

Democracy still a dream to Zairians

KINSHASA, Zaire, Mar 30: Democracy remains a dream to Zairians, who were allied with the West in the Cold War...

Pro-democracy groups on both sides of the Congo River used strikes and demonstrations against their authoritarian presidents...

In Brazzaville, the Congolese capital, it produced a national conference that stripped President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of all but ceremonial powers...

In Kinshasa and the rest of Zaire, the economy is in ruins.

Delhi, Pindi will use gun to halt JKLF march

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan, Mar 30: Pakistan and India both pledged to halt, at gunpoint if necessary, a march by Kashmiri militants today on the ceasefire line...

But the militant Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) vowed to defy the ban on the march and said it had already infiltrated activists into the Chinari area...

The Premier of Pakistan's Azad (free) Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum, said thousands of policemen and paramilitary troops under his command would stop any militants from reaching the UN police ceasefire line.

Girish Saxena, Governor of India's Jammu and Kashmir state, said anyone would be shot if they reached the heavily defended frontier and tried to cross it.

"It is always a very unpleasant thing to do start shooting at people," he told Reuters at his fortified residence in the state's summer capital of Srinagar.

"But the troops have their orders. The troops have been advised to exercise utmost restraint, but there is no way they will allow a contravention of the (ceasefire line)."

At least seven people were killed between Chinari and Chakothi last month when Pakistani security forces opened fire on JKLF militants attempting to march on the ceasefire line to show solidarity with a Muslim uprising in Indian Kashmir.

Qayyum said he now had sufficient forces to ensure there was no repetition of last month's violence, which deeply embarrassed a Pakistani government which gives moral backing to the Muslim rebels.

"Pakistan, which controls a third of Kashmir, banned today's march fearing that a mass crossing of the border could provoke war with India."

The two nations have twice gone to war over Kashmir and nearly fought two years ago over Indian charges that Pakistan actively supported militants in Jammu and Kashmir with arms and training. Pakistan denied the charge.

Pakistani security forces virtually public transport and Azad Kashmir at the weekend, halting public transport and deploying security forces to prevent Kashmiris massing in the Azad Kashmir capital Muzaffarabad.

Three Kashmiri opposition leaders were arrested at a hotel in Muzaffarabad on Sunday night and the JKLF said many of its activists had also been detained. JKLF leader Amanullah Khan was taken into preventive detention last week in Rawalpindi.

JKLF leaders intended to lead a march to the ceasefire line to join force with Kashmiri militants arriving from the Indian side.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in Indian Kashmir since the secessionist movement there flared into open armed revolt two years ago.

But JKLF militants in Pakistani-ruled Azad (free) Kashmir said they had changed their strategy of storming the ceasefire line in the face of a government crackdown.

AP reports: Indian security forces Monday cordoned off a three-kilometer (two-mile) area around a famed mosque to forestall pro-independence demonstrations.

Police feared a nationalist upsurge to coincide with an announced march on the Pakistan side of divided Kashmir, even though the march was postponed following the arrest of leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front by Pakistani authorities Sunday.

Troops armed with automatic weapons searched the few people on the streets near the Hazratul mosque, a 500-year-old shrine which houses what believers revere as a hair from the Prophet Mohammed.

Meanwhile, most residents of the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir state stayed indoors for the fifth day of protest the alleged killings of three Muslim militants spearheading a call to break away from Hindu-majority India.

The Iqwanul Muslimien or Muslim Brotherhood ordered businesses to close down indefinitely after three of its men were killed by security forces.

Government authorities produced the body of the one militant, but said the other two escaped when they were being taken in a vehicle for identification.

Police escorting them were ambushed by militants, said BS Bedi, the state police chief.

Mitterrand under pressure to fire Cresson

PARIS, Mar 30: The French ruling Socialist Party's suffered its second stinging debacle in two weeks in local elections, leaving President Francois Mitterrand to draw the lessons and appoint a new government this week, reports Reuter.

Political commentators said the latest rebuff increased pressure on him to fire Prime Minister Edith Cresson, who has accumulated errors in 10 months in office rather than merely to reshuffle ministers.

"She's for the high jump," a senior socialist official said.

Mitterrand was expected to address the nation on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The Socialists, who collapsed to a mere 18.3 per cent of the vote in regional elections last week, lost historic bastions to the Conservative opposition in Sunday's run of cantonal elections.

