

Bush-Miyazawa talks in July

TOKYO, May 12: Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa will hold talks with US President George Bush in July before a summit of the world's leading industrialized nations in Germany, Jiji press reported today, says AFP.

Quoting government sources, Jiji said Miyazawa would leave Japan on June 30 for the United States where he will meet the following day with Bush.

The Japanese Prime Minister will then visit Britain to talk with British Prime Minister John Major and the European Community President Jacques Delors on July 4 before attending the Group of Seven (G7) summit meeting in Munich in Germany on July 6-8.

The meeting in the United States is expected to include follow-up talks on the Tokyo Declaration and the attached plan of action accepted by Tokyo and issued during Bush's visit to Japan in January.

The declaration addressed both bilateral as well as international issues, resolving to give highest priority to trade friction.

The plan of action aimed to enhance bilateral partnership and to solve trade disputes in various areas including over automobiles, car parts and computers.

Prospect of ME talks uncertain

BRUSSELS, May 12: More than three-dozen nations met Monday to offer ideas for repairing the strife-torn economies of the Middle East, but the outlook for the talks was clouded by the refusal of Israel, Lebanon and Syria to attend, reports AP.

The European Community, which is hosting the discussions, urged the three to reconsider and take part in future meetings.

Foreign Minister Joao de Deus Pinheiro of Portugal, which holds the rotating EC presidency, suggested that Israel's desire for closer trade and economic ties to the 12-nation European Community would depend on progress in the peace talks.

He noted that Israel is a democracy, as are the European nations. Therefore, he said, "the community has a special understanding but it also means that Israel has a special responsibility."

The other EC members are Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain. Also at the meeting were the United States, Japan, Canada, China,

Russia, Algeria, Egypt, India, Kuwait, Yemen, Sweden, Switzerland and the World Bank.

Israel boycotted it to protest the participation of Palestinians who live outside the occupied territories. The United States and Russia, sponsors of the peace talks, decided those Palestinians could attend after excluding them from the initial negotiations last October in Madrid, Spain.

It is vitally important that one must be faithful to the principles accepted in Madrid," said Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, who met separately with foreign ministers of the EC nations.

"One should not have any changes in principles without a consensus ... that could in the

future jeopardize the whole peace process itself," he told a news conference.

The Israeli government is afraid that participation by Palestinians from outside the occupied territories could strengthen the Palestine Liberation Organization and claims by refugees to the homes they lost when Israel became a state in 1948.

Lebanon and Syria have said there must be progress in bilateral peace negotiations before they will show up at the multilateral discussions on economic development, water resources, environment, refugees, and arms control.

The side talks, sponsored by the United States and Russia, were designed to complement direct negotiations

that began last October between Arabs and Israelis to end the 44-year-old Mideast conflict.

The idea was that if the nations could work together to resolve common economic and other problems, they might find it easier to tackle the larger issue of peace for their troubled region.

At the opening session on economic issues, the European Community offered itself as an example of how a dozen diverse nations can cooperate on trade and other issues to eventually form a wealthy trading bloc.

The Middle East nations would be starting from scratch to create a free trade area.

Israel and the Arab nations have no formal trade relations,

and all Arab nations except Egypt maintain a boycott against Israel.

EC officials said the economies of the region are so small — and some so impoverished — that they could benefit greatly from improved contacts.

One official, demanding anonymity, said that if Arabs and Israelis agree on measures for regional economic cooperation, then "certainly the community can provide finances and means of support."

The community suggested "a gradual and pragmatic approach" that would lift trade barriers, improve the climate for investment, free up the movement of labor and capital and create conditions for monetary stability.



SARAJEVO: Framed by the wrecked wall of his home, a Bosnian defender takes up a firing position early May 11 as Serbians and Bosnians continue to fight for the control of the besieged capital. His apartment was completely destroyed by Yugoslav federal army shelling. — AFP/UNB photo

Coalition govt in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, May 12: The former Soviet republic of Tajikistan pulled back from the brink of civil war on Monday by creating a coalition government with opposition representatives in several key posts, reports Reuter.

Thousands of Muslim and pro-democracy demonstrators, who have been camped on a square in the capital Dushanbe for six weeks, waited for details of the compromise before deciding whether to pack up their tents, blankets and kettles and go home.

"I think the people will leave either today or tomorrow," said Tokhir Abduzhaborov, leader of the Rastokhez Democratic Opposition Group. He told reporters that ex-

communist President Rakhmon Nabiyev, under pressure from radical opposition supporters to resign, would remain in his post — one part of the agreement that might be hard to sell to the crowd.

"Nabiyev must resign. After this bloodshed, he has no right to remain in power. That is my last word," a senior Muslim cleric, Abdullah Nouri, told reporters at the entrance to the former communist party headquarters.

