

Off the Record

Gorbachev to visit Japan in Apr:

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is to visit Japan in mid-April for talks with political and business leaders, The Daily Yomiuri Shinbun reported on Tuesday, says Reuter from Tokyo.

Yomiuri, which is hosting the visit, said Gorbachev had accepted the invitation but exact dates had yet to be set. His wife Raisa would accompany him, the paper said.

The visit coincides with the first anniversary of Gorbachev's visit to Japan, the first here by a Kremlin leader.

The overriding issue during that visit remains unresolved—a territorial dispute over four small islands of northern Japan seized by Soviet troops in the closing days of World War Two.

The dispute has prevented Tokyo and Moscow signing a peace treaty, and recently has blocked all-out Japanese Economic aid to the states of the former Soviet empire.

24 killed in Nagorno-Karabakh:

At least 24 people have been killed in fresh fighting between Armenian and Azeri gunmen over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, ITAR-TASS New Agency said Monday, reports Reuter from Moscow.

It quoted Armenian Interior Ministry officials in Nagorno-Karabakh's capital, Stepanakert, as saying four Armenians and 20 Azeris had been killed in clashes around the Armenian village of Kirchena.

The attack had been under way for more than 24 hours, it said. The Armenian Snark News Agency put the death toll at 26.

Landslide kills 3 in Sumatra:

Three people died and 16 were missing after a landslide in West Sumatra triggered by heavy rain, the officials news agency Antara said Tuesday, reports Reuter from Jakarta.

It quoted officials as saying the landslide on Saturday hit houses and a road where a number of people were passing. Rescue workers are still searching for the missing.

Taylor celebrates birthday Feb 27:

Elizabeth Taylor is planning a 60th birthday extravaganza on February 27 for 1,000 guests, including many of Hollywood's biggest stars, at Disneyland, her spokeswoman said on Monday, reports Reuter from Los Angeles.

Spokeswoman Chensam said the evening birthday bash was being organised by Taylor's new husband, Larry Fortensky, and a group of friends.

Disneyland will be closed to the public just before the party and security officers will scour the area for those hoping to stay behind and crash the party.

Guests will be treated to foods and wine from around the world served on tables draped with deep purple, after Taylor's "deep purple" line of perfumes, Sam said.

9 crushed to death in China:

Nine people were crushed to death by an oncoming locomotive after they jumped from a burning train compartment in south China, officials said Tuesday, reports Reuter from Beijing.

The accident on the busy line linking the capital, Beijing, with Guangdong province in the south, occurred on Sunday night in Hunan province, an official of the Canton Railway Bureau said by telephone.

The fire started when a smouldering cigarette butt thrown by a passenger ignited some plastic.

Passenger in the burning compartment panicked and jumped from the train as soon as it stopped, but were hit by a train travelling in the opposite direction.

Intra-Afghan talks key to peace: Najibullah

KABUL, Feb 11: President Najibullah told a United Nations special envoy here Monday that an intra-Afghan dialogue was the key to a lasting peace in Afghanistan, reports AP.

Najibullah told Benon Sevan that all sides in the Afghan conflict who had peace at heart should take "practical, honest and real steps" to end the 13-year-old civil war, officials said.

"We believe that the key to the resolution of all issues is in the hands of Afghans," an official quoted Najibullah as saying.

Sevan arrived here Sunday from Islamabad for consultations with Kabul on a UN proposal for convening an intra-Afghan meeting in April.

The UN peace plan also proposed the installation of a transitional government pending free elections.

Talks to fail if US backs Jews settlements: Arafat

TUNIS, Feb 11: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said Monday that Mideast peace talks will collapse if the United States grants loan guarantees to Israel to build housing for immigrants, reports AP.

Arafat made his comments to the Palestinian news agency Wafa to mark the 50th month of the Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in the occupied territories.

"Arafat said Middle East peace talks that opened last year in Madrid menaced with complete collapse" by US-Israeli negotiations over the guarantees.

