

International

Chirac presses Israel to resume ME peace process

'If Netanyahu sticks to 3 'nos' Arabs will have 3 similar 'nos'

CAIRO, July 8: Egypt has said that if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists on taking a hard line in Arab-Israeli peace talks, he will be exposed to international isolation, reports Xinhua.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's top political aide, Osama El-Baz, said that if Netanyahu sticks to his three 'nos' — no to the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, no to a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and no to negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem, the Arabs will have three similar 'nos', namely no normalisation of relations with Israel, no peace negotiations with Israel and no regional economic cooperation with Israel.

In an interview to Egypt's weekly magazine Rosey Yousef, Baz said that the Middle East peace process must be based on relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions as well as the land-for-peace principle. The interview was published in the magazine.

He has also said that Jerusalem would remain Israel's eternal and undivided capital. Israel captured the Arab East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war.

However, Baz said in the interview that Netanyahu's policy will not be clear until after his visit to Washington and to Cairo this month.

The Arab and European countries recently have urged Israel to stick to the principle of land-for-peace embodied in U.N. resolutions.

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, July 8: French President Jacques Chirac, backed by Saudi King Fahd, pressed Israel on Sunday to resume the Middle East peace process or run the risk of renewed political violence, reports Reuter.

"I have told them — and I have also discussed this with US President Bill Clinton — that they must understand that when they make commitments, they must keep them. If they don't, they run the risk of a resumption of terrorism," Chirac said during a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia.

The day before, during a 90-minute meeting between Chirac and Saudi King Fahd, the monarch had stressed the importance of new global efforts to spark life into the peace process, officials in Chirac's entourage said.

The Arab-Israeli peace process ground to a halt following the election in May of hard-line Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli Prime Minister.

Netanyahu travels to Washington this week for the first time since his surprise

election victory, hoping to win America over his more cautious approach to regional stability.

Arab states have warned him against going back on accords reached under previous Israeli governments, such as an agreement to negotiate on the basis of exchanging Israeli land for peace with its Arab neighbour.

This is not an academic theory, it is a genuine risk," Chirac said, referring to the risk of renewed Middle East violence should the peace process falter or die.

He urged Israel to let its intentions be known quickly, adding that should it choose against resuming the path to peace, it should think again.

Chirac and Fahd conferred for nearly 90 minutes late on Saturday after a men — only state dinner in Chirac's honour hosted by the King.

Israel views France as closer to the Arab states, but Chirac insisted that he sought warm ties with all of the region's states including Israel, and hoped to influence all

sides in promoting steps toward a peace.

On Sunday, Chirac met a string of senior Saudi officials in pursuit of closer political, economic and cultural ties.

"I will return home quite pleased to have put in motion this partnership that I seek between our two nations, particularly at a time of great uncertainty in the region, for example as regards the peace process," Chirac told a news conference.

He also sought during the visit a closer partnership in fighting "terrorism" and praised the kingdom's "moderate Islamism," French officials said.

Moderate Islam was "a religion of tolerance and brotherhood," the French head of state told Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef.

That differed from fundamentalist radicals who "use religion for inappropriate ends," Chirac said according to the officials. Nayef agreed with Chirac that the values of Islam can be twisted to the religion's detriment, the officials said.

Clinton testifies as defence witness

WASHINGTON, July 8: President Bill Clinton testified as a defence witness for a second time behind closed White House doors on Sunday, this time in the trial of two Arkansas bankers accused of diverting money to help pay his campaign debts in 1990, reports Reuter.

The president, who is not accused of any crime, recorded his testimony on videotape in a special two-hour 20-minute court session held at the White House so as not to disrupt his official duties.

Judge Susan Wright, who came to Washington to preside over the session, ordered that his remarks remain secret until they are played for the jury in the Little Rock, Arkansas, trial, which was not expected until the week of July 15.

It was the second such appearance by Clinton, who in April testified for the defence in the trial of two of his partners in the failed Whitewater real estate venture, Jim and Susan McDougal, and then Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker.

Man walks into police station with wife's head

COLOMBO, July 8: A man in eastern Sri Lanka walked into a police station carrying an umbrella in one hand and a bag containing his wife's head in the other, authorities said Monday, reports AP.

Karuppiyah Chandrasekaran, 30, a tea plantation worker in Badulla town, had complained to police two months back that he suspected his wife of having an affair with a neighbour.

Police intervened in May but did not act on Chandrasekaran's complaint because families often come to the police to settle domestic disputes in rural Sri Lanka.

On Sunday, a frustrated Chandrasekaran tried to drag his wife, Kalappan Selvam, to the police station, an officer said.

Diana turns to Fergie for advice

LONDON, July 8: Princess Diana has turned to the Duchess of York for advice on her divorce settlement from Prince Charles which British newspapers today said hinged on her title and an order banning her from talking about her marriage, reports Reuter.

