

Palestinian team to consult with US before ME talks resume

TUNIS, Apr 10: The Palestinian delegation to Arab-Israeli peace talks will visit Washington for "consultations" ahead of the next round of negotiations planned for April 20, a top PLO official said, reports AFP.

The consultations "should be in mid-April," according to Jamil Hilal, the head of the Information Department for the Palestine Liberation Organization, which instructs the Palestinian peace delegates.

Palestinians Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi visited Washington at the end of March but said they had been unable to resolve all the issues blocking the resumption of the peace talks.

The talks were suspended over Israel's mass expulsions of Palestinians in December.

Washington has invited Israel and the Arab parties to attend the ninth round on April 20.



German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe (L) and Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel hold a joint press conference in Bonn on April 8 commenting on the ruling of the German federal court to authorise Germany to join the NATO mission to enforce the 'no-fly' zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Kinkel's Free Democratic Party had brought a suit to the court against a cabinet decision to join the NATO mission arguing that the move was illegal while Ruehe's Christian Democratic Union had backed the move.

Good Friday battle claims 34 in Lanka

COLOMBO, Apr 10: The Sri Lankan military today claimed to have killed at least 14 Tamil Tiger guerrillas to raise to 34 the death toll in a Good Friday bloodletting in the island's northeast, reports AFP.

Security forces had "confirmation" of at least 14 deaths among the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who stormed a bunker line in the Well Oya region Friday.

An officer and 18 soldiers died immediately in the attack, while one more soldier died in hospital overnight Friday to raise military losses to 20, a spokesman said.

He said intelligence reports and intercepts of LTTE radio communications showed that Tiger losses included a captain, two lieutenants and six second lieutenants.

Troops retaliated using helicopter gunships, a fixed-wing bomber, tanks and artillery guns, the spokesman said.

The Good Friday massacre was the worst single loss suffered by security forces this year. The attack also belied government claims that Tigers were unable to carry out major attacks in the northeastern region.

Last Christmas eve, suspected LTTE gunmen wiped out 42 soldiers in the same region carrying out a similar raid on army posts and a group of soldiers who were engaged in an anti-rebel operation.

Tigers have also been often accused of turning Good Friday to black Friday with massacres of soldiers or civilians in the past.

The LTTE is leading a violent campaign to establish an independent Tamil homeland in the island's northern and eastern regions where the country's two million Tamil minority is concentrated. Thousands have died in the fighting.

Off the Record

'He is unlike anybody'

WASHINGTON: Hillary Rodham Clinton says she liked her future husband, President Bill Clinton, from the start "because he combined an absolutely extraordinary mind with a huge heart", reports AP.

In a magazine interview recalling her early days with Clinton, the US first lady said "what I learned quickly was that he was unlike anybody I'd ever met — and still is."

Mrs Clinton, who backed conservative Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater for president in 1964, said she still regards herself as a conservative.

"I would characterize the way I was raised and the way I still am as being conservative in the true sense of the word, not in the kind of radical, ideological, destructive way that term is often used," she told Parade magazine in its issue to be published Sunday.

"I was raised to be self-reliant and to be responsible but to know that I was part of a larger community to which I also have responsibilities," Mrs Clinton said.

The Parade issue is devoted entirely to Mrs Clinton, the first time the weekly has centered on a single person.

She talks at length about the importance of personal responsibility, declaring it "at the root of any kind of social structure, including the family." And she added that "we have not done a good job in expecting people to exercise their rights responsibly and to be held accountable."



Owada's decision setback for feminists?

DURHAM (North Carolina): Masako Owada's decision to set aside her career and marry Crown Prince Naruhito poses a potential setback for Japan's feminists, a Japan expert said here Friday, reports AFP.

"She was a woman who was a pioneer in carving out a career on a past track which has been extremely hard to do for women in the past 10 or 15 years," said Andrew Gordon, a history professor at Duke University.

"This engagement promotes the idea that the most important thing for women to do is to be married and have a family," he added.

Japanese media had used Owada's decision to leave the Foreign Ministry to marry Naruhito to play up the wisdom of remaining outside the job market, said Gordon.

Asked if the Harvard University-educated Owada could perhaps carve out a freer, more outspoken style and re-make her eventual role as empress, Gordon replied.

"I just have an impression that the mechanism is so strong and confining that it's going to be very very tough. I have a sense of her walking into a cage."

Owada, who worked for Gordon as a research assistant at Harvard in 1984, seemed shy and unsure of herself then, but was intelligent and ambitious in finding information for him, Gordon said.

But Gordon acknowledged that Naruhito's decision to marry one of Japan's few female Foreign Ministry officials could also offer hope to Japan's slowly growing university trained work force.

