

BRIEFLY

Kuwait to set up link with US coys: Kuwait has indicated a willingness to abandon part of the Arab boycott of Israel and do business with US companies that also work with the Jewish state, according to American Jewish leaders, reports Reuter from New York.

The leaders said they learned this from Thomas Pickering, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, during a meeting on Sunday. Pickering's office declined comment and a spokesman for Kuwait was not immediately available for comment.

But diplomatic sources said there were indications that Kuwait was willing to drop its ban on American companies doing business with Israel although it would keep the ban on direct dealings with Israel, which it does not recognise.

Quake in Costa Rica: A powerful earthquake shook Costa Rica from end to end Monday, killing at least 19 people and causing extensive damage in the capital and the important port of Puerto Limon, reports AP from San Jose.

"We have reports that at least three people were killed when the International Hotel collapsed in Puerto Limon and other buildings were damaged and many homes destroyed," Red Cross spokesman Jose Manuel Calvo said in San Jose.

"I saw at least 40 to 50 homes destroyed and one person dead, with great damage to the railway line. There is no electricity nor running water," Garza, a resident said.

San Jose residents fled to the streets for safety when the 15-second quake rolled through the capital at 3:58 p.m. (2058 GMT).

The quake measured 7.4 on the Richter scale and was centered 70 miles (110 kilometers) southeast of San Jose, said Willis Jacobs of the U.N. National Earthquake Information Center.

IRA agrees to ceasefire: The Irish Republican Army agreed on Monday to a provisional ceasefire with Protestant extremists in northern Ireland, reports Reuter from Belfast.

But the IRA, fighting against British rule in northern Ireland, said attacks against the security forces would continue.

The Protestant Ulster Loyalist central co-ordinating committee last week promised a ceasefire on the eve of talks on northern Ireland's future, which begins on April 30.

The IRA told reporters in Belfast that if the ceasefire offer proved to be genuine and if attacks on nationalists stopped, it would also stop attacks on loyalist targets—presumably members of the Protestant extremist organisations.

Arab fund soon: Six Gulf Arab states on Monday agreed to set up a multi-billion dollar fund that they hope will help promote stability in the region, reports Reuter from Riyadh.

The agreement was reached at the first meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) since the Gulf War ended more than seven weeks ago.

The programme of the GCC to boost development efforts in the Arab countries will be ready to operate in the near future," Saudi Arabian Finance Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abal-Khalil said, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

Speaking after talks with his counterparts from Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, he said the fund would have an eventual capital of up to 15 billion dollars.

Ousted Mongolian dictator dies: Fallen Mongolian dictator Yumjaagyn Tsedenbal, who kept his nation firmly in the Soviet orbit during three decades in power, has died in exile in Moscow, the official news agency Tass reported Monday. He was 74, reports AP from Moscow.

In a dispatch from Mongolia's capital of Ulan Bator, Tass quoted the Mongolian news agency Montsame as reporting that Tsedenbal died on Sunday.

In a decree announcing the death, President Gombojavyn Ochirbat said there were favorable and negative aspects of Tsedenbal's tenure, and that Mongolia should remember him in a humanitarian but truthful way, the report said.

Ochirbat decreed that Tsedenbal's body would be returned to Mongolia and that he be buried with full honors befitting a leader of the nation. Tsedenbal was ousted in 1984 in a power struggle within the ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party.

85 die in Ecuador cholera: The cholera epidemic that spread north from Peru has taken toll of at least 85 Ecuadorians, an increase of nearly 50 per cent in the past week, Health Minister Plutarco Naranco says, reports AP from Quito in Ecuador.

The death toll in Colombia, meanwhile, rose to three, and new cases were reported in Chile. No new figures were available in Peru, where cholera has killed more than 1,140 people since the epidemic broke out in late January.

Naranco said Monday that 3,484 Ecuadorians have been hospitalized for cholera, but he said the number of new cases has been falling. News reports and Ecuador's main doctors' association say cholera has killed more than 100 people and sickened at least 7,000.

UN keen to have a spy satellite

BORDEAUX (France), Apr 23: UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said on Monday the United Nations should have its own spy satellite to pinpoint trouble spots around the world before violence erupted, reports Reuter.

An independent UN observation satellite would have been able to show Iraq's threatening behaviour towards Kuwait before it invaded the Emirate in August, he told a news conference.

Perez de Cuellar, talking after accepting an honorary

Boy among 7 get environmental prizes

SAN FRANCISCO, Apr 23: A 12-year-old Swedish boy who campaigned to save rainforests was among seven people named on Monday as winners of 60,000-Dollar environmental prizes, reports Reuter.