Thailand warns Myanmar

BANGKOK, Feb 11: Thailand has warned Myanmar it will use force if Myanmar soldiers do not stop building a bridge over the Moet river that forms the border between the two countries, Thai military officials said today, reports AP.

The bridge, which is being built some seven kilometers (five miles) north of the Thai town of Mae Sot, could be used by Myanmar troops to enter Thai territory to intensify attacks against a camp of anti-Myanmar guerrillas just inside Myanmar.

Thai military officials contacted by telephone at Mae Sot said reinforcement had been rushed to the area after Myanmar soldiers started building the bridge on Friday.

The local Commander of the Thai border force, Colonel Niphan Sripanul, has sent a letter to his Myanmar counterpart to demand that construction be halted and warn that force would be used if this did not happen, the officials said.

The PLO is not formally part of the peace talks, but it is regarded as strongly influencing the Palestinian team negotiating in a joint delegation with Jordan.

Warsaw, Feb 11: President Lech Walesa said Monday that the West should do more for the new nations emerging from the former Soviet Union than it has done for Poland, reports AP.

"We counted too much on the West," he said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Walesa has mainly criticized Europe for a lack of action. Last week, in a speech to the council of Europe, he accused the West of "making good business" out of Poland's revolution, while giving little back in terms of investment.

On Monday he said those comments were meant only as "a warning" so that Western countries do not repeat the pattern in their treatment of the former Soviet republics. That, he said, could bring a retreat from democracy or even violence.

He also stressed that he had been addressing Europe. "We don't have much to complain about" concerning the United States, he said.

According to Walesa, Western Europe is guilty of flooding Poland with goods while doing little to help modernize and create employment—steps that would bring long-term political and social stability.

He said Poland might be a bad investment in the short term, but good for the long run—and the same lesson should apply in the former Soviet Union.

"What matters is giving a fishing rod for the Soviet nations, and not just fish, as it turned out to be in Poland," he said.

"If we give them only fish and we don't solve the problems, then we have to remember that a mass migration of peoples will take place and destabilize us all," he said.

Walesa, 48, was an electrician at the Lenin Shipyard in

FIS activists kill 8 policemen, call for defiance of emergency

ALGIERS, Feb 11: In an apparent hardening of their response to a government crackdown, Islamic Fundamentalists have killed eight police officers in one day and called for defiance of a state of emergency, reports AP.

The Islamic Salvation Front, in a communique, called on Algerians to reject the emergency measures announced Sunday, vowing that a national protest march would be held as planned Friday.

"Don't give up," the front exhorted followers in the statement Monday, urging them to claim their political rights. "Rest assured, the Islamic cause will emerge victorious whatever the sacrifices."

The communique was signed by information director Abderrazak Radjam, whose ar-

rest had been reported, by state radio. It was not known whether he was in custody although most of the Salvation Front's other leaders are in jail.

The call for defiance came on a day when calm was largely reported in the capital, Algiers. However, Monday's attacks on the police were the most deadly since the military took power one month ago.

In the latest violence, police said six of the police officers were killed before dawn when their cars were riddled with gunfire near a mosque in the ancient quarter of the capital known as the Casbah.

The attackers, who police said had fought alongside Muslim guerrillas in the Afghan war, reportedly escaped into the densely crowded neighbour-

hood. Two other officers were slain Monday by companions of a fundamentalist they were trying to arrest in Bordj Menacl, 40 miles (70 kilometers) east of the capital, police said. One attacker was shot and killed by police; the others escaped.

A policeman also was killed Saturday in the Casbah, an ancient district of tiny, winding streets and tightly packed houses that was a stronghold of revolutionaries who battled the French from 1954-62.

Algerians who fought in Afghanistan have been blamed for previous attacks on security forces. Fundamentalists said some Afghan war veterans had declared a jihad, or holy war, on the government.

