

Japan to ask US to shut 2 military facilities

TOKYO, Oct 25: Japan has decided to ask the United States to close two US military facilities in its southernmost prefecture of Okinawa and partially close another, Kyodo News Service said today quoting government sources, reports AFP.

Earlier this year, the United States also agreed to relocate two other facilities within Okinawa prefecture and shift live shell firing drills that had been held over a highway in Okinawa to mainland Japan, it said.

In the new request, Japan will call for two other facilities to be closed, and for the size of a third to be reduced, the sources said. The first two were named as Okuma rest centre and Awase Communication site and the third as camp Zukeran.

Tokyo will also negotiate for the partial closure of the Kadema ammunition store and Makimino service area, the sources said.

Japan will contend that closure of Awase Communications site is feasible because US forces are now mostly dependent on satellite communications. The United States will also be urged to transfer the recreation facilities of Okuma rest centre to other bases in Okinawa, the sources said.

Demand for plebiscite in Kashmir reiterated Benazir opposes move to enlarge UNSC's permanent membership

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 25: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said Tuesday she opposed enlarging the permanent membership of the UN Security Council, a move that could give India a seat on the body, reports AFP.

"The Security Council needs enlargement, but not in its permanent membership," Benazir said in an address to the special UN General Assembly commemorating the 50th anniversary of the organisation.

India has won a measure of support for its campaign to be given a permanent seat on the Security Council as debate on whether to enlarge the UN's highest decision-making body continues.

At present only the five acknowledged nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — have permanent membership on the council which

also give them veto power over its decisions. In her speech, Benazir also called for a tax on inter-



national financial transactions, international air travel and the exploitation of space or the oceans to help finance the United Nations. Such a tax "can be consid-

ered," she said. Benazir also called for creation of an "under secretary general" for the United Nations who would have responsibility for giving "greater impetus" to alleviating poverty in the world.

Reuter adds: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto used the podium of the United Nations on Tuesday to appeal for support for Kashmir separatists campaigning against Indian rule.

Pakistan and India have been at loggerheads for decades over Jammu and Kashmir the only Muslim majority state in India.

Do not close your hearts your minds to the torment of Kashmir, said Benazir, whose government says it provides only diplomatic and moral support to the separatists. She was addressing a special UN session to mark the world body's 50th birthday.

Earlier on Tuesday in Sri-

nagar, the summer capital of Kashmir Indian security forces arrested the leaders of a march protesting against what they see as the United Nations' unwillingness to intervene in the dispute.

Pakistan and many Kashmir separatists say the United Nations is bound by resolutions dating from the late 1940s to supervise a plebiscite to determine whether Jammu and Kashmir should remain in India.

India says a 1972 treaty with Pakistan left the issue to be solved in bilateral talks but Benazir renewed the demand for a plebiscite.

Forty eight years of occupation have not crushed the spirit of a noble people committed to the right of self-determination, committed to the ideals of the United Nations placing their hopes on the UN pledge to hold a plebiscite to determine their future, Benazir said.

Off the Record



An archaeologist uncovers on Tuesday an ancient bronze sword and tools which were recently discovered in one of ten graves on the grounds of the salt mine of Hallstatt and were dated back some 3,000 years in one of the 2,000 ancient graves already uncovered here, the archaeologists found an impressive 83-centimetre long sword.

Abortion more than twice the birth rate!

MOSCOW Thousands of girls under 15 have abortions in Russia and twice as many pregnancies are terminated as there are babies born, ITAR Tass news agency said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Tass quoted a report by a family planning association as saying three million abortions were registered in Russia a year — more than twice the birth rate.

Two years ago, 235 abortions were carried out for every 100 births and 217 for every 100 in 1994.

It said an average 3,000 abortions were carried out on girls under 15 a year, but a Health Ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the number was even higher.

The official said 4,820 girls under 15 had abortions last year and 2,790 so far in 1995. He said the number had fallen because more people were using contraception.

Sartre's manuscript fetches \$10,700

DIEPPE, France: A Jean-Paul Sartre manuscript, written at a German prison camp in 1940, was sold Sunday at an auction in this northern French town to an anonymous buyer for 53,500 francs (10,700 dollars), reports AFP.

The manuscript of "Bariona or the Game of Suffering and Hope", a play written in prison by Sartre and given to fellow prisoner Marc Benard, a French journalist, is a 40-page canvas-bound notebook bearing the seal of the XII D prison camp at Trier, near the Luxembourg border.

BRIEFLY

Linda Goodman dies: Linda Goodman, the writer who brought astrology onto the best-seller lists, has died, the New York Times reported yesterday. Reuter says from New York.

The report said the author of "Sun sings" "Love signs" and "Star signs" died on Saturday at Penrose Hospital in Colorado Springs following complications from diabetes. She was aged about 70. Her books sold more than 30 million copies in 15 languages and continue to sell some 200,000 copies a year, the New York Times said.

