

Japan to review its role in Asia

TOKYO, Apr 22: Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa plans to set up a special panel to review the country's role in Asia and its regional policy, government spokesman said today, reports AP.

"We should study new policies that would govern our diplomacy toward Asia in the 21st century to take into account the changing international situation," Chief Cabinet Secretary Keichi Kato told reporters.

Kato, the top government spokesman, said Tokyo intended to announce the members and the agenda of the panel in the near future.

Jiji press said the panel, to comprise 10-15 academics, will hold its first meeting in early May and submit a report to Miyazawa by the end of this year.

It is also expected to reshape Tokyo's aid programmes largely used to construct infrastructure, to take into account environmental concerns and other purposes. Among other topics to be discussed are disarmament, security issues and measures to maintain free trade in the region.

FIS urges Algerians to take up arms to oust army-backed govt

ALGIERS, Apr 22: The Fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) called on Algerians to take up arms to overthrow the military-backed regime, in an underground publication received today by AFP.

It was the first time the FIS has directly urged Algerians to rise up against the regime which seized power in January and aborted elections which would have brought the FIS to power.

The FIS, in its bulletin *Minbar Al-Joumouaa* (Friday News), urged Algerians to "move from words to rifles after the failure of attempts at dialogue."

"I will seek a rifle to liberate my country," said the author of the unsigned appeal. "There is resistance to oppression and we are prepared to sacrifice millions (of people) to save Algeria."

The appeal was dated Monday, the day before the jailed Head of the FIS Abdel Kader Hachani appeared in court charged with inciting troops to mutiny.

Hachani's lawyers said the incitement charges had been

dropped, but the court had ordered the FIS leader to be kept in jail on other unspecified charges.

It was not clear whether the clandestine news bulletin reflected the official position of the FIS leadership, most of whom are now in jail.

However, in a communique issued last month, the FIS acknowledged that Islamic militants were probably responsible for attacks against security forces since the elections were cancelled and a state of emergency imposed on February 9. The FIS was disbanded by authorities on March 4.

In two and a half months, about 50 policemen and gendarmes have died in terrorist attacks.

For the first time in independent Algeria, posters of people wanted by the police have been posted on walls in major cities.

In its call to arms, *Minbar Al-Joumouaa* said "The junta"—FIS terminology for the high state council collegial Presidency headed by Mohamed Boudiaf—had installed "dictatorship in every sense of the word."

"An entire nation has been reduced to the status of sus-

pect under police supervision," it said.

The junta approves, legalises and justifies barbarity: The deaths of some 200 Algerians, more than 700 others wounded by bullets, more than 60,000 interrogated, more than 30,000 arrested and more than 10,000 deported to concentration camps while as many again are languishing in prison.

The official toll of security force action against the fundamentalists is fewer than 100 dead, about 2,000 sentenced and some 7,000 held in seven "security centres" in the

Sahara desert.

"France in colonial times, Nazi Germany or fascist Italy did not do as much in such a short time," the FIS newsletter said.

"Millions of Algerians live in daily fear of being arrested or abducted, even shot, when they leave their homes, schools, universities, factories, mosques or walk down the street," the publication said.

The FIS was poised for an overwhelming victory in January's legislative elections when the second round of polls were cancelled.

Off the Record

He will pay for soiling Major's suit

EASTLEIGH, England: A student who hit Prime Minister John Major with an egg during the national election campaign was fined Wednesday and ordered to pay the cost of cleaning Major's suit, reports AP.

Appearing in magistrates' court, John McIntyre, 25 of Portsmouth, admitted throwing the egg at Major on April 6, three days before the national election.

The egg hit Major on the right side of his face and oozed down over his clothing.

McIntyre was fined 100 pounds (dfls 175) and ordered to pay 10 pounds (dfls 17.50) compensation for soiling the suit.

Aim is to promote healthy lifestyle

SINGAPORE: Sugary soft drinks such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola will be banned from sale in Singapore schools from June, the Straits Times newspaper said Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The aim is to promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce obesity among students, an Education Ministry spokesman said.

"We are preparing a list of drinks containing less than 10 per cent sugar which school canteens will be allowed to sell," the spokesman said.

Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola and some other popular drinks would not be sold in school canteens because they contained too much sugar, the newspaper report said.

In January the government banned the manufacture, sale and import of chewing gum.

Like a piece of garbage

PITTSBURGH: Botched abortions that interfered with their ability to bear children sent two Pennsylvania women along different paths. One became an abortion-rights crusader, the other an anti-abortion activist, reports AP.

Mary Litman can't forget how those involved in her illegal abortion treated her "like a piece of garbage." She wants safe, legal abortion to remain available.

Paula Molloy also can't forget how she was treated. Her abortion was legal, but she says the clinic's staff never warned her of the risks.