Other winners included a Kenyan woman who inspired a grassroots movement to plant millions of trees and a Japanese man who is fighting to curb his country's appetite for tropical timber.

The 360,000 Dollars in prizes was awarded by the Goldman Environmental Foundation, founded by a San Francisco couple, Richard and Rhoda Goldman. The foundation began making the awards last year and picks winners from different regions of the globe.

doctorate from the university of Bordeaux, said the UN Security Council needed "independent and objective real-time information."

"I would like us to have an independent observation satellite that would have enabled us for example to detect, even before August 2, the Iraqi threat to Kuwait," he said.

"If we want to avoid catastrophes of the type and extent which have struck Iraq and Kuwait, the Security Council must be constantly examining flashpoints, intervening in a decisive way as soon as a conflict is spotted and applying the UN charter's principles with the utmost consistency," Perez de Cuellar said.

Perez de Cuellar also said the United Nations should reassess its methods to find a way of intervening in a country's affairs without violating the UN charter.

"We have to find a mechanism which permits interference, without violating the UN charter which specifies that the UN has no authority to intervene in matters of an essentially domestic nature," he said.

The United States and the Soviet Union have spy satellites able to give high-definition images of the ground. They are usually used by the military, but commercial observation satellites have also been launched.

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Opposition rejects new cabinet

US warns Kuwait against human rights abuses

DAMASCUS, Apr 23: US Secretary of State James Baker warned the ruler of Kuwait on Monday that Washington's support might fade if human rights in the Emirate did not improve, reports Reuter.

The Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, assured him that brutalities which followed liberation from Iraq have stopped.

Baker went to Kuwait concerned about human rights. Amnesty International says Kuwaiti armed forces and former resistance fighters have killed scores of people, mostly Palestinians suspected of being pro-Iraq. Many others suffered torture or illegal imprisonment, Amnesty said.

After 80 minutes of talks with Kuwaiti leaders, Baker told reporters: "I'm told that those abuses have ceased and I was told as well that the government of Kuwait would be pleased to invite Human Rights Organisations here to interview minorities—Palestinians and others."

But Baker flying on to Damascus, Baker told reporters on his plane that the Emir's leaders still were unable to control internal security.

Retreating Iraqi forces left behind many weapons that are now in the hands of various groups and Kuwaiti leaders have chosen not to try and seize those arms by force, he said.

A senior official of Kuwait's Interior Ministry told a local newspaper on Monday that the government had started to collect thousands of guns which fell into private hands. He did not make clear how the authorities would find out who had weapons.

Baker said he told the Emir: "The ability of the United States to continue to support Kuwait politically and from a security standpoint in the manner in which we supported them against Saddam Hussein's brutal aggression would be enhanced in the event of full respect and commitment to the preservation of human rights."

In addition to human rights, the secretary's meeting with the Emir focused on national security arrangements for Kuwait, a broadening of the political process and reconstruction.

Baker watched at ground level the efforts of firefighters from his home state of Texas to snuff out one of more than

500 oil wells set ablaze by Iraqi troops.

Baker said the Emir reaffirmed his recent promise to call elections in 1992 and to give consideration to allowing women to vote.

Asked if 1992 was too far distant to make democratic changes, Baker said: "I think when you consider that they would be radically transforming their political system, certainly we would not have any objection to the fact that the elections will take place in 1992."

Another report from Kuwait adds: Kuwaiti opposition groups rejected the Emir's new cabinet on Sunday as a challenge to the people's will and demanded more democratic reforms.

A statement signed by all opposition groups said the ruling Sabah family was "opening many doors, threatening national unity, blowing the winds of unease, doubts and evil."

It amounted to a forceful dismissal of the new cabinet, sworn in earlier in the day to lead the Emirate out of the trauma of seven months of Iraqi occupation and the Gulf war.

AP adds: The government refused permission for opposition groups to hold a news conference Monday, ordering the lights to be turned off in a hotel ballroom where the event was to be held, officials said.

The opposition groups said the action, which came hours before a visit by US Secretary of State James Baker, showed the ruling al-Sabah family was not sincere about allowing greater democracy and free speech.

"We were shocked," said Sami al-Khatrash, a leader of the Islamic Constitutional Movement, a Sunni Muslim group considered the strongest opposition force. "We expected the government to respect the people since we were the arm of the government (during the Iraqi occupation)."

The seven opposition groups scheduled the joint news conference at the Kuwait International Hotel to criticise the appointments to the new Cabinet, which was named Saturday and sworn on Sunday by the Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah.

Though many ministers were ousted or demoted, members of the al-Sabah family continue to hold the key positions and no opposition figures were selected.