The industrial north, a symbolic stronghold of the left since 1934, was one of six departments which the Socialists lost. The Conservatives won control of 73 departments, leaving the left holding just 21.

Socialist leader Laurent Fabius said: "This is a serious failure for the Socialist party and it must be recognised honestly... we must carry out a thorough renewal of the party and put an end to divisions."

Cresson, 57, was only narrowly re-elected in her western constituency of Chateaufort, while Mitterrand's former chief of staff, Jean-Louis Bianco, was beaten in province.

BRIEFLY

Bush entertains newsmen: President George Bush entertained journalists at the Annual Gridiron Club Dinner in Washington impersonating popular talk show host Johnny Carson, reports AFP.

Bush, introduced by White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, Saturday night did a spoof on Carson's character "Carnac the Magnificent", who "guesses" the answers to questions sealed in envelopes.

"Saddam Hussein, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Paul Tsongas," Bush said, answering the question: Name a stud, a stud and a fudd, as in the cartoon character Elmer fudd, a reference to Tsongas' speaking style.

Bush then jokingly insulted Fitzwater as his lowly sidekick and glared at members of the audience who laughed.



WASHINGTON: US President George Bush (R) held a news photographer who had fallen while walking backwards to photograph him. Bush was walking back to the White House from St John's Church when the incident occurred. — AFP/UNB photo.

Hun Sen in Paris: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen arrived on Sunday in Paris for four days of talks with French government officials on the situation in Cambodia, reports AFP from Paris.

French sources noted that the visit was the first by a Cambodian official to France since the signature last October of the Paris Peace Accords which opened the way to implementing the United Nations Peace Plan now in its initial stage.

Hun Sen trip will be an opportunity to discuss French aid for Cambodian reconstruction and to assess progress in the deployment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), officials said.

France donated 20 million francs (3.5 million dollars) to Cambodia in 1991 plus a cultural package worth 34 million francs (6,000,000 dollars).

Masked men kill 3 Palestinians: Masked men in the Gaza Strip on Sunday killed three Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israeli occupation forces, Palestinian sources said in Jerusalem, reports AFP.

One man, Marwan Hamis Abu Tara, was stabbed to death in his ship, and ten a few hours later two others, named as Majed Tawfik Babah (25) and Naim Ahmed Owed Owed, (46) were shot in the head.

The sources said the killings took to 415 the number of alleged collaborators murdered since December 1987, when an uprising against Israeli rule began in the occupied territories.

Baker plans ME talks in April: US Secretary of State James Baker has proposed holding a new round of Middle East peace talks in Washington in late April, an administration official said Monday, reports AFP from Washington.

Baker has sent messages to Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian delegation proposing that the new round begin April 27 Washington, the official said.

Township wars in South Africa continue

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 30: At least 12 people died in South Africa's continuing township wars at the weekend, four of them in a single knife fight yesterday, police said, reports Reuter.

The focus of the violence shifted from the Johannesburg township of Alexandra, where six people were killed on Saturday, to Natal province, where six more died yesterday.

Police said in a statement today four black men were stabbed to death on Sunday at Fakazi, near the coastal resort of Amanzimtoti. Their homes were set on fire.

Another man was stabbed to death in a township outside Pietermaritzburg.

Labour, Conservatives rule out coalition

LONDON, Mar 29: Britain's two major parties both insisted Sunday they will not make deals with minority parties to form a governing coalition, despite opinion polls pointing to a stalemate result in the April 9 national election, reports AP.

"I don't think anyone is contemplating any deals in smoke-filled rooms afterwards," said David Mellor, the governing Conservative Party's treasury secretary. "We're going out to win."

Labour Party spokesman Tony Blair said the third-running Liberal Democrat Party — which appears on course to hold the balance of power — was seeking votes "for a piece of horse-trading."

"It is not right for us to stand on our programme and then afterward say we will do a deal with the Liberals," Blair said, taking part with Mellor in a British Broadcasting Corporation radio debate.

But despite the denials, most observers consider Labour more likely to make a deal with the centrist Liberal Democrats.

The centrists, who have climbed to nearly one-fifth support in polls published Sunday, reiterated that their price for cooperation was a new electoral system which favours small parties.

