

Rabin pledges peace with Palestinians

JERUSALEM, July 11: Labour leader Yitzhak Rabin has pledged that his new, dovish government will move quickly to reach a peace pact with the Palestinians. But there will be powerful forces working against it, reports AP.

Not only will Rabin face differing voices within the Cabinet that he is building, but in Israel as a whole. Polls always show Israelis divided about 50-50 on making peace, and the right-wing will play on every Israeli fear.

The ink was barely dry on the agreements with the left-wing Meretz and the religious Shas giving him a majority in Parliament when the hawks started attacking.

"I think we have to recognize that Israel is besieged, and anybody who does not recognize that... will be treading a very dangerous road," outgoing Defence Minister Moshe Arens said Friday on state-owned radio.

Arabs, too, were cautious. "It is fallacious to assume that Rabin government will readily come out with surprise concessions to the Arabs,"

Jordanian political scientist Labib Qamhawi said in Amman. Rabin, a former general, is well aware that the words "peace" and "security" are inseparable in Israel and has couched his promises for one in terms of the other.

"I believe it is a reasonable government that on one hand will try and achieve peace (while) by no means risking even slightly our security," Rabin said this week.

The trick, says Israeli political scientist Peter Medding, will be "how to put this jigsaw puzzle of peace and security together."

Within the coalition, there will be tugs and pulls: The leftist Meretz advocates independence for the 1.8 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and has urged that the Palestine Liberation Organization be brought into the peace talks.

The ultra-Orthodox Shas, which has usually sided with the right in Israel, has expressed willingness to be flexible on the Palestinian question but has not stated its limits.

NF, left parties unhappy over Rao's attitude

Babri Mosque issue leads to an 'explosive situation'

NEW DELHI, July 11: Leaders of the National Front and left parties combine today expressed "total dissatisfaction" with the Prime Minister's attitude over the current developments in Ayodhya and the centre's "inaction" to stop the work relating to construction of a temple in the disputed Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid complex, reports PTI.

Spokesmen of the two fronts said this after an hour-long meeting with P V Narasimha Rao in the morning that the centre did not appear to have any concrete plan to prevent the ongoing "violation" of the court order and the constitution by the VHP-sponsored temple construction programme.

CPI-M leader, Somnath Chatterjee, and Janata Dal leader, Ram Vilas Paswan, said after the meeting that an NF-LP delegation, led by former Prime Minister, V P Singh, had urged the centre to acquire the disputed site and keep it under the centre's custody till final settlement of the issue by the court.

This was very essential to maintain the principle of secularism and communal harmony in the wake of latest developments which had led to a "explosive situation" in the country.

V P Singh and others made it clear to the Prime Minister that the non-BJP opposition did not want use of Article 356 of the Constitution (dismissal of state government) but immediate steps to make the state government uphold the rule of law and not allow violation of the court order.

The delegation also pointed out that a group of sadhus had called on the Prime Minister last month and had told him about the construction programme. It wanted to know why the centre did not initiate any action to prevent it.

Paswan alleged that the current construction work was going on in "connivance with the central and the Uttar Pradesh governments".

The delegation was given to understand that the Supreme Court would give some direction in the matter this evening and the centre would formulate its course of action after that.

It was also told that the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, was expected in the capital for discussions in the afternoon.

Those who were part of the delegation included, S R Bommai, S Jaipal Reddy, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (Janata Dal), Indrajit Gupta (CPI), K P Unnikrishnan (Cong-S), M Padmanabham (TDP) and Kiruttinan (DMK).

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Off the Record

'Women gotta have guts'

TOKYO: Tamako, drawn and pale in a hospital where she is being treated for stress, has just had her dream of running the family inn's new annex squashed by her evil step-daughter. Crittling her teeth, she begins to weep: "That inn is my life. I can't let them take it away from me," reports AP.

So went a typical scene of "Women Gotta Have Guts," the blockbuster soap opera that chronicles the never-ending abuse heaped upon the petite heroine by her nasty in-laws.

The show's heart-wrenching probe of family ties and idolization of the persevering Tamako is striking a resonant chord in this society in which female servitude and oppressive filial relationships remain the rule.