"If there's one thing I'll never get over, it's my abortion," she said.

Both women - along with activists around the country - awaited the outcome of arguments scheduled before the US Supreme Court on Wednesday on the constitutionality of a restrictive Pennsylvania abortion law.

The law requires doctors to show patients literature about fetal development and imposes a 24-hour waiting period for women seeking an abortion. Married women must notify their husbands before an abortion, and girls under 18 must have parental permission.

Blood donation mandatory

BEIJING, Apr 22: Beijing residents will be forced to give blood from July as part of China's plans to make blood donations mandatory for everyone, an official said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Six million Beijing adults could be covered by the new policy, which aims to fill the city's need for about 60,000 litres (13,200 gallons) of blood each year, said Shi Weiwel of the Beijing Health Bureau.

"The Ministry of Health is going to make a law on mandatory donation for the whole country," she said, adding that this would take some time.

Beijing follows Shanghai and northern Liaoning province in being among the first to implement the new policy.

In the past, the government required work units to fulfil blood donation quotas by soliciting donations among workers.

The mandatory blood drive was designed to outsmart people who turned to "professional blood donors" to make up their work unit's quotas, the China daily newspaper said on Tuesday.

Seven top Sikh leaders held

NEW DELHI, Apr 22: Police arrested seven top Sikh leaders Wednesday when they tried to meet United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and demand UN intervention in Punjab, reports AP.

"This is undemocratic (and) inhuman...", said Simranjit Singh Mann, president of one of the seven Sikh political parties, as he emerged from a historic Sikh shrine before being arrested by the police.

The Sikh politicians were arrested for violating an order banning assemblies and processions near Parliament, said police officer Malook Singh. The Sikh shrine is near the Parliament.

"The detention of the Sikh leaders shows that this country is not keen to solve the Punjab problem," said Jagmohan Singh Sohi, spokesman for the arrested leaders.

Boutros-Ghali is on a four-day visit to India.

"We were planning to go peacefully," said former Punjab state Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal. "The United Nations officials have said that they have no objections if the Indian government allows us to meet them."

India says that the Punjab issue is an internal affair.

In an 11-page memoran-

dum to the UN copies of which were released to reporters, the Sikh leaders said "demilitarization and decolonization of the Punjab is indispensable to... enable the Sikh people to exercise their economic, social and cultural rights."

Indian security personnel terrorize, rape, plunder and humiliate innocent Sikhs.

Lankan monks to hold talks with Tamils

COLOMBO, Apr 22: Ten Buddhist monks left the Sri Lankan capital today for peace talks with Tamil rebels in the northern town of Jaffna, a military spokesman said, reports Reuter.

It will be the first such contact since a Buddhist delegation visited Jaffna in 1986.

The group, led by the venerable Madampegama Assaji and accompanied by two unnamed laymen, was flying to a military airfield in the northern Peninsula, the spokesman said.

From there, they will be taken by road to Jaffna by the Red Cross, he said.

In Jaffna, the monks are to meet officials of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam



Afghan security troops watch for Mujahideen resistance fighters in Bagram, near the highway to Carikar Tuesday. The Afghan resistance is advancing to Kabul to take over the control of the capital after the fall of the Najibullah regime. — AFP/UNB photo.

Kashmiris observe strike to protest Ghali's India visit

JAMMU, Apr 22: Kashmir was brought to a virtual standstill Tuesday by a general strike called to protest a visit by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to India, witnesses said, reports AP.

The strike, called by Muslim militants fighting for the secession of India's only Muslim-majority state, was called to protest the UN's failure to implement 1948 its resolutions for a plebiscite to decide Kashmir's political fate. Boutros-Ghali arrived in New Delhi late Tuesday.

Schools and colleges, shops and businesses were shut and vehicles stayed off the roads in

the Kashmir valley, the stronghold of Muslim militancy, in response to the strike call, residents reached by telephone from this winter capital city of the state said.

There were no reports of violence connected with the strike.

The plebiscite, opposed by New Delhi, was proposed to ascertain whether the people of India's northernmost state would like to remain with India, join Pakistan or have independence.

Most militant groups favour Kashmir's union with Pakistan, but the Jammu and Kashmir

Liberation Front is fighting for independence from both India and Pakistan.

Reuter adds, Boutros-Ghali arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday on the final leg of an Asian tour but refused to make any detailed comment on the Afghanistan crisis.

He told reporters at Delhi airport the objectives of the United Nations were to maintain political independence in Afghanistan, to maintain its territorial integrity and national reconciliation.

"We are trying to do our best to achieve these objectives", Boutros-Ghali said.

During his three-day stay in Delhi, Boutros-Ghali is expected to discuss with Indian leaders various international issues, especially the recent developments in Afghanistan, where President Najibullah was deposed last week.