Talks between the government and opposition, which is made up of Muslim and democratic groups, had looked doomed to failure after security forces fired on a crowd of demonstrators on Sunday, killing nine and seriously wounding 24.

The talks were chaired by local commonwealth army commander Vyacheslav Zabolotny, who said 108 people had been killed in the violent unrest of the past week.

As Nouri spoke, Islamic prayers and shouts of "God is great" and "revolution" echoed around the square, reminding democrats of possible future conflict over the separation of church and state — guaranteed under Monday's accord.

The agreement is a compromise. We wanted there to be no repetition of the bloodshed," Abduzhaborov said.

The agreement followed late night talks between President Nabiyev, opposition leaders and the country's senior Muslim cleric, Qazi Akbar Turazhonzade.

Cambodia to attend NAM meet

BANGKOK, May 12: Cambodia is to send its first united delegation to a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in more than 20 years, reports Reuter.

The Cambodian delegation will be headed by Prince Norodom Ranariddh, whose father Prince Norodom Sihanouk was one of the founders of the movement.

The news was contained in a statement, received on Monday, from Cambodia's royalist faction which Ranariddh now heads.

The six-man Cambodian delegation to the four-day meeting, which begins in Bali, Indonesia on Tuesday will represent the Supreme National Council, a reconciliation body Sihanouk heads. The delegation includes representatives of all four Cambodian factions.

Indo-Pak talks by monthend

ISLAMABAD, May 12: India has agreed to release four Pakistani intelligence officers arrested in March and the two countries will resume tension-easing talks later this month, a Pakistani spokesman said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters the three officers of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and a driver arrested after straying across the border would be released unconditionally and were expected to return very soon.

Last month, Islamabad said New Delhi had asked for the release of an unspecified number of Indians held in Pakistan in exchange for the four men caught on March 13 when they crossed the border in a sensitive area of India's Punjab state and were charged with spying.

Much of Punjab's border has been fenced by India, which accuses Pakistan of helping separatist militants in Punjab and the adjoining disputed state of Kashmir.

In return, Islamabad charges India with fomenting trouble in Pakistan and being responsible for bomb attacks.

The spokesman said top Indian and Pakistani Foreign Ministry officials would meet in New Delhi on May 30 for another round of talks to ease tensions between the two countries.

PTI from Poonch adds: Two Indian civilians were injured when Pakistani troops resorted to indiscriminate firing in some border villages of Poonch district last night, official sources said.

Zardari allowed to attend parliament session

ISLAMABAD, May 12: The husband of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto will be let out of jail to attend a session of parliament, the Interior Minister said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Asif Ali Zardari will be brought to Islamabad from a jail in Karachi on Tuesday to attend the current budget session of the National Assembly (lower house) the next day, Interior Minister Shujaat Hussain told the Assembly.

Last week, anti-terrorist court trying Zardari gave him permission to attend the Assembly, to which he was elected in October 1990 after his arrest that month.

But another court ruled he could not go because he faced serious charges, including conspiracy to murder 29 people in Karachi in August 1990.

Gaddafi talks Lockerbie issue with UN envoy

TUNIS, May 12: Libyan Leader Muammar Gaddafi met on Monday with the UN's top envoy on the Lockerbie crisis who delivered a letter from Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Libyan news agency JANA said, reports Reuter.

The letter, hand delivered by Vladimir Petrovsky, United Nations under Secretary-General, urged Libya to comply with UN demands for the handover of the Lockerbie suspects, the JANA report monitored in Tunis said.

Massive hunt for Sikh militants

NEW DELHI, May 12: Police ordered a massive hunt today for Sikh militants in Bombay after an overnight gunbattle with the separatists left one officer dead and another injured in the bustling western India city, reports AFP.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said police set up road blocks and intensified patrolling in Bombay, India's commercial hub, to track down a group of Sikh militants who were involved in the overnight gunbattle.

An unspecified number of Sikh militants travelling in a car shot and injured four civilians Monday night in a north-eastern district, but were intercepted by a police patrol which led to a gunbattle in the busy Bombay streets, PTI said.

The militants pumped eight bullets into a police sub-inspector, killing him instantly, and shot a constable four times from AK-47 assault rifles, injuring him, PTI said.

The Sikh killers abandoned their weapons and ran away during the fireplay in the city's Bhandup area, triggering the manhunt.

Off the Record

'The way I see it' reveals that she is no more gloomy

WASHINGTON: Patt Davis's voice does not waver when she describes what she regards as years of abuse at the hands of her mother, former First Lady Nancy Reagan, reports Reuter.