The times said the estranged wife of the heir to the throne had lunch with the Duchess, popularly known as "Fergie," on Sunday to ask for her guidance on the settlement, reported to be worth about 20 million pounds (31 million dollars).

"She has watched the recent divorce negotiations between the Duke and Duchess of York with interest," the newspaper said.

Fergie's nine-year marriage to Queen Elizabeth's second son, Prince Andrew, ended earlier this year after she agreed to a reported two million pound (3.1 million dollars) settlement and to relinquish the title of "Her Royal highness" and the social standing that goes with it.

300,000 Chinese Evacuated from 3 flood-hit cities

BEIJING, July 8: Tens of thousands of soldiers, armed police and militia have evacuated 300,000 people from three flood-struck cities in east China, Xinhua reported, says AFP.

The evacuees, all residents of Huangshan, Xuancheng and Chizhou cities in Anhui province, were left stranded by rising flood levels after fierce rainstorms, hit the region in late June.

Provincial authorities despatched 50,000 soldiers, armed police and military militia to rescue them although further 80,000 people remain cut off the news agency said in an overnight dispatch.

Anhui, one of the three hardest hit provinces where floods have affected five million people, has already set aside 10 million yuan (1.2 million dollars) for flood relief work, and received limited aid from the Red Cross Society of China.

Tikhomirov's next posting has not been announced.

The replacement was viewed as a possible sign of Moscow's commitment to end the 19-month-old war. Tikhomirov, commander in Chechnya since January, has taken a hard line in the military campaign against separatist rebels.

Tikhomirov's next posting has not been announced.

The rebels for the missed deadline, accusing them of ignoring a ceasefire and of mounting frequent attacks on the checkpoints.

The separatists who accuse the federal command of breaking the Nazar accords are themselves guilty," military spokesman Roman Sokolovsky told Interfax Monday.

Angry rebels, for their part, said the Russians have stepped up shelling and bombing in some districts since Yeltsin was re-elected last Wednesday. They threatened new attacks.

Daily clashes continue in Chechnya, mostly in Grozny.

Off the Record



Valentino drapes the torso of a long red chiffon gown with mousseline panels in the back for the autumn/winter 1996-1997 high-fashion collection shown in Paris on Sunday.

— AFP/UNB photo

Courtesy campaign

SINGAPORE: Singaporeans should take time out and be more gracious and warm despite their congested housing estates, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said, reports Reuter.

Launching Singapore's national courtesy campaign on Sunday, Goh said: "When you receive an act of courtesy, it makes your day. If you receive an act of rudeness early in the morning, it's going to spoil your day."

"And living in Singapore, where you have three million people very tightly packed into housing estates — neighbours to the right of you, neighbours to the left of you, neighbours above you, neighbours below you — you need courtesy to make life pleasant," he said in a speech.

Bhutto siblings meet to quell family feud

ISLAMABAD, July 8: A widely publicized family feud between Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her politically ambitious brother, Murtaza, appears to be on the mend, according to news reports Monday, says AP.

The Bhutto siblings met late Sunday at the prime minister's grand marble residence set atop a grassy hillock that overlooks the capital.

It's not clear what prompted the meeting, but the English-language daily newspaper, The News, is calling it "the news of the decade for loyalists of the Bhutto family, who have been heartbroken over the estranged relations between brother and sister".

Murtaza Bhutto only returned to Pakistan in 1993. He had lived for 16 years in self-imposed exile after being accused of masterminding the 1981 hijacking of a Pakistan International Airlines jet.

He allegedly headed a militant group known as Al-zulfiqar, named for his deposed father.

a narrow margin to form a coalition government.

Her younger brother set up a rival party and fielded dozens of candidates against his sister's Pakistan People's Party. Murtaza Bhutto won a seat for himself but little else.

Both siblings lay claim to the political throne of their father's Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's prime minister for seven years until he was overthrown in 1977 by military dictator Gen. Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq. He was hung two years later.

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New Russian commander takes over in Chechnya

GROZNY, July 8: The newly appointed commander of Russian troops in Chechnya was taking charge Monday amid fresh tension over Moscow's decision to ignore a key benchmark of last month's peace pact, reports AP.

Lt. Gen. Konstantin Kulkovsky, who had been deputy commander of the North Caucasus military district, was named last week by President Boris Yeltsin to replace Lt. Gen. Vyacheslav Tikhomirov. He was flying to Grozny on Monday, the Interfax news agency said.

Tikhomirov's next posting has not been announced.

The replacement was viewed as a possible sign of Moscow's commitment to end the 19-month-old war. Tikhomirov, commander in Chechnya since January, has taken a hard line in the military campaign against separatist rebels.

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BRIEFLY

483 Burundian refugees return:

Some 483 Burundian who fled recent fighting in the country's northwest returned home last week from Rwanda, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said Sunday. AP reports from Bujumbura.

