

Yeltsin goes to Japan Oct 12

TOKYO, Sept 26: Russian President Boris Yeltsin will make an official visit to Japan on October 12, Japanese officials said Sunday, reports AP.

The date was agreed on at a meeting between Japanese Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata and Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in New York, the Foreign Ministry said in Tokyo.

The agreement came despite the turmoil in Moscow, where hard-line lawmakers were holed up in the Russian parliament building.

The ministry said a Russian advance party would come to Tokyo shortly to fix details including the length of the visit.

Japanese officials said a full agenda had not yet been set, but that subjects were expected to include four disputed northern islands seized by Soviet troops in the closing days of World War II.

Yeltsin has cancelled planned visits twice in the past year, although he came to Tokyo in July for the Group of Seven Summit.

Separate politics and religion to decide fate of Jerusalem: King Hussein

AMMAN, Sept 26: King Hussein suggests separating the religious and political questions about the future of Jerusalem as a way for Israelis and Arabs to solve one of the hardest problems in their quest for peace, reports AP.

"Jerusalem is the essence of peace between us," the King said Saturday night, "I don't know what will happen. May be there is a division between the religious aspect of the problem and other aspects of the problem, so that on the demographic aspect Jerusalem can hopefully be the capital of both sides."

Israel has steadfastly refused to consider returning Jerusalem to the divided status that prevailed between the founding of modern Jewish state in 1948 and its capture of the Arab, east side of the city

from Jordan in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

But Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman Yasser Arafat, even while recognizing Israel and signing a Palestinian self-rule agreement with the Jewish state on September 13, continues to speak of Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestine.

King Hussein said that protecting the rights of Muslims, Christians and Jews and their holy shrines in Jerusalem could also ease the threats Islamic extremists pose to the stability of their own countries — and to the rest of the world.

The return of Jerusalem, one of Islam's holiest cities after Mecca, is a sacred call to battle by Iran's Islamic revolutionary government and by increasingly militant Muslim organizations in the swath of

Arab nations stretching across North Africa, the Middle East and into Asia.

The king met with Western correspondents over a late-night dinner in Ma'wa palace, whose name in Arabic means 'shelter,' in a hilltop compound overlooking downtown Amman.

The PLO-Israeli accord on limited self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho has created confusion over the timing of parliament elections in Jordan.

The accord includes a goal of Palestinian elections for a West Bank and Gaza council by mid-June 1994, and Hussein has flatly rejected the idea of having Palestinians living in Jordan vote in both elections.

"They can't vote here and vote there at the same time," he said. "The basic question is

a personal choice for anyone whether they should go or stay."

Hussein said he expected to decide by Wednesday whether Jordan would postpone its parliament elections, or proceed as scheduled on November 8.

"There is even the possibility of having the elections simultaneously with the occupied territories or shortly thereafter," he said.

About 40 per cent of Jordan's 1.6 million eligible voters are Palestinian refugees from Israeli rule. Their decades of economic and political frustrations have provided fertile recruiting ground for Islamic fundamentalists, some of whom advocate overthrowing the monarchy.

Turning to what sort of ties the envisioned Palestinian

state would have with Jordan, the 57-year-old monarch said:

"The idea is confederation — or any other name — but it is something that the Palestinian side seems to be committed to, and I believe it will naturally happen."

He said the Jordanians and Palestinians should begin talks 'urgently' on the matter. "But the final linkage cannot come until there is a Palestine," the King said.

The King looked relaxed and said there was no sign of the cancer that forced the removal of a kidney a year ago. But with an almost apologetic look at his wife, Queen Noor, across the inlaid marble dining table, he said he had not been able to give up smoking at this momentous time of peacemaking.



US singer Madonna performs at London's Wembley arena on Saturday during the first night of her 'Girlie Show' world tour. —AFP photo

BRIEFLY

King Birendra in Shenzhen:

Nepalese King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, on a week-long state visit to China, wrapped up Sunday a visit to the scenic southwestern tourist site of Guilin, the Xinhua news agency said, AFP reports from Beijing.

The royal couple arrived Friday in Guilin, famous for its limestone scenery, and spent the next day sightseeing along the Lijiang river. They also attended a banquet hosted by the city's Mayor.

The King and Queen left Guilin Sunday morning for the southern special economic zone of Shenzhen, bordering Hong Kong, the official news agency said.