On Sunday the government banned the Islamic Salvation

Front, the nation's largest political party, and declared a state of emergency granting authorities broad powers to make arrests, ban demonstrations and dissolve local councils.

The actions followed a week of unrest that left more than 40 people dead and 300 injured.

The Salvation Front was on the verge of winning control of parliament last month in the second round of Algeria's first free elections since independence from France in 1962.

But the military forced President Chadli Bendjedid to resign after it became apparent he was planning to share power with the fundamentalists, and the new military-backed government called off the elections.

Charles, Diana meet Sonia

NEW DELHI, Feb 11: Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana paid an extended call on the Italian-born widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at heavily guarded home here Tuesday, reports AP.

The royal couple drove to the Gandhi residence where they were greeted by Sonia Gandhi, who has been in mourning since the May 21 assassination, and stayed for 50 minutes instead of the scheduled half hour witnesses said.

Prince Charles, who flew to Delhi for Rajiv Gandhi's funeral last year, then plunged into a round of engagements in the capital while the princess flew separately to the city of Agra to see the fabled Taj Mahal.



NEW DELHI, Indian Vice President Shankar Dayal Sharma and his wife greeting Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana Tuesday at Rashtrapati Bhavan (Presidential Palace). The royal couple is on a six-day visit to India. — AFP/UNB photo

Lockerbie suspects may have been executed, says Washington Post

WASHINGTON, Feb 11: Two men indicted for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, have disappeared from Tripoli and may have been executed, the Washington Post reported on Tuesday, says Reuter.

Quoting intelligence sources, the paper said Libya had been planning to announce the disappearance of the pair to suggest they had been kidnapped.

But intelligence sources said the men Abdel Baset Ali Mohamed Al-Meghrahi, 39, and Al-Amin Khalifa Fhimah, were dead. The men were in-

dicted in Scotland and the United States.

The sources included Vincent Cannistraro, former Chief of CIA counter-terrorist operations for the US Central Intelligence Agency.

The United States and Britain have demanded that Libya agree to allow their extradition, but without success.

A total of 270 people died when a Pan Am airliner blew up over Lockerbie.

In London, US Vice-President Dan Quayle said Washington was serious about forcing Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi to hand over

the men.

"Gaddafi had better realise we are serious...You just have to look to the past to see that we have the political will to make these kinds of requests happen," Quayle told the British Broadcasting Corporation on Monday night.

In 1986, US aircraft bombed Libya after Washington accused Gaddafi of involvement in a bombing of a West Berlin Discotheque that killed two Americans.

Asked if the United States might try to bomb the Libyan leader again, Quayle replied: "I am not saying what we will do,

I am just saying we are serious and that he'd better understand we're serious."

"He had better realise we do not have unlimited patience," he said.

The Post quoted Cannistraro as saying "the Libyans became convinced that the United Nations sanctions probably would go into effect, that there was no escape route."

"They were worried that if they released the two guys, the two would say they were acting under orders," he said.

Gaddafi has denied Libyan involvement in the bombing.



JERUSALEM, Palestinian girls pass Israeli border policemen in East Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhood Feb 10. Security was reinforced in the area to prevent any unrest as Jewish settlers moved into an Arab house in Jerusalem's old city Feb 9. — AFP/UNB photo.

Venezuela overhauls army high command

CARACAS, Venezuela, Feb 11: President Carlos Andres Perez has ordered an extensive overhaul of the army high command in the aftermath of last week's failed coup, reports AP.

"I have issued instructions to the minister of defence for the reorganization of the Army command echelons," said Perez in a communique issued by the government press office on Monday night.

He said in the statement that the overhaul would affect both General Staff, combat units, garrisons and other operational units.

The overhaul seeks to fill the hole in the military command left by the departure of 136 ranking officers who were jailed and face court martial for their alleged participation in the February 4 coup attempt.

Perez said the overhaul was intended to strengthen an army weakened by the insurrection and neutralise what he called any possible "negative influences" within units commanded by the jailed military leaders.