Indeed, Davis, 39, is quite cheerful in a telephone interview as she plugs her new autobiography, in which she says her mother was addicted to tranquilisers and describes her father, former president Ronald Reagan, as distant and unfeeling.

"I am happier in my life because I don't look out at the world any more from the point of view of being a victim," she said.

Her book, 'The way I see it', paints a grim picture of life in the Reagan home.

More than three years have gone by since Reagan left the White House and the charges are bound to tear further at his image as the kindly, fatherly man who said he was trying to set a moral example for the nation during his presidency.

Davis says her mother beat her for years but her father ignored the troubled relationship, refusing to acknowledge what was happening under his own roof.



Have vasectomy, stop AIDS

WASHINGTON: A vasectomy shows promise as a new method to control the spread of AIDS by stopping transmission of Human Immune deficiency Virus (HIV) found in the semen of infected men, researchers reported on Monday, says Reuter.

They reported to a meeting of the American Urological Association that their study might yield important information about how Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is spread.

The findings may have profound implications about strategies to limit sexual transmission of HIV, they said in a brief report.

Four vasectomised men known to be infected with HIV provided semen samples. Scientists were unable to grow the virus from this in contrast to their success in growing HIV from the semen of infected men who had not had vasectomies.

A vasectomy is minor surgery that cuts the ducts that carry the sperm from the testes to seminal vesicles. The continues to ejaculate as usual but the semen no longer carries sperm. The sterilisation is usually done as a method of birth control but in rare cases on a reverse itself.

Researcher Dr John Krieger of the University of Seattle cautioned this was a nearly study on a small number of men and it has not been proven conclusively that semen of vasectomised men is free of the virus that causes AIDS.

He said in an interview, it is very important this be studied scientifically and no one should jump to conclusions.



LONDON: Judith Ward (C), leaves the Court of Appeal, London on Monday, on bail after three judges ruled that convictions against her were 'unsafe and unsatisfactory'. Ward, 43, spent 18 years in prison after being convicted in 1974, on her own confession for bombing on an Army coach in which 12 people died. — AFP/UNB photo

When 'cold' becomes 'hot' only then a drum rolls

NEW YORK: The Reagans and the Gorbachevs, two couples who together helped end the cold war, said farewell to each other on Monday — from the stage of New York's Radio City Music Hall with 2,000 people applauding, reports Reuter.

Politics can make for strange occasions and so can show business-tinged magazine Promotions.

The former US and Soviet presidents and their wives were guests of honour at a Promotion at the Cavernous Art Deco-style music hall to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Forbes, the US business magazine that bills itself as the capitalist's tool.

Mrs Gorbachev and Mrs Reagan arrived on stage together holding hands, making tales of their fighting their own cold war when their husbands were in power seem like so much ancient history.

Then the curtain lifted, a trumpet fanfare was played complete with wanger-like drum rolls, and the two ex-presidents appeared to warm applause.

The Reagans, at their California ranch, played host to the Gorbachevs at the start of their two-week US tour which is scheduled to end this week. The two couples were reunited in New York for their appearance at the Forbes celebration.

The two ex-presidents spoke briefly before a documentary film made by Forbes on the fall of communism and the struggle for democracy in eastern Europe was shown.

Reagan, a former actor turned politician said he was looking forward to the film as it was the first one he had appeared in for 28 years.

Gorbachev said he was surprised to find myself in this grand room and saluted the Reagans as old friends who worked with him to achieve world peace.



BRIEFLY

Quake hits California: A moderate earthquake shook Southern California desert communities on Monday, rattling windows but bringing no reports of injuries or damage, police said, reports AP from California.

The quake registered 4.4 on the Richter scale and struck shortly before 8 pm (0300 GMT Tuesday), said Doug Smith, a spokesman for the seismographic station at the California Institute of Technology.

It was an aftershock from a magnitude-6.1 temblor that struck the same area on April 22. The jolt was the 14th aftershock to reach magnitude 4 or better.

Palm Springs Police Department spokeswoman Julieen Gerhardt described the quake as "a big roll" followed by smaller tremors that shook windows.

Webster to lead probe into US riot: William H Webster, former head of the CIA and FBI, was named Monday to lead an investigation into whether police responded too slowly to rioting that left 53 dead, AP reports from Los Angeles.

Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl F Gates promised to cooperate with the probe. The appointment of Webster and Hubert H Williams, President of the Washington-based Police Foundation, was announced by the Police Commission. Mayor Tom Bradley requested the independent investigation.

"The focus of this investigation is not to lay blame but to move the department ahead," Police Commissioner Ann Reiss Lane said.

Meanwhile, the peace held in riot-ravaged neighborhoods. On Saturday 4,000 Marine and Army troops were withdrawn. A police spokeswoman, Sharyn Michelson, reported Sunday night was quiet.