China quake toll rises to 36: The toll in a huge earthquake that rocked China's southwestern province of Yunnan has risen to 36 dead and 245 injured, as large aftershocks continue to shake the region, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing. A state seismological bureau official said the death toll had risen from 29 as victims of the quake, which struck at 6:40 am Tuesday (2240 GMT Monday) and measured 6.5 on the Richter Scale, succumbed to serious injuries.

5 killed as plane crashes in Bogota: A small plane crashed into a warehouse shortly after take off Monday, killing five people and injuring three others, authorities said, AFP reports from Bogota.

The crash ignited a huge blaze that spread from a warehouse containing construction supplies to an adjacent auto mechanics shop, according to police who had initially reported three dead. The aircraft went down seven minutes after takeoff from Bogota's El Dorado International Airport.

Gunmen kill 1 in Russia: Gunmen burst into an airport in the Russian Republic of Ingushetia and opened fire at will in a seemingly well-coordinated attack blamed on Russian paratroopers and linked to the bitter Chechen conflict, AFP reports from Moscow. The men flew into Slepovskaya aboard two helicopters before ransacking the terminal building with automatic fire, killing one person and wounding two others, officials at Ingush President Ruslan Ayushev's office said.

Blast kills 4 on outskirts of Madras: Four people were killed and 12 injured when chemicals for making fireworks exploded in a house on the outskirts of Madras early yesterday, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, Reuter says from New Delhi. The agency quoted police as saying one of the occupants of the house had been involved in the illegal manufacture of fire crackers.

Floods claim 109 in India: Torrential rains and flash floods have killed at least 109 people and caused widespread damage in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, a newspaper reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi. But most rivers were receding for the first time in three weeks, the Hindustan Times quoted Andhra Pradesh Revenue Minister T Devender Goud as saying in the state capital of Hyderabad.

Kuwait to ease ties with Arabs: Kuwait told the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday it is willing to normalise ties with Arab states that were seen as sympathetic to Iraq in the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis, diplomatic sources said, Reuter reports from Abu Dhabi. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah told UAE President Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan al Nahayan that his country "is willing to normalise relations" with Arab states that were perceived to back Iraq, an Arab diplomat told Reuters.

Road mishap claims 10 in India: Ten persons travelling in a private Tata Sumo vehicle were killed and two others injured in an accident on the Pune-Solapur-Hyderabad national highway near Ravangan, about 94 kms south-east of Pune yesterday, PTI says from Pune. Eight of the victims died on the spot when their Sumo vehicle collided head-on with a truck at around 08:45 hours and two died on way to hospital, rural police said.

Asahara's trial indefinitely postponed
TOKYO, Oct 25: The trial of Aum supreme truth leader Shoko Asahara, due to open on Thursday, has been indefinitely postponed after the Guru fired his lawyer, court officials said today, reports AFP.

Shoji Yokoyama, the only lawyer who has represented Asahara, was dismissed by Asahara on the eve of the trial, they told AFP. The 40-year-old Guru has been charged with murder and attempted murder in connection with the March 20 nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway.

Clinton, Jiang review strained bilateral relations
NEW YORK, Oct 25: US President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin reviewed strained bilateral relations on Tuesday and the White House said matters had improved even though they reached no agreements, reports Reuter. "We've begun a process that will lead to a series of dialogues that can help improve the opportunity for comprehensive engagement with China," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said after Clinton and Jiang met for two hours in New York's Lincoln Centre for the Performing Arts. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord said both presidents sought to focus on a framework for improving



US President Bill Clinton (C) meets with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (L) and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (R) in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday. Some 140 heads of state gathered for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. — AFP/UNB photo

Power struggle intensifies in UP

LUCKNOW, India, Oct 25: A struggle for power over India's most populous state intensified today as two minority parties staked rival claims to rule Uttar Pradesh (UP), the biggest prize in coming general elections, reports Reuter.

In an about face, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) both asked the Uttar Pradesh state governor for a chance to form a government. The governor was expected to rule on the requests in the next few days.

The parties, which convened meetings of legislators today, earlier called for dissolution of the state assembly and fresh elections after a

minority government headed by India's first low-caste chief minister fell on October 17.

But the BJP, the main opposition in parliament in New Delhi, reversed its stance on Tuesday after its leaders apparently felt the party might be able to woo enough members of rival groups to muster a coalition.

The BJP has 176 members in the 425-seat Uttar Pradesh assembly. Because there are currently only 423 members sitting in the assembly, the BJP would need the support of 36 defectors from other parties to win a vote of confidence.

The horse-trading in the northern state was being watched keenly in the Indian capital, New Delhi.

Uttar Pradesh has 85 of 545 seats in the lower house of parliament in Delhi.

