiar was at home in France. He was educated in Beirut and Paris, and graduated from the Sorbonne with a law degree.

He fought with French foreign legion in World War Two and when he returned to Iran in 1946 he could hardly speak Persian.

After founding a prosperous law practice, he became Secretary General of the Iran party a component of the National Front which for years worked in secret opposition to the Shah's autocratic rule. He was reported to have been jailed six times for anti-Shah activities.

The Shah gradually eased political controls and in 1978 the National Front came out into the open, with Bakhtiar as Deputy Chief.

Once appointed Prime Minister in January 1979, Bakhtiar persuaded the Shah to leave Iran with his family on an open-ended holiday which was to become permanent exile. In western terms Bakhtiar was a liberal social democrat.

During his brief rule he worked for press freedom, the abolition of Martial Law, and dissolution of Iran's hated secret police.

He also wanted to eliminate the corruption which had grown up during the Shah's 37-year rule promising exemplary punishment for those guilty of violating human rights or abusing their positions.

Off the Record

Free bus ride for Orissa journalists

CUTTACK: All working journalists in Orissa can soon travel by buses freely in the state, reports PTI.

They could avail themselves of full concession in the buses owned by the public sector Orissa State Road Transport Corporation as well as private buses, said Mr Satya Ray, General Secretary to the Utkal Journalists Association.

He said that a decision to this effect had been taken at a meeting with the Transport Minister, Mr Bhagabat Behera and Information and Public Relation Minister, Mr Sarat Kumar Kar on Monday last.

He said that the District Information and Public Relations Department would furnish the names of the correspondents to the state government and the newspapers would furnish the names of those working in the desk for issue of necessary travel passes.



CEMINAC (Yugoslavia): An elderly Croatian woman weeps in front of a Croatian soldier here early August 14 following an overnight Serbian mortar bomb attack on this east Croatia village. Three Croatian para-military policemen were killed overnight and 23 wounded in fierce clashes in the Osijek region. — AFP/UNB photo

Indonesian National Day to be celebrated with poetry

JAKARTA: About 70 prominent Indonesian figures, including Cabinet Ministers and business tycoons, will hold a joint poetry reading on the eve of National Day, press reports said here on Thursday, reports AFP.

The open air poetry reading, part of the city's commemoration of National Day on August 17, will be held on Friday evening at Jakarta's vast Central Square near the State Palace, the *Merdeka Daily* said.

The head of the Organizing Committee, Mayor General Syaikat Banjaransari, said the event, scheduled to last at least six hours, would present a wide range of poetry with patriotism, the struggle for independence and religions as their themes.

Among the readers would be Coordinating Minister of Security and Political Affairs Sudomo, Education and Culture Minister Fuad Hasan, leading playwright and poet Willy Rendra, business tycoons William Soeryadjaya and Ciputra, and President Suharto's eldest daughter Siti Hardiyanti Indra Rukmana, Syaikat said.

The readers would take part as individuals and not in their official capacities, Syaikat added.

Noriega to rule Panama, if released

MIAMI: Topped Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega plans to govern his country again if he is released from US custody, his attorney said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

He's going to go back and run the country of Panama as he did in the past, Frank Rubino told a Miami radio station.

The lawyer was not immediately available for further comment, his Secretary said.

In his radio statement, Rubino described the current US-supported Panamanian government of Guillermo Endra as "having one foot on a banana peel."

Lord knows how long that government is going to last, he said.

Noriega was brought to the United States in January 1990 following a December 20, 1989, invasion of Panama by US forces.

He is scheduled to go on trial next month on charges of drug trafficking and money-laundering.

Israel won't free Arab detainees

TEL AVIV, Aug 15: Israel said it would not be releasing any Arab detainees in coming days as hopes for a quick deal on the hostage crisis faded, reports Reuter.

"There is no truth to reports according to which Israel is preparing to release Lebanese prisoners in the coming day," Defence Ministry spokesman Danny Naveh said late on Wednesday.

Israel negotiator Uri Lubrani said after meeting UN Secretary-General Javier Peres de Cuellar in Geneva that talks of a time frame for a release was not the solution. But he said the meeting was "very fruitful and very good."

However, Israel radio said Perez de Cuellar unable to give the Israeli negotiators the information their government has demanded on the fate of seven servicemen missing in Lebanon.

Israel has said it must have proof of what has happened to the men before making any deal involving the release of some 400 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners it holds.

James Roosevelt dead

NEWPORT BEACH (California), Aug 15: Former Congressman James Roosevelt, the eldest son of President Franklin Roosevelt, died on Tuesday at his home in Newport Beach, California, at the age of 83, officials said, reports Reuter.

They said Roosevelt's wife, Mary, was at her husband's side when he died of natural causes.



A FLASHBACK: Shapur Bakhtiar with his bodyguards in Paris after fleeing from Iran in 1979.