They want seats in the 651-member House of Commons allocated according to the proportion of the overall vote won instead of by districts won.

At the last election in 1987, the centrists got 22.5 per cent of the vote but won only 22 seats in the Commons, or 3.4 per cent of the total.

Labour, within grasp of regaining power for the first time in 13 years, has set up an inquiry into proportional representation — a move which some Labourites hope privately would be sufficient to get Liberal Democrat support.

Prime Minister John Major's Conservatives flatly reject proportional representation.

Major, who succeeded Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in November 1990, has softened some Conservative policies.

Asked if he had run out of steam as he left a church near his country residence, Chequers, Major joked, "Well it's better than some of the things that have been said about the campaign."

Labour leader Neil Kinnock has tried to move his leftist party toward the center.

The BBC's poll of polls published in Sunday newspaper showed Labour with 39 per cent and the Conservatives 37 per cent.

Labour's lead was similar in most polls last week. But both major parties lost support in the past week, while the Liberal Democrats, up from 14 per cent to 19 per cent, was the only gainer.

The polls have a margin of error of 2 percentage points. They also discount the don't know, which in some polls run as high as one-third.

Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown said Sunday that he would demand a change to proportional representation within the first 18 months of joining a coalition government.

"This is the most uncallable election of all time," Ashdown added, "look at the don't knows. When they start to shift, anything might happen."

Diana's father dead

LONDON, Mar 30: Earl Spencer, the father of the Princess of Wales, died Sunday, the Press Association said in a report from Lech, Austria, quoting an adviser to the Royal Family AFP reports.

Princess Diana (30) who is on a skiing holiday in Austria with Prince Charles and their two sons William (9), and Harry (7), had been informed and was being comforted by her husband, Press Adviser Philip Mackie told journalists there.

The Earl, who was 68, was earlier said to have been recovering in hospital from pneumonia.

Arrangements were being made to fly the family back to London on Monday.

Call to convene all-party meet on Jharkhand

NEW DELHI, Mar 30: Members in the Lok Sabha today urged the government to convene an early meeting of all political parties to discuss the Jharkhand issue and find an amicable solution to the problem, reports PTI.

Cutting across party lines, the members expressed concern over the economic blockade launched by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in the Chhotanagpur and Santhal Pargana belt of south Bihar, paralysing the movement of coal, iron and other minerals, in support of its demand for a separate state.

Raising the issue during zero hour, Suraj Mandal (JMM) appealed to centre to regard the issue seriously and take a decision on the basis of the recommendations made by the committee on Jharkhand matters, which was set up in 1988 by the Rajiv Gandhi government.

On the one hand, the centre attached too much importance to the minerals of the area and on other, it had been ignoring the hopes and aspirations of the people of the belt, Mandal added.

Mission fruitful: Boothby

BAGHDAD, Mar 30: The head of a UN team said Sunday his mission here was "very fruitful" because key elements to Iraq's ballistic missile programme and repair facilities had been destroyed, reports Reuter.

But team leader Derek Boothby of Britain said the work of inspecting and destroying Iraq's potential to make scud and other ballistic missiles would still take "quite some months."

"We have destroyed some of the primary and key items established by the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission for the destruc-

tion of Iraq's ballistic missiles and repair facilities," he added. Boothby did not say how many missiles were destroyed during the week-long mission of his 35-member team.

"We have done our part in both destroying 62 (scud missiles) last June and now we have been another significant number," he said.

"Altogether I do think it has been a very worthwhile week and a very fruitful week and certainly we at long last, I think, made one or two quite large steps of progress," Boothby said.

He added that the next UN inspection team will visit Iraq in mid-April and that his team

would leave the country for Bahrain today, after another visit to a military site.

On Sunday, the team inspected the military base at Taji, 30 kilometers north of Baghdad, but he said it found nothing that had to be destroyed under the UN disarmament resolutions stemming from the end of the Gulf War.

The destruction work during the team's mission was thorough, he added.

"What we have seen destroyed cannot be put back together again," he said. "We make sure that when we destroy items, they are completely unusable and not able to be repaired."



BAGHDAD: Head of the UN inspection team Derek Boothby (R) speaks to journalists in front of the Chirton hotel in Baghdad on Mar 29 after returning from his last inspection visit to the Al-Taji Iraqi military base 30 km outside Baghdad. — AFP/UNB photo.