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Former Afghan secret police chief jailed in India

NEW DELHI, Apr 23: Former Afghan secret police chief Assadullah Sarwari, a long-feared opponent of President Najibullah, was convicted Monday of violating Indian immigration laws, reports AP.

Sarwari, who has been jailed in India since last June, faces a prison term of up to five years and an unlimited fine. He is to return to New Delhi's Tis Hazari District Court on April 29 for sentencing.

Well-placed Afghan sources have said Sarwari was a confidant of senior military officials who bombed Najibullah's palace in Kabul in an unsuccessful coup March 6, 1990.

Magistrate Raghuraj Singh Malha found Sarwari guilty of failing to possess a valid passport and Indian visa.

Sarwari had pleaded not guilty, saying his passport was confiscated by an Afghan Embassy official on February 2, 1990, at New Delhi's international airport when he tried to board a Kabul-bound flight.

He stayed in India and was arrested by Indian police on June 11, 1990. The arrest coincided with a visit to New Delhi by Afghan Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil, a Najibullah stalwart.

Hepburn throws Gregory Peck a radiant kiss

NEW YORK, Apr 23: Audrey Hepburn was honoured by colleagues paying tribute to the enchanting actress who bewitched fans as a princess in "Roman Holiday," a Cockney flower girl in "My Fair Lady" and the outrageous Holly Golightly in "Breakfast at Tiffany's."

"Suddenly there was that dazzling creature, looking like a wide-eyed doe prancing through the forest," recalled Billy Wilder, who directed Miss Hepburn in "Sabrina." "It took exactly five minutes for everybody on that set to fall in love with her."

Wilder was one of a dozen actors and directors to speak at the Lincoln Center Film Society tribute Monday to the 62-year-old actress.

Miss Hepburn's big break came in 1951 at age 22 when the writer Colette spotted her and asked her to play "Ogi" on Broadway. Her first major movie role, "Roman Holiday," followed in 1953. She won an Academy Award

for her portrayal of a princess who goes out on the town incognito and falls in love with an American reporter.

"It was my good luck during that summer in Rome to be the first of her cinema swings, to hold out my hand and help her keep her balance as she did her spins and pirouettes and made practically everybody in the world fall in love with her," said Gregory Peck, who played the reporter. "There will never be a sequel to 'Roman Holiday,' but without a doubt the princess has become a queen."

Form a box on the side of the stage, Miss Hepburn, radiant in a flowing white gown topped by a sparkling gold-and-aqua bolero, threw Peck a kiss.

Later, she thanked the many actors, directors, photographers and technicians she worked with over the years, saying in her charmingly self-deprecating fashion that they "gave so much to a skinny broad and turned her into a marketable commodity."

The Lincoln Center gala included clips from 18 of her 26 films, including her portrayal of a ballerina in "Secret People," Natasha attending her first ball in "War and Peace," a nun struggling with a desire to renounce her vows in "The Nun's Sabrina," and a piteous bookstore clerk who blossoms into a ravishing model in "Funny Face."

Miss Hepburn was born in Belgium to a Dutch baroness and a British banker who divorced when she was a child. She suffered from malnutrition growing up during World War II in Nazi-occupied Holland, a childhood she has said prepared her well for her current work as UNICEF's goodwill ambassador.

Fellow United Nations volunteer Harry Belafonte described Miss Hepburn's work "in Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam in the holding camps with hundreds of thousands of starving people in Ethiopia" as "her best performance."



HEPBURN IN BANGLADESH: A flashback-UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Audrey Hepburn completed a mission to Bangladesh last year. These are excerpts from her account of this poignant mission. "It is true that the flood of September 1988 was devastating, killing nearly 2,000 people, rendering millions homeless—the worst in 400 years. The economy of this young, only 18-year-old nation may have been impoverished by war, famine and floods, but it has untold wealth in the resilience and resourcefulness of its bright, active, talented people. Its strength lies in the unity of its people—families and community spirit are still intact—and in their willingness to help themselves. They help each other, the poor help the poor. In Bangladesh alone, UNICEF has sunk about three quarters of a million tube wells for clean drinking water; provided nearly 14 million textbooks for schools; implemented a vast immunization programme against the five killer diseases and polio; is distributing large amounts of Vitamin A to combat blindness; and helping to provide iodized salt and lipidol injections against iodine deficiencies, which cause goitre and cretinism." Audrey Hepburn uses local transportation—a rickshaw—during her visit to Mymensingh.

Off the Record

Ping-Pong Diplomacy

TOKYO: The world table tennis championships, which start in the Japanese city of Chiba on Wednesday, will be the scene of a flurry of "ping-pong" diplomacy, reports Reuter.