However, he said the reorganization did not imply any judging of the conduct or loy-

alty of those officers who were either removed or rotated out of posts. The communique did not elaborate further on the shakeup.

The announcement capped a day in which Perez reportedly promised to end press censorship, following a stand-off with the country's main daily newspaper over criticism of the government in the coup plot's aftermath.

Early Monday, police stormed the offices of El Nacional and seized all but 2,000 copies of the day's editions before the newspaper hit the streets with an article on alleged government corruption.

Dutch Air Force plane crashes

HENGELO, Netherlands, Feb 11: A Dutch Air Force F-16 crashed in residential area of this eastern Dutch city Tuesday morning, Dutch television reported, says AP.

There was no immediate word on casualties.

The pilot was able to eject safely before the crash, which occurred at about 9.45 am local time.

Somalian warring factions to attend peace talks in NY

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 11: Representatives of Somalia's warring factions have agreed to attend peace talks in New York this week, a UN spokesman said Monday, reports AP.

Spokesman Francois Guliiani said each side will send a three-person team, expected to arrive Tuesday or Wednesday. Both delegations have been given authority to negotiate, Guliiani said.

The talks will be aimed at arranging a cease-fire in Somalia's capital Mogadishu, where battles between clans have killed or wounded more than 20,000 people, mostly women and children, since November 17. Thousands more have fled the city and are camped in the surrounding

scrub land without food or water.

James Jonah, the undersecretary-general for African affairs, had told reporters Friday in Nairobi, Kenya, that President Ali Mahdi had agreed to attend the talks but his rival, General Mohamed Farrah Aidid, sought a postponement.

Jonah said Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali would ask the Organization of African Unity, the Islamic Conference and the Arab League whether they would be willing to provide peacekeeping troops. Such a force, however, would require the consent of the warring parties.

The three organizations are scheduled to meet with Boutros-Ghali on Wednesday.

BRIEFLY

Adkins gets a tie clip, a hug from Bush

WASHINGTON: A little boy who tried to entice President Bush off a stage got a presidential reward Monday: A tie-clip and a hug, reports AP.

As he was being introduced for a speech to a conference called "Healthy Children, Ready to Learn," the President was seen shaking his head and mouthing something like "I can't."

Speech over, Bush told the audience that "I've got to tell you, those in the back, when I walked in and was sitting very serious waiting for the doctor to introduce me, this guy in blue does like this to me."

The President made a beckoning motion with a finger. "I had to tell him, 'no, I have to stay up here. I tried to communicate."

Then Bush invited the 5-year-old, who is EZRA Adkins of Huntington, W. Va., to come up, put him on his lap, gave him a hug and pinned the clip to his shirt.

The youngster is afflicted with spina bifida, an anomaly of the spine.

One million dollar nail for sale

PUNE: Nails up for sale. Price only U.S. dollars one million, reports PTI.

A Pune based government press photographer Ahrthidar M Chhillal, who has refuted the claim of Delhi businessman Ramesh Sharma of having the longest nails in the world, told PTI that he now wants to sell the nails he keeps carefully sheathed like swords to make ends meet and maintain the standard of living befitting a world record holder. Hence, the price tag of U.S. dollars one million.

Chhillal's nails have a total length of 452.5 cms (181 inches) as entered in the 1992 edition of the Guinness Book of World Records, while Sharma's nails measure 430 cms, Chhillal said.

Chhillal, who has been growing his nails since 1952 and entered the Guinness book in 1980, said ever since I have grown these nails, I have had no peaceful sleep.

Law is blind, even for 3-year old Daniel

SYDNEY: A three-year-old Australian boy was forced to appear in court Monday over a dispute with a neighbour until embarrassed authorities withdrew his summons, reports Reuter.

A summons naming Daniel Mullan, his father Darren and Darren's wife Emma was served at their freemantle home in western Australia on Sunday, Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC) radio reported on Tuesday.

