

Netanyahu tells Clinton

Jerusalem to remain under Israel's sovereignty

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday he told President Bill Clinton he will do everything necessary to ensure that Jerusalem remains undivided and under Israeli sovereignty, reports AFP.

"Jerusalem is our capital. It has been our capital for 3,000 years. It's been no one else's capital," Netanyahu said in an address to The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank.

"We will continue to build it, to develop it, make it grow for Jews and Arabs alike," he said.

Netanyahu said he reiterated his position on Jerusalem in

talks with Clinton on Thursday and with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"We will do everything that is necessary to ensure the united and undivided nature of Jerusalem under Israel's sovereignty," he said.

Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967 and quickly annexed it as part of its "eternal capital." Palestinians want to make east Jerusalem the capital of a future independent state.

The United States has refrained from recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and maintains that the issue must be settled in final negotiations

beginning next month between Israel and the Palestinians.

Netanyahu said he told US leaders that Israel will continue to provide "complete, free and unfettered access" to Jerusalem for worshippers of all three faiths.

But he categorically stated that he will not allow a "Berlin Wall" to be erected in the city.

Another report adds: The political leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Mussa Abu Marzuk, warned Israel on Friday he would refuse to cooperate if extradited from his US prison.

"I will not accept being questioned by the Israeli internal

security service (Shin Beth). I will not reply to a single question and I will not even disclose my identity. I will only speak to Israeli judges," said Marzuk in an interview with The Yediot Acharonot daily.

The paper said Abu Marzuk also made veiled threats that Hamas would launch a new state of anti-Israeli attacks inside the Jewish state.

"I think that Israel will demand my extradition, even if there is nothing (of substance) in the 1,000 page dossier given to the Americans. The Israelis should therefore, look to the future," said Abu Marzuk.

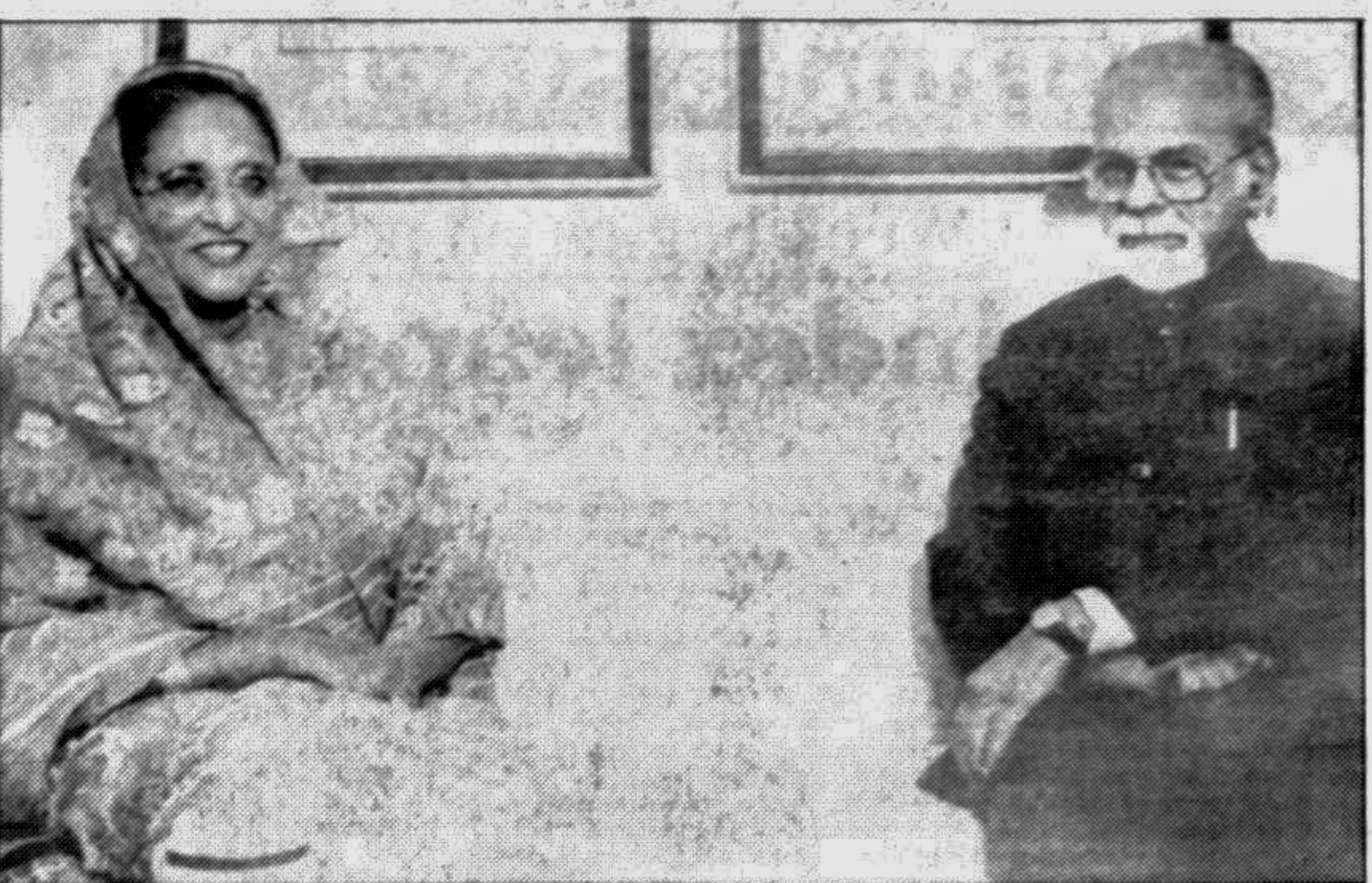
Tajik rebels resume talks with negotiators

DUSHANBE, Feb 15: Talks resumed early today with a group of Tajik rebels holding 11 hostages including eight UN workers after a planned handover stalled during the night, a Tajik government official told AFP.