Among the squads from about 70 countries and regions brought together by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) will be the first unified Korean sports team. Sports officials from the two Koreas are likely to meet during the 13-day event.

Last week a senior Seoul official said in Barcelona that talks aimed forming a single Korean squad for next year's Olympics in the Spanish city were likely to resume after the table tennis tournament.

Kuwait will also make a full-strength comeback to international sport following the Gulf war and South Africa is sending officials to the April 27 ITTF congress for the first time since apartheid made it an outcast in international sport in the 1960s.



LONDON: Princess Diana of Wales speaks at the National Children's Bureau conference on children and HIV/AIDS, and the National Aids Trust at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre Sunday. —AFP/UNB photo.

Shake hands with AIDS victims: Diana

LONDON: An estimated 10 million of the world's children will have AIDS by the year 2000 and they need help and love, Britain's Princess Diana said here Monday reports Xinhua.

Making a keynote speech at a London conference organized by the National Children's Bureau and the National AIDS Trust, the Princess said: "For our children's sake we need to seize the opportunity to plan our responses and organize our defenses while we still have time."

"AIDS-infected people are not dangerous to know", she said. "You can shake hands with them and give them a hug. Heaven knows, they need it. What's more you can share their homes, their workplaces and their playgrounds and their toys."

Princess Diana has shown special concern for AIDS victims cuddling AIDS-infected babies and shaking hands with many adult patients.

Meanwhile, British Health Minister Virginia Bottomley said that government guidelines are being urgently drawn up to help care for children infected with AIDS.

More than 200 children are known to be infected with the AIDS virus in Britain, 120 of them in south-east Scotland, where needle-sharing became common in the 1980s. Thirty-six cases of AIDS in children have been reported, including 15 deaths.

US, UK, Swedish nationals asked to leave Kashmir

JAMMU (India), Apr 23: At least three foreign governments have asked their nationals to leave Kashmir, where two Swedish were kidnapped by Muslim militants three weeks ago, travel and tourism officials here said Monday, reports AFP.

They said the United States, Britain and Sweden had advised their nationals to leave the scenic northern region, the scene of a bloody campaign by militants fighting for its secession from India.

Intelligence officials in Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, confirmed the information without elaborating.

But state government sources here denied an earlier report that Indian intelligence agencies had advised foreigners to quit Kashmir, where the search continued for the two Swedish engineers kidnapped March 31.

"The report was not correct, and no Indian authority has given such advice", the sources said.

"Tourists have started leaving Kashmir," a state tourism department official said by telephone from Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital and urban hub of the militancy, adding that some 1,000 had left since Saturday.

"The report was not correct, and no Indian authority has given such advice", the sources said.

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Rajiv's 'super committee' calling the shots in Cong

NEW DELHI, Apr 23: The Congress(I) "super committee" of non-political persons has begun work on preparing a list of possible candidates for the elections that will be finally presented to the parliamentary board for approval.

The "super committee," which has had meetings with the Congress(I) president, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, to determine electoral strategy, amongst other things, includes General Krishna Rao, the economist, Mr A.M. Khuroo, the former home secretary, Mr R.D. Pradhan, the former foreign secretary, Mr M.S. Rasgotra, and the communications expert, Mr Sam Pitroda.

These members are writing to senior Congress(I) leaders asking them to submit notes assessing their own constituencies. This, along with other information about various constituencies, will then be computerised to arrive at a short list of candidates for the coming elections, reports UNI.

The "committee," which has just begun approaching Congressmen for information is being regarded with considerable hostility by party members who are openly critical about its role and jurisdiction.

Publicity, campaign strategy and manifesto inputs will be overseen by this Congress(I) "think tank" appointed by Mr Rajiv Gandhi to assist him in the coming elections.

The party general secretaries and other officials have been eclipsed, or so Congressmen feel, by these

luminaries who derive their authority directly from Mr Rajiv Gandhi. As one party leader pointed out, "Everyone who wants a ticket will have to cooperate with these people. Tell me how can people like these even begin to think politically."

The Congress (I) sources are also talking of another committee set up to collect funds for the party. This includes Mr Satish Sharma, Mr Lalit Suri and Mr R.K. Dhwani.

The party is gearing up for elections with posters and publicity material under preparation. Congressmen, unlike their colleagues from the Janata Dal, do not complain of a paucity of funds but many are worried by Mr Rajiv Gandhi not meeting aspirants and directing them to other leaders or to this committee instead. There is some uncertainty in Uttar Pradesh circles with hard negotiations going on between Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and the Congress(I) leadership for the distribution of seats. The talks have got bogged down between Mr Yadav's demand for 25 Lok Sabha seats and the Congress(I)'s offer of 13.

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