"Another possible message is that men should not be afraid to marry intelligent women," said Gordon.



Female religious devotee Gracia Jumaquio, 26, is nailed on a cross by a man dressed as Roman centurion on April 9 marking Good Friday. Three women and two men here crucified in Paombong, north of Manila, as part of this traditional bloody Lenten ritual which re-enacts Jesus Christ's crucifixion. It was the sixth time Jumaquio, a house wife, was crucified. — AFP/UNB photo

Security force for school

NEW YORK: New York city, the biggest city in the United States, will improve its school security while dealing with increasing serious problems in this aspect, reports Xinhua.

According to the New York Times today, there were 1,880 assaults and 388 robberies reported last year, compared with 1,356 assaults and 186 robberies in the 1989 school year.

The Times said that the city's schools Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez has called, in a proposal, for changing the city's force of 3,000 school safety officers into a better-trained, better educated department modelled in many ways on big city police departments.

For the first time, each high school would have a security force headed by a safety supervisor who would be a security professional not an educator, the newspaper reported.

The Chancellor also recommended the issuance of photo identification cards for all high school students that can be read by machines at school entrances and perhaps be used in a new electronic fare card system that is to be introduced in the subways.

South African CP leader shot dead

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 10: South African Communist Party (SACP) leader Chris Hani was shot dead outside his home in a fashionable suburb to Stanchely Conservative Boksburg east of here today, police said, reports AFP.

An eyewitness told a Johannesburg Radio Station he heard four shots ring out, and saw Hani mortally wounded on the ground in front of his home in Dawn Park, a Boksburg housing several senior ANC officials which had been for whites only under apartheid.

One man has been arrested, police said.

Hani, 50, was elected leader of the SACP at its eighth congress in December 1991, relinquishing his post as Chief-of-Staff of the ANC's armed wing.

Adored by the radical youth, he was nevertheless a fervent advocate of a negotiated settlement in South Africa.

He leaves a wife, Limpho, and three daughters.

DPRK to boycott UN disarmament conference

TOKYO, Apr 10: North Korea has said it would not send representatives to an annual United Nations disarmament conference to be held next week in Kyoto, western Japan, the Kyodo news agency reported, says AFP.

The news agency, quoting conference officials, said late Thursday they had invited North Korea to the meeting starting Tuesday, but received a letter from Pyongyang in late March saying it would not participate.

The officials told Kyodo that Pyongyang decided to boycott the conference in a bid to avoid talks on its decision to withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

BRIEFLY

China to buy 21 B-737 planes: The Chinese government will order 21 B-737 planes for three of its airlines at a cost of some 800 million dollar, Boeing reported Friday, AFP says from Seattle.

China Xinhua Airlines, Zhongyuan Airlines and Xinjiang Airlines ordered 20 B-737/300 planes and one B-737/200 plane, Boeing reported.

Boeing said it had already delivered 125 aircraft to China but there are still unfilled orders for 69 planes, which will be delivered along with the 21 orders announced Friday.

Boeing said that it considers China one of its most important clients and that it expects China to purchase 800 airliners over the next 15 years as its economy rapidly expands.

Clintons attend funeral: President Bill Clinton and his wife, Hillary and their daughter attended the funeral in Little Rock Friday for the First Lady's father, Hugh Rodham, AFP reports from Arkansas.

Rodham, 82, a drapery maker, died Wednesday after suffering stroke on March 19. Hillary Clinton, who kept a 16-day bedside vigil had to temporarily shelve her leadership role in revamping the nation's health care system.

The Clintons arrived with their 13-year-old daughter, Chelsea, before the funeral and met with about 25 family members and close friends before and hour-long private service at the First United Methodist Church.

Clinton gave a brief eulogy that one of his friends, Bruce Lindey, described as humorous, serious and touching. "He talked about the relationship he had with his father-in-law and how he first viewed him."

Plea for French-Bosnia ties: French philosopher Andre Gluckman and Writer and Journalist Daniel Rondeau Friday proposed a cultural airbridge between Paris and Sarajevo, AFP reports from Sarajevo.

The two men flew into this besieged city several days ago to explore the possibility of supplementing food and medical supplies for Sarajevo with books and other material.

"There is a psychological stage which makes people sick," said Gluckman.

Asked if he was not worried that books would displace food or medical supplies on relief planes, he replied that the need to communicate was "as strong, as vital," as he need for bread.

10 killed in Taiwan fire: A pre-dawn fire at a karaoke bar destroyed a four-storey building Saturday, killing ten people and injuring six others, police said, AP reports from Taipei.

