

International

BRIEFLY



Five-year-old Islam, son of Ayman Razania, a member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group who was shot dead by Palestinian agents on February 3, holds a toy pistol sitting by a poster of his father during a rally in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Friday. — AFP/UNB photo

Threat to Dayton accord
Serbs cut high-level military contacts with NATO

SARAJEVO, Feb 10: Carrying out the most dire threat yet to Bosnia's shaky peace, Bosnian Serbs have cut high-level military contacts with NATO to retaliate for the detention of two Serb officers, NATO officials said, reports AP.

The cutoff of contacts disrupts everything from negotiations on prisoner exchanges to the demarcation of buffer zones, important elements of the peace agreement reached in Dayton, Ohio.

Richard Holbrooke, the US Assistant Secretary of State who brokered the peace deal, said on Friday the agreement would "unravel" if all contacts with Serbs were broken off. British Lt Gen Sir Michael Walker, the force's ground commander, called it "an ominous sign" for peace.

"We have a number of liaison officers who are in the Bosnian Serb military, with whom we inevitably have contact, but in terms of the high-level strategic-type contact that we had with them, there is none," Walker told reporters at Sarajevo Airport.

Holbrooke, who was on his way to the region to try to defuse the crisis, told reporters in Budapest, Hungary, that he did not expect the Serbs to cut all contacts.

"We will not tolerate the kind of threats coming out of the Bosnian Serbs," he told reporters at a stop in Budapest, Hungary. "We have to make all parties comply with the Dayton agreement."

"We've never said it'd be easy. We anticipated this," he said.

Serbs had said they were ending contacts with the NATO-led force and the Bosnian government because the government was holding Gen Djordje Djukic and Col Aleksa Krsanovic on suspicion of involvement in civilian massacres.

To press demands for the unconditional release of the two Serb officers, Bosnian Serb justice minister Marko Arsic said on Thursday that Muslims and Croats crossing into Serb territory would face arrest.

At least six other Serbs are in Bosnian government custody, some as potential witnesses to war crimes.

Gen John Shalikashvili, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he received assurances from Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic to free Serbs "against whom there is no evidence of participating in war crimes."

Shalikashvili, who met with Izetbegovic in Sarajevo, said he also requested that the International Committee of the Red Cross be allowed to visit the detainees.

The two Serb officers were arrested on January 30 after they made a wrong turn into government-held territory near Sarajevo.

Serb anger grew when the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, said it wants the two men held until it decides whether to indict them for war crimes.

Two news photographers were detained on Thursday by Bosnian Serbs. One of them, Associated Press photo-

grapher Srdjan Ilic, was released on Friday. But the second, Hidajet Delic, remained in custody. Delic was accredited to the Bosnian government BH Press news agency, but worked frequently for the AP.

Even without the arrest of the Bosnian Serb officers, the danger of just such a conflict seemed almost to be built into the Bosnian peace agreement.

The accord stipulates that suspected war criminals in Bosnia should be brought to justice. Yet the accord depends on the cooperation of one key party — the Serbs — whose top military commander, Gen Ratko Mladic, and top political leader, Radovan Karadzic, themselves have been indicted by the tribunal.

Karadzic said the detentions by the Bosnian government violated the peace accord's free-movement provisions while the NATO-led force watched in "impotence and humiliation," the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency said.

New US immigration law may encourage brain drain

WASHINGTON, Feb 10: America's new immigration law, expected to pass this year, is frankly aimed at encouraging brain drain from other countries to the United States, to compete effectively in the global market place, reports PTI.

The Chairman of the Congressional subcommittee on immigration, Lamar Smith, told reporters here today that his bill, with 120 Republican and Democratic co-sponsors, has been approved by the judiciary committee by a vote of 23 to 10.

The bill is also likely to increase the percentage of immigrants, admitted on the basis of needed skills and education, from 18 to 28 per cent, Smith said.

He said increasing the number of skilled immigrants would better ensure that they would become productive, self sustaining members of society rather than welfare recipients.

The new bills also seek to discourage immigration as far as possible by members of extended families, confining immigration mostly to the nuclear family—husband, wife and children, and

professionals. An effort to restrict immigration by professionals had recently backfired as computer moghuls had protested vigorously, pointing out that computer experts from countries like India were playing a major role in US software industry.

The new bill will make sponsors legally and financially liable for the immigrants, parents, sisters, brothers etc.

Whom they sponsor at present, the sponsors give such an assurance but when the relatives turn 65, in many cases they apply for and get welfare assistance.

Smith cited statistics the department of labour indicating that immigration accounts for about 50 per cent of the decline in real wages of the lowest-skilled worker.

The Congress and the immigration and naturalisation service have recently launched a drive against illegal immigrants in the US a report of the Republican Policy Committee said that almost half of the nearly five million illegal aliens in the US use fraudulent documents to get jobs and benefits.

US Senate body seeks sanctions on China

WASHINGTON, Feb 10: US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms on Friday urged President Bill Clinton to impose sanctions on China for transferring missile technology to Iran, reports Reuter.