China's anti-corruption drive:

In the latest salvo of China's anti-graft campaign, the government has ordered police to stop charging 16 types of fees and to end 10 types of corrupt behaviour, official media said Sunday, AP reports from Beijing.

Among the fees police must stop charging are those for missing person searches, for registration of residence changes and for handling criminal and public order cases, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

Among the corrupt practices police must stop are smuggling, bending the law to favour relatives and friends, tipping off criminals, having financial interests in entertainment centres such as dance halls and massage parlours, and accepting gifts or securities in connection with official business, the newspaper Legal Daily said.

Another Kuki village torched:

Another Kuki village was torched yesterday morning in Manipur despite the continuing hunt by the security-men for the extremists, ITI reports from Imphal.

Official sources said that suspected Naga insurgents had raided Komalhabhi village in Chandel district and set on fire all the houses.

Meanwhile, coming operation was on at Khoum in Tamenglong district to trace the NSCN (Muvah faction) activists who looted arms from a post of the second Manipur rifles where on Saturday.

7 miners die in Ukraine:

A methane explosion killed seven miners in eastern Ukraine's Donbass coalfield, local officials said on Saturday, the latest in a series of fatal mishaps in the area's outdated pits, Reuters reports from Kiev.

A duty officer at government offices in the eastern city of Lugansk said the blast occurred on Friday in the town of Xolote, 100 km (60 miles) to the west.

A team of industry officials was inspecting the mine, which was closed. Government experts were investigating the cause.

Policeman shot dead in Cairo:

Suspected militants shot and killed a state security policeman in the southern province of Assiut on Saturday, bringing to nine the number of policemen killed there this month, security sources said, Reuters reports from Cairo.

They said two gunmen shot Kamal Anwar Abdel-Hamid, 27, in the head and chest in the village of Nazlet Bakour, near Abu Tig, 345 km (215 miles) south of Cairo. Abdel-Hamid, who was standing by the side of the road, died instantly.

Police suspect the gunmen, who escaped, of belonging to the militant El-Gama's El-Islamiyya (Islamic group), which has targeted policemen, Christians and foreign tourists in an attempt to overthrow the government.

8 fundamentalists killed:

Eight Muslim fundamentalists were killed by security forces in an operation that followed the killing of five members of a patrol, the authorities announced Saturday, AFP reports from Algiers.

The incidents took place Thursday the security services said, but released no details of the attack against the patrol in Saoula in the western outskirts of Algiers.

Two Islamic militants were killed Tuesday in Ain Deffa in the west of Algiers while a third was killed in Tebessa, in the east of the country, the authorities said.

Typhoon lashes Hong Kong:

Typhoon Dot whipped Hong Kong with strong winds and torrential rains Sunday, disrupting land and sea traffic and injuring seven people, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The typhoon, packing winds of up to 130 kilometres (81 miles) an hour, forced many shops and businesses to close.

Public transport was curtailed and ferry services to the outlying islands were suspended. Also suspended were ferry services to China and the neighbouring Portuguese enclave of Macao.

Israel calls on Arabs to end state of war, trade boycott

JERUSALEM, Sept 26: Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, before leaving Israel for the US General Assembly opening on Monday in New York, called on Arab countries to end their state of war and trade boycott against Israel, reports Reuters.

"Today the end of the boycott is not enough," Peres told Israel television on Saturday night. "We must in my opinion make a supreme effort at least to end the state of war."

Arab countries imposed a trade boycott against Israel after the 1973 Middle East war.

Speaking 20 years after the outbreak of the war on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Peres said now that Israel had signed an agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation it was time for Arab states to end hostilities.

"All the Arab states gave us the cold shoulder because of the Palestinian problem," Peres said. "Finally we have begun to solve the Palestinian problem." Israel and the PLO signed a

historic peace accord in Washington last Monday calling for limited self-rule to the nearly two million Palestinian of the Israeli-occupied lands.

Peres will take part in an international conference on October 1 in Washington aimed at raising billions of dollars to help implement the Israel-PLO deal.

He is due to address the General Assembly on Tuesday. Peres said he would also meet with about 40 other foreign ministers and heads of state.

He said no talks were scheduled with his Syrian counterpart Farouq Al-Shara but added: "I am prepared to meet with anyone."

Expectations of a deal between Israel and Syria were bolstered last week when Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said he had good news to share with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on the matter.

