

BRIEFLY

'Summit of Americans' Dec 9-10:

The "summit of the Americans" that President Clinton is hosting in Miami later this year will take place December 9-10, the White House said Friday, Reuter reports from Washington.

The summit, announced by the president in early March, is intended to help the nations of North and South America and the Caribbean region coordinate strategies for economic growth and development, defence, strengthening democracy, protecting the environment and alleviating poverty.

All of the heads of state in the hemisphere except for those in power in Cuba and Haiti have been invited to attend.

Avalanche kills 20 in Ecuador:

About 20 rescue workers were buried Friday by an avalanche in central Ecuador that struck while they were searching for the victim of another avalanche last week, a civil defence spokesman said, Reuter reports from Quito.

They were part of a search party of 60 that was combing the Cachí Canton Pujilí area, 60 miles (100 km) south of the capital Quito, when a wall of snow fell on them, spokesman Elio Andrade said.

Bush may visit Seoul Apr 16:

Former US President George Bush is expected to visit Seoul next week to attend a conference of the Pacific-Asia Travel Association (PATA), an official at the host PATA Korea committee said yesterday, Reuter reports from Seoul.

"Bush will visit here on April 16 and stay for three days," the official said.

Bush will pay a courtesy call on President Kim Young-Sam and make a keynote speech at the opening session of the 43rd PATA meeting, scheduled from April 18 to 21.

13 killed in Indian road mishap:

Thirteen persons, including three women and two children, were killed on-the-spot and six injured when a van, in which they were travelling, collided with a truck near village Lingri, about 40 km from Jabalpur, yesterday evening, police told PTI.

The injured were admitted to the medical college hospital in Jabalpur, they said, adding that high police officials have rushed to the mishap site.

Blasts kill 2 in Colombo:

Two people were killed and about 14 injured on Friday when four bombs exploded in luxury hotels in the Sri Lankan capital and at a beach outside the city, police said, Reuter reports from Colombo.

Police said they suspected Tamil rebels fighting for an independent state in the north and east of the island.

More than 30,000 people have died in ethnic violence since 1983 when the rebels stepped up their campaign for independence.

West Bengal minister dead:

The West Bengal Forest and Environment Minister, Dr Ambarish Mukherjee, died of cancer at SSKM Hospital here early this morning. He was 67, PTI reports from Calcutta.

Mukherjee who was suffering from lung cancer was admitted to SSKM Hospital in February last. Earlier he was taken to London for treatment last year.

Guatemalan peace talks in Oslo next month

OSLO, Apr 9: Representatives of Guatemala's government and leftist guerrillas will hold peace talks in Oslo next month in a bid to end their 33-year conflict, a Norwegian official said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Egeland said Norway, which won a diplomatic triumph last year by secretly brokering a historic peace accord between Israel and the PLO, had been involved in behind the scenes contacts with both sides.

The peace talks would be held under United Nations auspices in the last week of May, he told Norway's national NRK television.

The UN Secretary-General, the government in Guatemala and the guerrillas in Guatemala want to hold talks in Oslo which could perhaps be a breakthrough for peace talks begun in Oslo in 1990, Egeland said.

Norway hosted rare Guatemalan peace talks in 1990 which both sides hailed as a step towards ending a conflict that has claimed at least 100,000 lives and led to the disappearance of 40,000 people since its start in the 1960s.

Clinton denies policy differences on Bosnia

MINNEAPOLIS, Apr 9: President Clinton denied Friday that there were policy differences over Bosnia between his State and Defense Department chiefs, who had sent mixed signals on using force, reports AP.

Clinton, in Minnesota to promote his health-care plan, told reporters that talk of a policy gap between Defense Secretary William Perry and Secretary of State Warren Christopher was "a great overstatement."

Christopher on Thursday called for the quick dispatch of hundreds of UN peacekeepers to Serb-encircled Gorazde in eastern Bosnia and vowed to have NATO air power defend them if they are attacked.

Earlier in the week, Perry and Gen John Shalikashvili,

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ruled out any military action at this stage to try to lift the siege of Gorazde.

Clinton shrugged off any differences.

"I don't think there ever was a real difference between them," he said. "Our government position is clear. We'll keep trying to work for a peace in Bosnia. We'll make our air forces available as part of the NATO strategy ... to protect the forces that are there."

He said both Perry and Christopher "were trying to say in different ways that we certainly wouldn't rule out the use of our efforts around Gorazde but that there is a process that triggers those efforts ... which has to be followed before we can bring our force into play."

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