"In the face of growing evidence regarding China's role in Iran's weapons drive, and the clear legal requirement that sanctions be levied against China for its missile sales to Iran, I appeal to you to act decisively," Helms said in a letter to Clinton.

Helms, a North Carolina Republican, said he had learned that Iranian-Chinese missile cooperation and transfers were discussed at high-level administration meetings this week.

"I am informed unofficially that there was virtually unanimous agreement that sufficient evidence exists to determine that China has knowingly exported missile technology control regime-controlled equipment and technology to Iran," Helms said.

US renews appeal to extradite Khun Sa

WASHINGTON, Feb 10: The US State Department issued a fresh appeal to Myanmar on Friday to extradite drug lord Khun Sa, saying that the trafficker was responsible for a part of the flow of narcotics into the United States, reports AFP.

Spokesman Glyn Davies described Myanmar foreign minister Ohn Gyaw's refusal to extradite Khun Sa as a "negative development."

"We call on the government to deliver this man up because of his importance as a drug lord behind the flow of much of the narcotics in this country," he said.

Davies also addressed reports that Khun Sa, who for many years led an armed rebellion against Yangon in Myanmar Shan state, surrendered to authorities last month in exchange for guarantees that he not be extradited.

Rao, Sonia attend iftar party

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, Sonia Gandhi and Lok Sabha Speaker Shivraj V Patil were among those who attended an iftary party hosted by the former railway minister CK Jaffer Sharief at his residence here Friday, reports PTI.

Among others who responded to Sharief's invitation were the former ministers, Madhavrao Scindia, Balram Jakhar Karnataka governor Kursheed Alam Khan, National Conference leader, Rajesh Abdullah, minister, Rajesh Pilot, RK Dhawan and Sibtary Razi.

But when the prime minister came behind schedules most of the other dignitaries had already left. Rao was seen in a jovial mood talking to Sharief and exchanging pleasantries with the other guest.

BJP for abrogation of Article 370

JAMMU, Feb 10: BJP leader Kidar Nath Sahni has opposed Article 370 of the constitution which granted a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and has called for its abrogation, reports PTI.

Termining such a move as the best political package for Jammu and Kashmir, Sahni, told reporters here today that this would ensure justice and equal opportunities for people of the state and remove the feeling that they have a separate entity within the Indian union.

Opposing the national conference demand for pre-1953 status for the state, he said there should be no appeasement of any political party or individual.



His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales meets with British soldiers stationed in Mrkonjic Grad, on Friday. Prince Charles visited Sarajevo and British Troops based in central Bosnia on the last day of his visit to Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. — AFP/UNB photo

Top Afghan leaders meet to set up broad-based govt

ISLAMABAD, Feb 10: Several top Afghan leaders held talks here Friday to hammer out a solution for the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan, Pakistani and Afghan sources said, reports AFP.

Former Afghan president Sibghatullah Mojaddedi met with Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostam, who few into Islamabad Tuesday, they said. Dostam, who commands considerable influence in several provinces in northern Afghanistan, also met with Ustad Mohaggiyev, Vice-President of the pro-Iranian Shiite faction Hezb-i-Wahdat, and Sadeq Modabbari of Harkat-i-Islami, the sources said.

The Uzbek general earlier on Thursday discussed the Afghan situation with Pakistani government leaders and senior foreign office officials. Official Pakistani sources

here did not rule out the possibility of representatives of the Taliban Islamic militia joining the talks among the key rivals of embattled Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who remains in power in Kabul despite his two-year tenure ending in December 1994.

Diplomatic activity to resolve the Afghan conflict stepped up Thursday as Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Borujerdi arrived in Islamabad for talks with Pakistani officials and UN Special Envoy on Afghanistan Mahmud Mestiri.

Mestiri also went to the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad to discuss peace prospects with former premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Afghan sources said that Hekmatyar, who heads his faction of Hezb-i-Islami, was also expected in Islamabad

Saturday to join the intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at ending the nearly four-year Afghan civil war.

The Taliban militia, besieging the Afghan capital Kabul for the past four months, wants to topple Rabbani and enforce Islamic law in the war torn country.

Dostam's National Islamic Movement and Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami along with Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat and Mojaddedi's National Liberation Front are grouped in a four party opposition coalition, which also demands Rabbani's resignation to pave the way for transfer of power in Kabul.

Mojaddedi Thursday told Pakistan television that Rabbani was "not sincere" in transferring power. Rabbani says he will step down but he never said to whom he would transfer the power.

Off the Record

Ready for group sex on polls day!

MOSCOW, Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who launches his presidential campaign this weekend by throwing a lavish silver wedding bash for himself, said on Friday his party was a "virgin in white" ready for "group sex" with Russian voters, reports Reuter.

"Against the background of general political prostitution, the LDPR is a long-haired, meek-eyed virgin in white," said the ultra-nationalist who plies a risk line in sexual innuendo.

"Forty million men will desert all those prostitutes and rush after the virgin LDPR. Let's have group sex on June 16," he told a news conference, referring to the date of the election.

Zhirinovsky will lead his wife Galina to the altar on Sunday, celebrating 25 years of marriage with a church blessing and then treating Moscow's homeless to a sea of vodka.