Earlier on Tuesday, Minister of State for External Affairs Eduardo Faleiro told parliament that India had not received a formal request for asylum from Najibullah. But he said India had received feelers in the past.

Boutros-Ghali arrived in Delhi from Bangkok after visits to China and Cambodia.

UN forces won't leave Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Apr 22: United Nations peace-keeping forces based in Sarajevo have no intention of pulling out despite street battles in the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a UN spokesman said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"We have no reason to think we are a direct target of attack. We intend to stay here as long as possible," Fred Eckhard, spokesman for the peace-keeping troops, told reporters. He said the force, operating

in neighbouring Croatia but with its headquarters in Sarajevo, would remain in the city unless it became a direct target.

"The headquarters will remain in Sarajevo until the violence starts being directly aimed at it," he said.

UN troops took to the streets in armoured vehicles on Tuesday to try to rescue the wounded as Serb forces pounded Sarajevo with mortars and fought Muslim militia in

the most serious upsurge of violence in the city since fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina broke out six weeks ago.

More than 200 people have been killed and 1,100 others are missing in the fighting between Serbs Muslims and Croats in the republic of more than 4.3 million.

Gun battles raged on Tuesday morning near a building used by UN officials in Sarajevo.

Armed UN "blue helmet"

troops took up position outside the building to guard against attack. Others drove armoured vehicles through the city to try to pick up the wounded.

Eckhard said the UN "have taken on a political obligation to remain in Sarajevo as long as possible because their presence represents a stabilising factor."

On Monday, UN officials said armed militia groups were spreading confusion in Bosnia.

bank report issued in 1990, 6,500,000 tonnes of petrol are dumped in the Mediterranean each year, and 550 tonnes of pesticide also reach the sea.

Some pollution is simply carried through the air.

Tests have proved that polluted air from the Ruhr industrial area (of Germany) can reach the western Mediterranean in four days, Viale said.

The pollution is completely absorbed into the marine food chain in 15 days.

Viale said schools of Whales were becoming a rare sight. At dead baby Sperm Whale I examined had large quantities of pesticide in its brain, and its reproductive organs were all withered. One three-year-old had a huge thick plastic sheet in its stomach.

BRIEFLY

Arab physician shot to death:

Palestinian assailants on Wednesday stabbed and shot to death an Arab physician employed by Israeli military authorities, accusing him of being a collaborator, the army and Arab reports said, AP says from Jerusalem.

The victim, Ahmed Istach, 53, an orthopedist appointed by Israel to the Jenin city council in the West Bank in 1983, also headed the city's Israeli-run health office.

Arab reports said he was shot and stabbed by members of the Black Panther movement who support the mainstream Fatah wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Tajikistan MPs taken hostage:

Rebel national guards in the central Asian state of Tajikistan took several Members of Parliament hostage on Tuesday, Interfax news agency reported, says Reuter from Moscow.

"Guards supporting the Tajik opposition have taken hostage several Parliamentary Deputies," it said. Opposition supporters, demanding the resignation of Parliament Chairman Safaril Kendzhayev and new multi-party elections, have been holding daily rallies in the centre of the capital Dushanbe for weeks.

"A total of 18 people have been taken hostage by opposition supporters, including Deputies from the Tajikistan Supreme Soviet and members of the government," it said, quoting opposition sources.

Peru's Economy Minister resigns:

Peru's Economy Minister, Carlos Bolona, has resigned in the mid-east of the country's political crisis, Foreign Minister Augusto Blaker confirmed Tuesday, reports AP from Lima.

Bolona's resignation comes one day after a high-level mission from the organization of America states arrived here to promote dialogue between the government of President Alberto Fujimori and his opponents.

Backed by the military, Fujimori suspended the constitution, dissolved Congress and launched a purge of the judiciary April 5. Fujimori said the power grab was necessary for him to bypass corruption, stop leftist guerrillas and clamp down on drug trafficking.

Members of the disbanded legislature earlier Tuesday swore in first Vice President Maximo San Roman as "constitutional president" in a direct challenge to Fujimori's crisis government.

5 newsmen charged with treason:

The editor of a newsmagazine critical of the government and four others were charged with sedition Tuesday in a Mombasa court, reports AP from Mombasa.

Pius Nyamora, the editor and publisher of Society, his wife Loyce, an assistant managing editor and two reporters were charged with publishing seditious material.

The prosecution, citing articles published since last December said five were attempting, "to bring hatred, contempt and to exit disaffection with the person of the president and the government of Kenya."

If convicted, they face a maximum of seven years imprisonment. The court will hear their bail application on Friday.

Duke Vladimir dead:

Grand Duke Vladimir, head of the Romanov Russian imperial family that was overthrown in 1917, collapsed during an appearance in Miami on Tuesday and died at a local hospital, officials said. He was 74, reports Reuter from Miami.