Hitoshi Misa, the refugee agency spokesman in Burundi, said the UNHCR transported the Burundians to Mugina on Wednesday. He said they opted to return to their homes in the surrounding hills, instead of living in a camp in Mugina. Earlier, Burundi's state-controlled radio said 900 refugees had returned to Cibitoke province since June 27, but Misa said he had no knowledge of that figure.

Rwandan troops kill 11 civilians:

UN human rights monitors were investigating reports that Rwandan soldiers killed nine civilians in retaliation for the murder of a family of eight, AP reports from Kigali.

UN security sources also reported that Rwandan troops may have attacked an island refugee camp on the Zaire side of Lake Kivu, killing two people. Witnesses told investigators that nine men were taken from their homes in Rushash district of Gisenyi province Tuesday by soldiers searching for Hutu rebels responsible for the June 20 murder of the family.

Yemen calls for summit with KSA:

Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh on Sunday called for a summit with Saudi Arabia to bring a speedy conclusion to an old border dispute between the countries, AP reports from Sanaa.

Speaking at a press conference to mark the two-year anniversary of the northern victory in the country's civil war, Saleh said joint committees set up to solve the dispute had made little progress and were too slow. The best solution will come from an accord at the highest level to get rid of obstacles and to make a definitive ruling on this problem, said Saleh.

Bus mishap kills 25 in Nepal:

Twenty-five people, including 13 women, were killed when a bus full of passengers plunged into a river in Nepal, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Kathmandu.

About 35 others were injured, most of them seriously, when the bus fell 150 metres (500 feet) from a rocky cliff near Butwal, 300 km (185 miles) southwest of Kathmandu, on Sunday night, police said.

Suharto leaves for Germany:

President Suharto left for Germany on Sunday night for what a senior official called a routine medical checkup, AP reports from Jakarta.

A presidential source had said earlier that Suharto, 75, Indonesia's leader since 1966, would be treated for stones in the kidney. Mardiono, minister at the State Secretariat, said the checkup was the kind the president receives every six months. He declined to name the city and hospital where it would be performed.

Teenage crime rises in Singapore:

The government Monday reported that teenage crime is rising steadily in Singapore, whose tough laws were highlighted by the flogging of American Michael Fay for vandalism two years ago, AP reports from Singapore.

Inaugurating a seminar on juvenile delinquency, Home Minister Wong Kan Seng blamed the problem on pampering parents, foreign cultural influences and working parents who have little time for their children.

Pampering to the many 'wants' of children may well be the start of the slippery slope to juvenile delinquency, Wong said.

Hashimoto to visit Mexico:

Trade and investment are likely to be the top issues when Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visits Mexico next month on the first leg of a four-nation tour, AP reports from Tokyo.

The August 20-21 visit, the first by a Japanese government leader in seven years, was announced Sunday by Mexico's Foreign Ministry. It provided no specifics about the agenda.

Journalist shot dead in Cyprus:

A Turkish-Cypriot political columnist was shot to death by gunmen outside his house, police said Sunday. AP reports from Nicosia, Cyprus.

Kutlu Adali, a leftist intellectual, wrote for the Yeni Duzen in the breakaway Turkish republic in the north. No suspects have been identified in Saturday night's slaying.

2 killed in Kashmir blast:

Two men were killed yesterday in a powerful blast near Kashmir's border with Pakistan when they were digging for ammunition hidden in a dump, authorities said. AP reports from Jammu.

R.S. Mehta, Inspector General of the Border Security Force (BSF), identified the victims as a Hindu from India and a Pakistani Muslim, Abdul Rahim. Mehta said the two men admitted after being caught early yesterday near the border that they had come to the area to recover a cache of arms and ammunition buried by them earlier.

The last six months have brought breakthroughs with the introduction of drug treatments that now offer the best hope of keeping AIDS patients alive since the killer disease first made its appearance 15 years ago.

The 11th international AIDS conference, which has drawn 15,000 delegates from 125 countries, comes amid a mood of optimism in sharp contrast to earlier meetings in Berlin and Yokohama.

VANCOUVER, Canada, July 8: The world's biggest-ever AIDS conference started on Sunday with scientists excited by the promise of new multi-drug treatments, but still daunted by the relentless spread of the disease and the remoteness of a cure, reports Piot.

"Nobody can call AIDS an inevitable fatal, incurable disease anymore," Peter Piot, head of the United Nations AIDS Programme, said in an address opening the conference.

"We have not got a cure yet, but... the new combinations of anti-retroviral drugs are holding out new hope."

The main hope centres on new drugs, called protease inhibitors, which block and enzyme crucial to the multiplication of the HIV virus. Tests so far have shown that when taken in multi-drug "cocktails" including the medicine AZT, protease inhibitors have reduced the virus in the blood to undetectable levels.