"I just thought I was a joke," Darren Mullan told the ABC. "He looked shocked (but) he just wrote it down in his bit of paper and said it was an official document and he had to deliver it," she said. "I mean really, three years old and served a summons."

Darren said he tried to persuade a justice of the peace to cancel the summons naming his son, before approaching the police and court authorities.

But a court clerk told him it did not matter how old the boy was, he would have to appear or get a criminal record.

Bush's doc scolds conservatives on AIDS

WASHINGTON: President Bush's personal physician will not get his knuckles rapped for accusing conservative lawmakers Sen. Jesse Helms and Rep. William Dannemeyer of hindering the fight against AIDS, the White House said Monday, reports AP.

"It's a free country... He's free to speak his mind," White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said.

The doctor, Burton Lee, was quoted by the New York Post as saying that lawmakers with "very ignorant" views were blocking programs that could slow the spread of AIDS. When pressed to specify, he named Dannemeyer, and Helms.

Lee criticized Dannemeyer and Helms for blocking funding for safer-sex education and for a research project on sexual behavior.

Lee told the newspaper that more research is certainly needed.

"Dannemeyer takes a very subjective and prejudicial attitude" toward AIDS, Lee said.

Fitzwater said Lee was speaking for himself, not the White House.

"We wouldn't comment on specific members of Congress," Fitzwater said. "We do share the doctor's concerns about AIDS research and aggressive AIDS medical program to fight that disease. Dr Lee was a member of the AIDS commission. He feels very strongly about it."

West making good business out of revolution: Walesa

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Walesa has mainly criticized Europe for a lack of action. Last week, in a speech to the council of Europe, he accused the West of "making good business" out of Poland's revolution, while giving little back in terms of investment.

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comments were meant only as "a warning" so that Western countries do not repeat the pattern in their treatment of the former Soviet republics. That, he said, could bring a retreat from democracy or even violence.

He also stressed that he had been addressing Europe. "We don't have much to complain about" concerning the United States, he said.

According to Walesa, Western Europe is guilty of flooding Poland with goods while doing little to help modernize and create employment—steps that would bring long-term political and social stability.

He said Poland might be a bad investment in the short term, but good for the long run—and the same lesson should apply in the former Soviet Union.

"What matters is giving a fishing rod for the Soviet nations, and not just fish, as it turned out to be in Poland," he said.

"If we give them only fish and we don't solve the problems, then we have to remember that a mass migration of peoples will take place and destabilize us all," he said.

Walesa, 48, was an electrician at the Lenin Shipyard in

Odansk when he rose to worldwide prominence in August 1980 as the leader of the strike that resulted in the birth of Solidarity, the East bloc's first independent trade union.

The union was banned under martial law 18 months later, but Walesa—who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983—continued to head the illegal opposition. He was the key figure in the first toppling of a Communist government in Eastern Europe in 1989.

In December 1990, Walesa rode a landslide to become Poland's first directly elected president. But recent polls

have shown his approval ratings ebbing, along with most public figures in the country.

In the interview, Walesa denied that Poles are turning against economic reforms. Instead, they see their country's potential and are frustrated that it has not been set in motion, he said.

"People are displeased because they don't have jobs and they don't have money to pay the bills, and the people who work have to pay for those who don't," he said. "So the strikes are not against reforms, they are for reforms."

He pointed to the booming

Chinese FM in Phnom Penh

PHNOM PENH, Feb 11: Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen arrived here today for a 24-hour visit, becoming the first minister from Beijing to visit Cambodia since the fall of the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge in 1979, reports AP.

China has been the main supporter of the Khmer Rouge for decades, financing their regime from 1975 to 1979 and the subsequent jungle war until a peace accord was signed last year.

I think China supports the Agreement and will boost forward the agreement, said Khmer Rouge Nominal leader Khieu Samphan.

"Some people envy me because they don't know what it means," he said. "I have never been so enslaved in my life."