Police believe disgruntled customers started the fire near motorcycles parked outside the first-floor karaoke bar in a commercial area in Shulin, a Taipei suburb.

Police said the bodies of the 10 victims, all badly burned, were discovered in apartments on the upper two floors of the building.

The victims included five men, three women and two sisters, aged 9 and 11, police said. The father of the sisters was among the dead, police said.

The fire was extinguished 90 minutes after it was reported at 4:18 am. (2018 GMT Friday).

17 crew feared dead: Seventeen crew members were feared dead after a Korean-owned fishing trawler abruptly listed and sank in calm seas off the Falkland Islands on Friday, the islands' director of fisheries said, Reuters reports from Port Stanley.

Rescue service recovered three bodies, but 14 men who left the Panamanian-registered Serrekunda 3 in a life-raft were still missing after a day-long air and sea search.

Another 15 crew members were rescued from their life-raft by British Royal Air Force helicopter and taken to Port Stanley, capital of the British-administered Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic.

Falklands Fisheries Director John Barton said he had no idea why the trawler had sunk. He was told by a survivor that the ship listed violently at around 0530 (0930 GMT) and sank before the crew had time to send out distress signals.

Thai coup leader operated upon: The General who led the February 1991 coup in Thailand has undergone cosmetic surgery on his eyes in a bid to avoid bad luck. The Nation newspaper reported Saturday, says AFP from Bangkok.

It said former Supreme Military Commander General Sunthorn Kongse-pong had surgery late last month to add another fold to his eyelids to enhance his looks and ward off misfortune.

Sunthorn acted on the advice of his common-law wife, Ampaphan Tanes-Dejsunthorn, with whom he flew off to Paris on April 5 with no immediate plans to return to Thailand, the English-language daily said.

Mali govt resigns

BAMAKO, Apr 10: President Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali announced the resignation of his government, four days after violent student riots in the capital Bamako and the burning of public buildings, reports AFP.

In a broadcast message late Friday, Konare paid homage to the outgoing Prime Minister, Younoussi Toure, and to his 18 ministers, calling Toure a "man of integrity." They had been in office since June last year.

One person died and 45 were wounded in the riots by university and school students demanding increased grants and better study conditions.

Yeltsin will not resign if he loses April 25 referendum

MOSCOW, Apr 10: With just over two weeks left before a vote on who will lead the country, President Boris Yeltsin intensified his campaign for votes, reports AP.

Yeltsin said the April 25 referendum on whether the president or legislature should rule "is the fate of Russia, and you all realize this full well."

He said if he loses he would not resign but is ready to "face early elections, but keep the post of president until then," according to the ITAR-Tass news agency.

The referendum is shaping up as the climax to the power

struggle between Yeltsin and the Communist-dominated Congress of People's Deputies, Russia's highest parliamentary body.

If there is no president, the power will be assumed by the most extremist forces, and the entire world will shudder," Yeltsin said. Portions of his meeting were broadcast on Russian television.

In an apparent bid to win votes, Yeltsin also said he would repeat a decision earlier this week to raise gasoline prices and rents of state-owned apartments in the capital.

If he wins, and voters also

call for new legislative elections, Yeltsin said he would take that as a sign the legislature has lost its power and he would use his presidential authority to fill the vacuum.

Yeltsin's main rival for power, legislative speaker Russian Khasbulatov, told Russia's regional lawmakers earlier Friday that while the referendum is important, it would not solve the country's main problem: the economy.

He criticized the country's central power structure, saying the referendum probably would result in early elections for the president and the law-

makers.

"A small group of new tycoons who are enriching themselves are closely connected with the existing political regime" and have become its main power base, Khasbulatov said.

Yeltsin on Friday said those officials in Moscow responsible for drafting the laws raising the prices of gasoline and rent should be punished, the Interfax news agency said.

Gasoline prices doubled on Wednesday, from 40 rubles (about 5 cents) per liter to 80 rubles (about 10 cents) per liter, further angering drivers who have experienced several

hikes in the past year.

Yeltsin, who has seen his authority stripped away by Congress, originally sought the vote as a way to settle the crisis by asking the people to pass judgement on his leadership.

Hard-liners in the Congress added more questions to the referendum, including one on his painful economic reforms that may prove embarrassing to the president. Besides the questions on his leadership and economic reform, the questions also ask whether there should be new presidential and legislative elections.



BOSNIA: A young Bosnian Muslim refugee flashes a V-sign in a UNHCR truck as others look on, upon his arrival in Tuzla on April 8 as part of a UN convoy carrying about 1500 refugees from the besieged town of Srebrenica. — AFP/UNB photo