Fire sweeps Rarotonga: Fire swept through the Cook Islands capital Rarotonga on Monday, devastating many government buildings and the telephone exchange, Radio New Zealand said, Reuter reports from Wellington.

The blaze damaged the central administration block, the Prime Minister's department, the Justice Department, the Court House, the post office and the telephone exchange.

Rarotonga is the main island of the 15 in the tiny south Pacific Archipelago and is where most of its 17,000 people live.

Located 3,000 km (1,900 miles) northeast of New Zealand, the islands cover more than two million square km (1.25 million square miles).

About 3,000 domestic telephone lines and most international lines were destroyed. A police spokesman said the cause of the fire was not known but arson had not been ruled out.

11 more freed in Yangon: Myanmar military government has freed 11 more dissidents, the latest in a series of releases since General Than Shwe took over as head of the junta last month, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

They included the former Chairman of the Democracy Party, Thu Wat, and former Deputy Chairman Htay Myint, official Yangon Radio said in a report monitored in Bangkok on Monday night, all were held at the capital's Insein jail.

The government has now released 75 jailed dissidents since April 23.

Diplomats say the junta, which seized power after crushing a pro-democracy uprising in 1988, is trying to counter international criticism of its human rights record.

Noriega ordered to pay \$ 30m: A British court has ordered former Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega to pay Panama 30 million dollar he allegedly stole from the country during his six-year rule. Panama's government said on Monday, reports Reuter from Panama City.

The decision was made last Wednesday by a London court, said a statement from the office of President Guillermo Endara.

Panama filed suits against Noriega in various countries where the government alleges he stashed funds in bank accounts and real estate. It was not clear how much of the 30 million dollar is alleged to be in British banks.

Taiwan to buy 100 fighters from France

PARIS, May 12: Taiwan is going to buy 100 fighter planes, French Minister Pierre Joxe said here today in a radio interview, reports AFP.

He gave no details about when the purchase might be made or whether the government had given the go-ahead to the Dassault Aviation Aeronautics firm to put its Mirage 2000-5 combat jet on offer.

Government authorisation involved "a very complicated interministerial procedure," Joxe remarked.

Major orders in a leading industry like Aeronautics meant that overall French interests in the short, medium and long term had to be taken into account, he said.

'Life under Israel like living in a prison'

LEBANON, May 12: 'It's a big prison. But I can't leave, it's home, said Nimr Musallam, from the South Lebanon enclave which Israel has turned almost into a state of its own, reports Reuter.

What the Lebanese school teacher calls home is 1,000 square kms (380 sq miles) of scenic hill country meandering along the Israeli border. Israel occupied the strip after pulling the bulk of its 1982 invasion force out of Lebanon in 1985.

Many villagers say they will only feel safe when and if Israel and Lebanon, who have been holding peace talks since October, sign a treaty.

Israel wants people to be pleased with it because its border lies here ... it is doing all of this to seek their favour," Lahd told Reuters in an inter-

view. All residents can get free medical care inside Israel, he added.

Supermarket shelves across the zone carry a wide array of Israeli goods, especially food and alcohol.

The Jewish state arranges recreational trips into Israel for the villagers, many of whom have become fluent Hebrew speakers after years of contact with their neighbours.

At Jidar Al-Tayyeb (The Good Wall) — the main passageway between Lebanon and Israel which are still officially at war — a wall painting shows a Lebanese and an Israeli flag with two hands shaking below them.

But many zone residents say life under Israeli control is like living in a prison. Until then, some 1,000

Israeli soldiers and gunmen of the 3,000-strong Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) are active around the clock. They concrete watch towers and mount foot patrols on the lookout for guerrillas trying to infiltrate the area.

In a raid last month, three Palestinian guerrillas entered the zone, hid for 11 days and then ambushed an Israeli patrol 400 metres (yards) from the border, killing two soldiers and wounding five before being shot dead.

The 300,000 inhabitants of what is still a virtual zone can enter from Lebanon and leave only through five crossing points, and with special permits. They can go into Israel through four passageways.

Israel declared the 15-km (nine miles) deep border strip

as a 'security zone' to curb guerrilla raids on its northern settlements. Many of these are clearly visible from the enclave. Some are within rifle range.

The Christian, druze and mostly Shiite Muslim inhabitants live in 108 villages across the zone, which runs for 60 kms (45 miles) from snow-capped mount Hermon in the east to the Mediterranean in the west.

Many till small patches of land around their villages amid lush green orchards. Most southerners work on the tobacco crop.

Although the area is Lebanese in character, Israel is making its mark. Seeking to win the hearts and minds of villagers, the Jewish state is providing essential services.