Having spent a fortune worthy of a latter-day Tsar on drink and food, he assured reporters that Sunday's grandstanding exercise would be worth turning up for.

"There'll be loads of vodka and sweets," he said. "There'll be enough for everyone and everyone will have a good time."



Porn sites remain despite decency act

SAN FRANCISCO: The day after President Clinton signed the Communications Decency Act, some Web sites still featured naked women and men doing things clearly not meant for children's eyes, reports AP.

The law, part of a historic bill that overhauls telecommunications in the United States, keeps indecent material from being made available to minors on the Internet.

The Justice Department has agreed not to enforce the act before a Philadelphia court rules on a request for a temporary restraining order. A legal challenge also has been filed in New York.

In the interim, the small percentage of cyberspace devoted to indecent material looks little different than when the bill was signed a day earlier.

Pornographic sites still offer up obscene pictures and stories of incest and rape still wit to be read on the Internet bulletin board Usenet, where a new group was formed Thursday night — all (expletive) the communications decency act.

But some sexually oriented sites have tried to comply by setting up elaborate warning pages.

VCA On Line, for example, advertises the wares of one of the nation's larger purveyors of adult videos, and Web master Darren Roberts has gone to great lengths to announce that the site is for adults only.

The first screen offers buttons that lead straight to three major companies that sell programme allowing parents to block out objectionable material.

Formation of coalition govt Turkish leaders yet to reach accord

ANKARA, Feb 10: Hopes of putting an end to Turkey's six-week political crisis dimmed on Friday as the three main party leaders continued to squabble over who should head a new government, reports AFP.

Mesut Yilmaz, the latest politician asked to form a government, told a news conference he may give up the task early next week if talks with a pro-Islamic party do not produce a surprise result.

He has already seen a coalition offer with the centre-right True Path Party rebuffed, and was pessimistic on the prospects of an alliance with the Welfare

Party of Necmettin Erbakan. Yilmaz, head of the right-wing Motherland Party said he would meet Erbakan for talks on Monday "to try to see if it is possible to form a coalition."

But he added: "After the legislative elections of December 24, Erbakan demonstrated flexibility but the attitude he has shown recently is a diversion from that line."

"I don't have a lot of hope for Monday's meeting," he went on, and accused the Welfare leader of "having praised the Iranian Islamic revolution" of 1979 during a reception at the Iranian Embassy in Ankara.

India, China discuss steps to maintain peace on border

BEIJING, Feb 10: Measures to implement the agreement on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control in border areas were discussed at the fourth meeting of Sino-Indian diplomatic and military expert group which ended here yesterday, reports PTI.

The Indian side was led by TCA Rangachari, joint secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, and the Chinese side by Vice-Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan.

Xinhua news agency said the two sides discussed measures to maintain peace in

border areas. The Indian delegation was not available for comments.

As part of on-going joint working group meetings between the two countries, the expert group began its meeting on February 7.

The last round was held in New Delhi in August and the next one was late for March in Beijing. The current meeting was believed to be a preparatory for the next round.

The agreement on maintaining peace along the line of actual control was signed in September 1993 when Premier PV Narasimha Rao visited China.

World adding quarter-million people every 24 hrs

BALTIMORE, Feb 10: If the human race does not quickly control the population explosion, nature may provide more brutal remedies such as starvation and disease, scientists said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Cornell University ecologist David Pimental warned of grim consequences of overpopulation as he presented research at the American Association of Science (AAAS) meeting.

"We're adding a quarter-million people every 24 hours," he said in an interview. "And no one is really tak-

ing action about it," he added. "It's not a big bang kind of problem, it's a gradual thing but that trickle is going to nickel and dime us to death."

The report by Pimental and his colleagues, entitled "Impact of Population Growth on Food Supplies and the Environment," said the earth could support about 2 billion people comfortably.

By comfortably, the scientists mean more modestly than the style to which most consumer-oriented Americans have become accustomed.

The planet already has nearly 6 billion people, and the population is expected to roughly double in 50 to 60 years.

That means one in four, or 3 billion people, will be malnourished and vulnerable to disease, Pimental said, adding that grain supplies per person have dropped for the past 15 years. In addition, about one-third of cropland has been abandoned because of erosion since the middle of the century.

Faye Duhin, director of the Institute for Economic Analysis at New York University, said much of the world saw US-style consumption as a desirable goal, but this could be a recipe for ecological disaster.

She urged new anti-pollution technologies, air and

development strategies and to rethink basic assumptions about future lifestyles.

"We need to create a set of stories around different kind of possibilities, like a historian of the future," she said.

Rockefeller University's Paul Cohen, the author of the new book How Many People can the Earth Support, said that by some calculations there should be nearly 700 billion people on the planet 150 years from now.

Although not every scientist shares these views and some even believe the planet can accommodate perhaps a trillion people, the experts at AAAS were not so sanguine.

They said there simply would not be enough food on a planet where 1 billion to 2 billion people were already malnourished.

Not enough water falls from the sky, said Cohen. China already has only about one-third as much farmland per person as most of the world and the world average in turn is only about half of what it takes for the minimal diet in the United States and Europe. Pimental said