Court figures show about one-sixth of couples seeking divorce cite conflicts with in-laws as a reason for breaking up. Feuds between bride and mother-in-law have long inspired plays, books and other TV hits before "Women Gotta Have Guts."

The daily soap, which began in April, is already the top show in Tokyo and the surrounding area. About 40 per cent of 13 million households tune in the 15-minute segments each morning, and unknown others watch the daily afternoon rerun, according to Video Research, a private ratings firm.

'Plague of the 21st century'

HELSINKI: Russian President Boris Yeltsin warned here Friday that rising nationalism could be the "plague of the 21st century" and called for preventive measures, including military steps to keep it in check, reports AP.

Russia saw the "danger of aggressive nationalism" rising in some countries of the former communist bloc, notably in Yugoslavia, Moldova, Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh, Yeltsin said in a 10-minute address to leaders of the 52-nation conference on security and cooperation in Europe.

"If legal, political, informational and even military precautionary steps are not taken, this pain could become the real plague of the 21st century," Yeltsin warned.

He said a European force for "restraint and rapid reaction" should be created based on experience of the UN and asserted it was most important that these forces be used early and not "after the blood has begun to flow."

In a reference to new legislation in the Baltic states, Yeltsin said that "measures of discrimination" were international principles.



Teacher convicted of promoting hatred of Jews

RED DEER, Alberta: A former teacher was convicted of promoting hatred Friday for teaching students at a rural high school that Jews had hatched conspiracies for hundreds of years to gain control of the world, reports AP.

Judge Arthur Lutz fined Jim Keegstra \$3,000 at the conclusion of the jury trial. He could have served up to two years in prison.

It was the second trial on the charge for the 58-year-old Keegstra. He was convicted in 1985 in the first successful prosecution under Canada's anti-hate law, but the verdict was overturned last year.

Acting as his own lawyer in the retrial, Keegstra said he tried to do what was best for his students and truly believed that Jews, including international bankers, had a blueprint to create a world government.

Seventeen of his students testified in the trial. They said Keegstra taught them the Jews were evil and bent on destroying Christianity.

"He taught that a small elite Jewish group planned every major war dating back to the French Revolution and that Jews viewed Adolf Hitler as a "dupe and lackey" according to testimony.

'Earth in the balance'

NEW YORK: In his book "Earth in the Balance" Sen Albert Gore Jr. links his environmental concerns to his religious beliefs and his concern for his children's future, reports AP.

"The more deeply I search for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of a better word, spiritual," he writes.

Environmentalists say Gore, who was chosen Thursday to be Bill Clinton's running mate, has one of the best environmental voting records in Congress, far surpassing the records of other Senators.

The League of Conservation Voters says Gore supported its positions 73 per cent of the time in 1991. The Senate average was 50 per cent, the league said.

"He is the most knowledgeable person in the Senate on a lot of these issues," said Scott Hajost of the Environmental Defence Fund. "He has read into them deeply."

"I don't think it's just something he sees as a popular issue," said Sarah McCourt of the League of Conservation Voters. "I think he really feels that these things are important."

Clinton on Friday thanked Gore for providing him with briefings by telephone from the Earth Summit in Brazil last month.

Environmentalists say Gore's record and his statements reflect a deep commitment to environmental issues.

Some observers say, however, that while Gore is an eloquent spokesman on environmental concerns, he hasn't been as effective as a legislator, failing to gain passage of bills that reflect those concerns.



BRIEFLY

Libyan pilot seeks asylum in US: A Libyan pilot who landed his Mig-23 jet fighter on the Greek island of Grete Wednesday has requested political asylum in the United States, informed sources in Athens said Friday, reports AP from Athens.

They said the pilot, a 28-year-old Second Lieutenant in the Libyan air force who identified himself as Jamal Salah Al-Kabouli, had at first asked for asylum in Greece.

The sources said he was a graduate of the Greek Military Aviation College, Icaros.

His plane was damaged in the forced landing Wednesday in northwestern Grete. Diplomatic sources said Libya had declared its intention to request the pilot's extradition.