Christopher is due to hold separate talks with Peres and Shara in Washington next

week. The United States warned on Friday against expecting a quick breakthrough between the Israel and Syria.

Peres said: "There are many contacts. I don't want to raise false hopes. I don't think there will be a breakthrough."

Uri Savir, the Foreign Ministry's Director-General, said on Thursday he expected Israelis and Palestinians to plot their next moves at a meeting in Washington next week.

Savir said the sides would decide on the next round of peace talks by October 13, the day the Israel-PLO declaration signed at the White House takes effect.

Under the deal, Israeli troops will withdraw from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho beginning in December.

Israel was due on Sunday to lift a closure on Gaza and the West Bank it clamped over Yom Kippur to prevent violence.

The army said on Saturday it had caught a young Arab woman who allegedly stabbed and slightly wounded a soldier

US envoy talks with PLO foreign affairs chief

TUNIS, Sept 26: US ambassador John MacCarthy has held talks with the PLO's Foreign Affairs Chief Faruq Kaddumi on the Israel-PLO agreement, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported, says AFP.

MacCarthy met Kaddumi, who refused to sign the ground-breaking agreement in Washington earlier this month, in the Palestine Liberation Organisation leader's office in Tunis on Saturday evening, Wafa said.

The news agency reported that MacCarthy confirmed Washington's desire to hold talks with the PLO leadership, while Kaddumi pressed for the United States to recognise the movement "officially."

The US State Department resumed contact with the PLO in the run-up to the signing of the Israel-PLO accord on September 13 after having broken off relations over a Palestinian attack on an Israeli beach in 1990.

UN commander leaves Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Sept 26: The commander of the U.N. forces in Cambodia, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, left here late Saturday as the U.N. mandate expired with the approval of the country's constitution and the formation of a new government, reports AFP.

A multi-national guard of honour, bearing the flags of 25 of the 34 nations that contributed troops to what was one of the biggest and most expensive operations in the history of the world body, bid the Australian general farewell.

"I feel something of a wrench departing from here because you can't be associated with something like this for two years without it sinking deep into your spirit," Sanderson said.

He added he would be watching closely the future of Cambodia. But, he said, "I am confident from what I have seen now that Cambodia has a future."

State polls to bring down Rao govt: Vajpayee

BHOPAL, Sept 26: India's main Hindu opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said on Saturday that polls in five northern states could bring down Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's 27-month-old government, reports Reuters.

"This is an ideological battle," BJP parliamentary leader Atal Behari Vajpayee told a massive rally in Bhopal, capital of the central Madhya Pradesh state.

The BJP said more than 500,000 supporters attended the meeting at the end of a two-week walk across most of India's 25 states.

Off the Record

Elephants force a family to spend night on tree top

HANDAPANAGALA, Sri Lanka: Every evening, Tikiribanda Ratnayake, a sugarcane farmer in southern Sri Lanka, clambers up a tree with his family to spend the night, reports AP.

Ratnayake and thousands of residents of nine villages fear hordes of elephants that trample through the area in search of food and water.

In the past two years, at least eight people have been killed and 27 homes damaged by elephants, said Basanayake Dharmadasa, the government's administrator in nearby Wellawaya town.

During the same period at least 10 elephants have been killed by the 25,000 people living in the villages that surround the Handapanagala tank, said Dharmadasa told the Associated Press.

Handapanagala is one of the sugarcane growing villages that has come up near the Yala National Park, one of the Sri Lanka's biggest elephant reserves, 140 kilometres (87 miles) southeast of Colombo.

In this area, the lure of higher profits from growing sugarcane has led villagers to expand their fields into the jungles where the elephants live, leaving little space for the animals and destroying trees on which they fed.

Exceptional courtesy for Sonia

BEIJING: The chairperson of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Sonia Gandhi, who is on a 'non-official' visit to China, has been received with 'exceptional courtesy', an Indian embassy official said yesterday, reports PTI.

Mrs Gandhi, her daughter Priyanka and their entourage were hosted a dinner by Premier Li Peng's wife, at which ambassador C Dasgupta and his wife were present "in a social way," the official said.

The dinner was preceded by talks and a photo session. Chinese television last night showed Mrs Gandhi embracing Madam Zhu Lin, the wife of Premier Li Peng.

Communist party organ, the People's Daily and official Xinhua news agency prominently reported her meetings with Premier Li and other officials.