A swap between the hostages and a group of rebels loyal to the hostage takers was called off shortly after beginning late Friday.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Ignatenko who was taking a leading role in the negotiations said the operation had to be halted because of the night and the impossibility under these conditions to complete the operation in total security ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Ignatenko had already made two telephone calls from Moscow to the rebels in eastern Tajikistan early today, ITAR-Tass reported.



Indian Foreign Minister I K Gujral called on Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Hotel Taj Palace in New Delhi on Friday.

— PID photo

BRIEFLY

3 Christians killed in Egypt:

Three Christians have been found shot dead in southern Egypt despite increased police patrols in the area after gunmen stormed into a church this week and killed nine people, AP reports from Assiut.

The bodies of Farag Awad, 65, his son, Samir, 35, and William Bishara Ibrahim, 32, were found Thursday night in a field about 240 kilometres (145 miles) south of Cairo, the interior ministry said Friday. Police were searching for the attackers in the village of El-Zuher in Minya province. Police stationed armored vehicles around churches and increased patrols in southern Egypt after gunmen burst into the Mar Girgis Church in El-Fiqriya on Wednesday and killed nine people at a charity meeting. El-Fiqriya is near El-Zuher.

DPRK delegation arrives in China: A North Korean delegation arrived in Beijing yesterday but it was unclear if the group planned to discuss the apparent defection of a senior North Korean official inside the South Korean embassy in Beijing. Reuter reports from Beijing.

The identities of the North Koreans were not known. The embassy declined to comment. A Reuters reporter at Beijing International Airport witnessed the delegation arrive and board a vehicle belonging to the North Korean embassy.

US frees 53 Chinese detainees: Fifty-three Chinese nationals jailed by the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service since 1993 are being released, the Clinton administration announced. AP reports from Washington.

The aliens had been awaiting decisions on their requests for political asylum since the freighter trying to smuggle them into the United States ran aground off New York City in June 1993. Ten of the 277 passengers aboard the Golden Venture died trying to swim ashore. Many of the survivors asked for political asylum from China's policy of one child per family after being taken into custody by the INS. They claimed their opposition to forced abortion and forced sterilisation as grounds for permission to stay in the United States.

Brazilian plane crash kills 1: A Brazilian jetliner crashed after hitting trees during a landing at an Amazon airport Friday, killing the co-pilot and injuring four people, AP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

The Vans Boeing 737 hit the tops of trees near the runway at the Carajás airport, 1,100 miles (1,760 kilometers) north of Rio de Janeiro, said Emílio Araújo Leão, superintendent of the Carajás airport. The co-pilot, José Aparecida de Oliveira, 36, died later from his injuries at a local hospital. The pilot and three passengers were hurt but reportedly in good condition, Leão said.

Bulgarian govt bans ex-ministers: Bulgaria's interim government Friday banned several ministers of the ousted Socialist-led administration from leaving the country, the Interior Ministry announced. AP reports from Sofia.

The announcement broadcast on radio, did not name the ministers but said it was to stem the flow of money precious objects and sensitive information. Bulgaria's interim government took power Wednesday and is due to stay there until after early general elections on April 19.

Asian — European FMs open talks to forge political links

SINGAPORE, Feb 15: Twenty-five European and Asian nations opened a day of talks Saturday, keen to forge stronger economic and political links and sidestep persistent disputes over human rights, reports AP.

The Japanese, South Korean and Chinese foreign ministers joined their opposites of the 15-member European Union and seven Association of Southeast Asian Nations who ended separate negotiations on Friday.

The EU and ASEAN sides issued a long-to-do list of their own: more joint ventures, fewer trade barriers, common industrial norms as standards, better cooperation in the fight against drugs and crime.

Adding Japan, China and South Korea to the debate on Saturday was an effort to widen economic, but above all political ties between the two regions as a whole.

Asia's relations with Europe never have been as strong as its ties to the United States, and both European and Asian politicians are eager to improve them.

In a draft statement, to be issued after Saturday's talks, the two sides committed themselves to cooperate more in the fight against drugs, crime and environmental pollution.

They also pledged joint support for Kofi Annan, the new United Nations secretary general, in his efforts to reform the UN and combat corruption in the world economy.

One irritant in the Europe-Asia relationship is human rights and European tendencies to press Asians on the issue at length.

The problem with Europeans, Singapore's foreign minister explained Friday after the one-day ASEAN-EU negotiations, in that they want a prenuptial agreement of human rights before marrying their trade partners.

The committee is to report

1m illegal workers still in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 15: When Malaysia is resorting to harsher punitive measures to flush out numerous illegal immigrants, many more are sneaking in to seek their fortune in this flourishing country, reports Xinhua.

The illegal immigrants are slipping into Malaysia as the country with a population of about 20 million is facing a serious shortage of workers resulting from the rapid economic development over the past few years.

There are still about one million illegal foreign workers in the country even after a nationwide exercise to register and legalize illegal from mid-August to December 31 last year and a follow-up voluntary repatriation programme which allowed them to surrender before January 31 to be deported to their respective homeland, according to official estimates which put the total foreign workers (including legal) at more than two million.

Malaysia authorities are worried that the presence of two million foreign workers along with the illegal immigrants is posing a threat to the nation's security and stability.

To rid the nation of this burgeoning problem, the Malaysian government is now waging an all-out war against the illegal. It is meting out harsher punishment to those bringing in and harboring illegals and has launched a massive crackdown against illegal immigrants.

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