Levy to resign

HERZLIYA, Israel, Mar 30: Foreign Minister David Levy, the Israeli Cabinet's strongest champion of the US-brokered Arab-Israeli peace talks, said Sunday he would resign, reports AP.

The move dealt Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir a potentially major setback three months before national elections.

Levy, 53, is seen as more flexible on the peace talks than the hard line Shamir.

Moussa declined to give details of the latest Libyan proposals, which were submitted to the Cairo-based Arab League and contained in the letter to Boutros-Ghali.

One Arab diplomatic source here said Libya had "guaranteed" to the UN Secretary General that the two Libyan suspects could be handed over to Britain and the United States, but only after a decision by the World Court.

Manley plans to marry to keep him fresh

KINGSTON: Prime Minister Michael Manley, who is stepping down Monday as Jamaica's leader, plans to marry later this week, a government aide said Sunday, reports AP.

The news came a day after longtime Manley aide P J Patterson replaced Manley as leader of the governing People's National Party in a delegate election. Patterson is to become Jamaica's sixth Prime Minister since independence from Britain in 1962. A swearing-in ceremony is set for Monday afternoon.

The 67-year-old Prime Minister, who announced March 15 he would resign because of poor health, plans to marry Glynn Ewart next Saturday in a private ceremony, the government official said on condition of anonymity. The aide gave no further details.

The report first surfaced in The Sunday Gleaner newspaper.

In an interview Friday, Manley did not disclose his wedding plans. He said he was stepping down because a series of health problems, including a 1990 bout with pneumonia that reduced his lung capacity by a third. He said the problems have limited him to an eight-hour workday instead of the 16-hour days he said a head of state needed to work.

Baby without brain court without heart

FORT LAUDERDALE: The parents of a week-old infant born without a brain vowed on Saturday to continue seeking a court order, if necessary, to end her life and donate her organs, reports Reuter.

The child, Theresa Ann Pearson, was listed in critical condition in hospital after doctors placed her on a ventilator to help keep her breathing.

Two Florida state courts have rejected a request by parents, Laura Campo and Justin Pearson to have the baby declared brain dead. The ruling would let doctors harvest her vital organs to use as transplants for other sick babies.

Both lower courts upheld a state law that requires all brain functions to have ceased in order to be legally dead. The family said they plan to appeal to the state supreme court on Monday, even if Theresa was dead.

Teddy bear embargo is over

LOS ANGELES: It took a special order from the United Nations, but the teddy bear embargo is over, freeing 2,000 stuffed animals for shipment to ailing Iraqi children, reports AP.

The shipment of bears, assembled by a Santa Barbara nurse, had been held up for 59 days in a warehouse at Los Angeles International Airport.

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Dianne Judice, after learning that Ambassador Peter Hohenhellner of Austria, chairman of the UN Security Council's sanctions committee, signed the order Friday releasing her shipment.

"The people opened up their hearts and saw the true meaning of what the teddy bears are all about."

She said she hoped to personally deliver the bears within three weeks. She also had assembled medicine and used clothing to be sent with the bears.

The sanctions, adopted after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, allow the shipment of only food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies as permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Judice, a former pediatric nurse who lost a 2-year-old son to leukemia, found medical experts who supported her claim that stuffed animals have a therapeutic value for sick and injured children.

Sick of being sick

RUTHERFORD: The founder of Fairleigh Dickinson University shot his Alzheimer's-stricken wife to death, then killed himself, a prosecutor said Sunday, reports AP.

A housekeeper found the bodies of Peter Sammartino, 88, and his wife, Sylvia, 88, in their bed, said John J Fahy, Bergen County prosecutor.

Sammartino fired one shot into his wife's temple sometime Saturday night, then placed the gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger, Fahy said. Police found a 38-calibre revolver near the bodies.

The couple founded Fairleigh Dickinson as a two-year-college in 1942 in Rutherford, a New York city suburb. It now has more than 12,000 students on three northern New Jersey campuses.

Sammartino, its president for a quarter-century, apparently was distraught over health problems, Fahy said. Mrs Sammartino suffered from Alzheimer's disease and her husband recently had a kidney removed, Fahy said.

Sammartino recently contacted several old friends and hinted that he might die soon, said Fahy, who declined to elaborate.