ROK 23rd populous country: South Korea hopes its population will level off at around 56 million by the year 2021, an official of the national statistical office said Saturday, reports Reuter from Seoul.

The country now ranks as the world's 23rd most populous country with 43.66 million inhabitants, 0.9 per cent higher than last year's figure of 43.27 million, he said.

Population growth would average 0.9 per cent until 1995, falling to 0.8 per cent until the end of the century and then hitting zero growth in 2021 when the population will be 55.86 million, the official said.

In the mid-1980s, South Korea actively promoted a fall in the birth rate by giving tax breaks to small families and penalising couples who had three or more children with heavier tax and medical insurance bills.

ETA offers truce: The Basque separatist organization ETA offered a two-month truce to the Spanish government Friday in a statement sent to Basque news outlets, reports AP from Bilbao.

The group also proposed "political negotiations." The offer came some two weeks before the opening of the summer Olympic games in the Mediterranean coast city of Barcelona, where seven deaths since Christmas have been attributed to ETA operations.

15 executed in China: Chinese authorities sentenced 15 people to death at public rallies on Friday and immediately executed them, the official People's Daily said Saturday, reports Reuter from Beijing.

Police led nine men convicted of more than 20 train robberies into a stadium in Jinan, Shandong province, where the death sentence was pronounced. They were then taken away for execution, the newspaper said.

Beijing authorities publicly condemned to death six men on charges ranging from rape to infanticide, and then executed them, it added.

Executions have in recent years become routine in China, which has seen a rapid rise in serious crime since the decline of orthodox Marxist morals in the past decade.

US slates attack on UN guards: The State Department on Friday strongly condemned an incident in which a grenade wounded two UN guards in the Kurdish area of northern Iraq, reports AP from Washington.

"We condemn this despicable action against the UN guards as well as other actions directed against UN personnel who are in Iraq to provide essential humanitarian assistance," State Department press officer Joseph Snyder said.

The two guards, both Austrians, were wounded about 9 pm Wednesday when a hand grenade was thrown into the garden of a private house where they were staying in Irbil, about 210 miles north of Baghdad.

Snyder said the United States expects the full cooperation of Iraqi government authorities in ensuring the safety and well-being of UN personnel.

19 envoys to invite NAM guests: The Indonesian government has appointed 19 special envoys, including 14 ministers, to deliver invitations for the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in September, the Kompas Daily said Saturday, reports AP from Jakarta.

Kompas quoted Foreign Minister Ali Alatas as saying Jakarta Friday that 14 ministers— including himself, two members of the Supreme Advisory Council and three senior parliamentarians — would deliver invitations for the summit to leaders of the 104 NAM member states.

Alatas added several top diplomats would be appointed soon to help deliver the invitations, which are expected to be received by NAM leaders by end of this month at the latest.

UN N-inspection team leaves Baghdad

BAGHDAD, July 11: The head of a UN weapons inspection mission, Karen Jansen, left Baghdad today along with five of her team after failing to win Iraqi approval to search the agriculture ministry, UN sources here said.

But 13 other members of the chemical weapons inspection group prepared for an indefinite wait outside the building.

Five of them were sitting in three UN vehicles outside the ministry this morning, an AFP correspondent said.

Jansen and her team have kept a round-the-clock vigil outside the building in shifts since last Sunday.

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Iraq previously has leveled the charges, which have been denied by the US and British governments.

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Al-Nima told a news conference that he presented the videotape to the president of the Security Council, Ambassador Jose Luis Jesus of Cape Verde. Jesus said US and British envoys have denied any effort to burn croplands and said that no council member has asked to see it.

He showed it at a news conference.

The tape, lasting about five minutes, shows what seem to be Western aircraft identified by a voice on the film as an F-16 and a British Jaguar. They are releasing light-colored objects, identified as flares, but the film did not show any actual fires started when the objects struck the ground.

It showed burned cropland and people trying to beat out flames.

Al-Nima said more than 31 cases of crop burning occurred from May 27, including a case two days ago. Most took place in Mosul, about 225 miles (360 kilometers) north of Baghdad. He claimed more than 11,000 acres were burned and 7,000 tons of grain, mostly wheat and barley, were destroyed.

The United States, Britain and France have