Grand Duke Vladimir Kirillovich was the third child and only son of Grand Duke Cyrille Vladimirovich, a first cousin of Russia's last Tsar, Nicholas II, and Victoria Feodorovna De Saxe Cobourg, a granddaughter of Britain's Queen Victoria.

The grand Duke became head of the Romanov dynasty in 1938 upon the death of his father.

Latvia opens mission in Israel:

Latvia has become the first of the Baltic republics to open a diplomatic mission in Israel with a consulate in Tel Aviv, the Foreign Ministry announced in Tel Aviv Tuesday, reports AP.

Since the collapse of the communist bloc, Israel has opened ties with the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Estonia, Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Three Myanmar dissidents get refugee status in Japan

TOKYO, Apr 22: Japan has granted refugee status to three Myanmar dissidents for the first time, the NHK public television station said today, reports Reuter.

The three Myanmar people who fled after taking in part in pro-democracy protest in Myanmar and have been active in Japan campaigning for the release of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, applied for refugee status in Japan three years ago, NHK said.

This is the first time Japan has granted such a status to Myanmar people, it said.

Metals poison marine mammals in Mediterranean

NICE, France, Apr 22: Dolphins and whales in the Mediterranean are being poisoned by mercury and choked by industrial waste and air pollution, scientists say, reports Reuter.

Over the past few years, post-mortem studies of the growing number of animals being washed up on beaches have revealed massive damage to vital organs.

"I've found increasingly large quantities of mercury, lead, cadmium, chromium and other heavy metals in relatively young animals," said Professor Denise Viale, an expert on marine mammals at the University of Corsica.

Henriaugier, Director of the Marine Biology Laboratory at Marseille University, has confirmed her findings.

"We too have found huge

doses of heavy metals on dead Dolphins," he said.

"The most dangerous is mercury. In some cases, to our stupefaction, we've found as much as 300 PPM (Parts Per Million) — 600 times the acceptable level."

"Since we can't conduct parallel laboratory tests on them, we can't affirm that it caused their death, but at those levels, no one could argue that it didn't."

The concentration of mercury increased eight or ten fold at each stage of the food chain, Augier said. Cetaceans — Dolphins and Whales — were at the end of the chain, hence the high levels of mercury accumulated in their bodies.

Although international agreements have severely restricted the use and disposal of mercury, the liquid metal, con-

tinues to be irreplaceable in industries manufacturing medicines, plastics, electrical equipment, and nuclear energy.

It also exists naturally in the environment.

"The Mediterranean basin is a special case," said Milena Horvat, a Marine Pollution Chemist at the Monaco-based International Laboratory of Marine Radioactivity.

"Sixty-five per cent of the mercury found here comes from natural sources, and its behaviour is not fully understood."

If, as some tests tend to prove, the deep sea temperature is rising, this could release more natural mercury. But we've found no evidence of danger to humans.

Marine mammals are not so

lucky. Viale said more and more dolphins examined showed abnormally weak thoracic cages.

This subjects their lungs to terrific pressure when diving.

The heart becomes overdeveloped because of the strain, and sometimes one-third of the lungs have disintegrated.

Others have vital organs riddled with tiny stones, and painful growths in their intestines.

We believe the effect of pollution also makes them vulnerable to viruses or parasites, and hinders their movements.

Mercury and other heavy metals are not the only dangers they face. Thousands die each year trapped in fishermen's drift nets.

According to a joint world bank-European investment



LONDON: Lisa Minelli gives her tribute to Freddie Mercury as she joins the surviving members of the rock band "Queen" for the last song of the show "We are the champions" on Monday. — AFP/UNB photo

Convicted for convincing others

CORCORAN: Charles Manson, one of America's most infamous criminals, had another date with a parole board Tuesday, hours after California's first execution in a quarter century, reports AP.

Manson, who originally was sentenced to die in the gas chamber by the state that killed Robert Alton Harris on Tuesday, is imprisoned for masterminding the grisly 1969 slaying of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and eight others.

But the state Supreme Court threw out the death penalty law in effect then, leaving Manson with the only alternative life in prison with possible parole.

The execution of Harris, convicted under a subsequent death-penalty law of murdering two teenagers in San Diego, was the first in California since 1967, two years before Manson's killing spree.

Supporters of capital punishment cite the parole hearings available every three years for someone as notorious as Manson as reason to keep the death penalty.

Manson has been in maximum security throughout his more than two decades in prison because authorities fear his ability to make others act violently.

"It's not that he's physically dangerous himself," Deputy Los Angeles District Attorney Stephen Kay said when Manson was transferred to Corcoran. "Manson is most dangerous at convincing other people to do his dirty deeds."