Mrs Gandhi had met Mr Li and Madam Zhu when she accompanied Rajiv Gandhi on his historic trip to China in December 1988, and had received them in December 1991 in New Delhi.

Tamils kill 2 airmen

COLOMBO, Sept 26: Tamil Tiger guerrillas shot dead two airforce ground unit personnel and wounded four more during a gunbattle in northeast Sri Lanka today, the military said, reports AFP.

A ground unit of the airforce was conducting a pre-dawn operation against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) when they were attacked at Morawewa in the port district of Trincomalee, a military statement said.

Troops retaliated and the terrorists withdrew — it is believed that the terrorist suffered heavy casualties," the statement said, adding that two airmen were killed and four were wounded in the firefight.

The latest attack against the airforce came barely 24-hours after an LTTE attack against a police post, also in the same province leaving five constables dead and four wounded.

Security forces across the island's embattled northern and eastern regions have been placed on maximum alert following reports that the rebels may mark the sixth death anniversary Sunday of an LTTE leader.

The Tigers are leading a protracted guerrilla war to establish an independent homeland in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated. Thousands have died in bitter fighting.

UNITA rebels attack govt troops

LUANDA, Sept 26: UNITA rebels on Saturday attacked government troops near the central Angolan town of Kuito, military officials said, hours before U.N. sanctions against the rebels were due to take effect, reports AFP.

The rebels attacked at Katuyo in the Kuito region and also killed an unspecified number of civilians who were searching for food at Kunje, about seven kilometres (four miles) from the centre of the beleaguered city.

Eleven civilians were wounded, the military officials stated.

The rebels were stocking arms and ammunition at Kunyanga, close to government troop positions.

Bloodshed to continue, warns Mandela

WASHINGTON, Sept 26: African National Congress (ANC) President Nelson Mandela warned Saturday that the bloodshed in South Africa will continue until voters elect a new government next year, reports AFP.

"Until these elections take place, we must expect this violence to continue in one form or another," Mandela said in a Cable News Network (CNN) television interview, the day after he called for an end to international economic sanctions against South Africa.

Mandela's call, in a speech before the anti-apartheid committee of the UN General Assembly, was in response to Thursday's vote by the All-White South African Parliament

Suu Kyi ready for talks with Myanmar junta on her terms

YANGOON, Sept 26: The iron will of Myanmar junta and the stubborn determination of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi remain locked in quiet combat, and analysts here say neither likely will taste sweet victory any time soon, reports AFP.

Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, has been held incommunicado in her family's heavily-guarded home on the shore of Inya lake since July 1989, refusing to pay the military's price for freedom: immediate exile.

"The military has laid down their terms and have made no attempt to compromise," said one diplomat. "There is no evidence that she is prepared to leave, on those terms — 'there's a stand-off.'"

"They don't really know

what to do with her so they do nothing," he added.

An Asian diplomat also said there was no sign of the stand-off ending: "There is no meeting of minds."

Sources here dismissed rumours earlier this year that the 48-year-old Suu Kyi was negotiating with the junta, officially called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

"In the long run I think she wants to negotiate but it has to be on her terms," said another Yangon envoy. "Their terms are unyielding."

"I think she will hold out," he added. "She will not accept release with any constraints on her freedom."

Ordinary Myanmar people fearful even of mentioning her name in public, privately say

Suu Kyi remains in their hearts.

The frail-looking daughter of independence hero Aung San returned to Yangon from England in 1988 to nurse her ailing mother, and soon was swept up in the mass demonstrations that erupted after almost three decades of totalitarian military rule.

In her first public appearance she told a huge, cheering crowd that Myanmar needed a "second struggle for independence," and quickly became the focus of the pro-democracy movement.

The military seized power that September, killing thousands.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) that she co-founded swept elections in 1990 even though she had

been slapped under house arrest on vague accusations of violating security laws and barred from running in he elections.

The junta refused to yield power, however, insisting a new constitution be drafted and new elections held.

One foreign source here predicted the junta will wait until the passage of time renders the 1990 poll irrelevant before considering her release.

Earlier this year the junta hinted for the first time that Suu Kyi might be freed and allowed to stay in Myanmar.

"It is a matter of timing, time and conditions," deputy intelligence chief Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Win said in January. "Once a new government is formed the situation regarding her release will be

changed."

A national convention is expected to finish drafting a new



Aung San Suu Kyi constitution next year and the military, which diplomats say