Seven of 10 Indian Prime Ministers have come from the state, which according to the 1991 census had a population of 140 million out of some 900 million in India.

Federal general elections have to be held by mid-1996 but Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's ruling Congress Party has indicated it would prefer to hold polls next April.

The BJP believes that if it can be in the seat of power in Uttar Pradesh at the time of the general election, it can fare better than it would otherwise. The Indian Express said.



US actress Sharon Stone strikes a pose with two soldiers of the US Marine Corps at the US embassy in Paris on Tuesday during a gala dinner. Sharon Stone was named earlier yesterday Knight of Arts and Letters by French Culture Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy. — AFP/UNB photo

Free Palestinian state within two years: Arafat

WASHINGTON Oct 25: Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat said on Tuesday he expected the recent peace agreement with Israel to lead to creation of an independent Palestinian state within two years, reports Reuter.

"It is coming" Arafat said in an interview with public television news hour with Jim Lehrer. Asked when such a state would be created, Arafat said: "Maximum two years." He said he expected the state to be independent, although he did not exclude the possibility of some sort of confederation with Jordan.

Arafat, in the United States for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations said elections for the Palestinian self government would take place next January after the final redeployment of Israeli troops out of the populated areas of the West Bank.

3 Russian troops killed in Chechnya

MOSCOW, Oct 25: Three Russian soldiers were killed and 11 wounded in a shootout which followed a fatal road crash involving a Russian military vehicle in Chechnya, Interfax news agency said today, reports AFP.

The armoured troop carrier which was part of a convoy smashed into the civilian car near Khankala airport west of the Chechen capital Grozny early Tuesday evening. One occupant of the car was killed and two others were injured.

Britain expels Iraqi attache

LONDON, Oct 25: Britain said today it had ordered the expulsion of an Iraqi attache based in London for "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status," reports Reuter.

The foreign office said in a statement that Khamis Khalaf Al Ajili, the administrative attache at the Iraqi interest section, had been declared persona non grata. He arrived in Britain in August 1994 and has been ordered to leave by October 31.

British sources said the attache was a member of the directorate of general intelligence, an organisation known to be responsible for terrorist attacks.

"He has been gathering intelligence to target Iraqi dissidents in the UK," said one source. "We view it with great seriousness."

US Congress votes to move embassy to Jerusalem

WASHINGTON, Oct 25: Congress voted overwhelmingly Tuesday to move the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by 1999 dealing President Bill Clinton an embarrassing blow in the US effort to broker a Middle East peace, reports AFP.

The measure that sailed through the House of Representatives 374-37 hours after clearing the Senate 93-5 gives the president the option of extending the deadline indefinitely.

Clinton quickly branded the bill a mistake at a time that the Middle East peace process was making unprecedented progress, and

he vowed to use the six month waiver provision to stall the embassy move.

"I will not let this happen, and will use the legislative waiver authority to avoid damage to the peace process."

A White House statement said Clinton would neither veto nor sign the bill, which then becomes law 10 working days after it reaches his desk.

Clinton in the past had threatened to veto legislation to move the embassy arguing it would undermine the United States' credibility with Arab states as an honest broker in the Middle East peace process.

Taliban fire rocket at Kabul Airport again

KABUL, Oct 25: The Taliban militia of religious students fired a barrage of rockets at Kabul Airport for a second straight day today, causing minor damage but no casualties, airport sources said, reports AFP.

The defence ministry said meanwhile that Afghan government troops had repulsed an offensive southeast of the capital by Islamic Taliban militia.

In Kabul, witnesses said two rockets landed some 300 metres (yards) from the war-ravaged airport terminal building alongside the main runway.

They caused minor damage but the runway remained serviceable, the witnesses said. Taliban militia besieging

the capital for the past two weeks fired 10 rockets at the airport on Tuesday but the missiles fell wide of the mark.

The only airline currently flying into Kabul is the Afghan flag-carrier Ariana, but the airport is also used by UN planes and Red Cross flights.

The defence ministry said the Taliban had suffered "heavy casualties" during four hours of fighting which began before dawn today in the Bandi Amir Ghawi area, some 30 kilometres (18 miles) southeast of the capital.

The ministry in a statement said the Taliban had launched a "full scale" offensive on government troops in the remote area.

Libya's call for jihad to liberate Jerusalem

TRIPOLI, Oct 25: Libya called on Arab and Muslim countries today to launch a jihad or holy war to liberate Jerusalem after the US Congress voted to move its embassy in Israel to the disputed city, reports AFP.

"This vote flies in the face of the resolutions of Islamic summits...which decided to liberate Al-Qods (Jerusalem) through jihad," the official Libyan news agency JANA said.

The hesitation of Arabs and Muslims to implement these resolutions encourages their enemies to damage their holy sites and humiliate them further.