

Clinton-Netanyahu meet today

Israel to ease further closure of West Bank, Gaza Strip

JERUSALEM, Apr 6: Israel announced Saturday it is further easing its closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip imposed after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed three Israelis in a Tel Aviv cafe March 21, reports AFP.

then for Palestinian ambulances incases of emergency and for the families and lawyers of Palestinians defendants brought before Israeli courts.

Another AFP reports says, Europe must play a more effective and influential role in the Middle East. Arab League and European Union (EU) representative here said Saturday at the end of their three-day conference on the peace process.



Children demonstrate on Saturday in the streets of Nablus during "Palestinian children day," to support peace and protest the construction of a new Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem.

No pressure on Leghari to step down: Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Apr 6: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has dismissed suggestions his party wanted President Farooq Ahmed Leghari to resign in the wake of a bill slashing presidential powers, report AFP.

unanimously annulled sweeping presidential powers, including a discretionary authority to dissolve the National Assembly, used four times by successive presidents since 1985.

Arafat due in India today

NEW DELHI, Apr 6: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will arrive here on Monday to attend a ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, diplomats said today, reports AFP.

President Leghari is under no pressure of any sort to resign and intended to continue playing constitutional role for the full length of his term, until November 1998, he added.

Arafat is to address a special session of the conference on Palestinian affairs and his Palestinian Authority and hold talks with Indian leaders, Palestinian Ambassador Khalid El-Sheikh said. He will be in India for one day. It will be Arafat's first visit to New Delhi since 1992.

The relations between the two remain "extremely cordial" because there were no differences between them on the repeal of constitutional clauses related to presidential powers, the spokesman said.

BRIEFLY

Madrid Film Festival opens:

The inaugural Madrid Film Festival opened this weekend with a promising lineup of movies but an embarrassing absence of stars. AP reports from Madrid.

French minister to visit China:

French Defence Minister Charles Millon will formally begin an official visit in Beijing on Monday in a highly significant gesture from Paris that it wants to turn the page on ties with Beijing after the Tiananmen Square massacre, AFP reports from Beijing.

3 die as bldg collapses in France:

An explosion probably due to a gas leak caused a three-storey apartment building to collapse Saturday, killing three people and wounding at least 13, police said. AP reports from Sarreguemines.

4 Azeri, 6 Armenian POWs freed:

Armenia and Azerbaijan on Saturday released 10 prisoners captured during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and repatriated them to Baku and Yerevan respectively. The ICRC said, AFP reports from Geneva.

10m Indonesians carrying HBV:

About 10 million Indonesians, or five per cent of the population, are carrying the hepatitis B virus (HBV) the state Antara news agency reported yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Fujimori in Bolivia for talks:

Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, in Bolivia for crisis talks with Bolivian leader Sanchez de Lozada, on Saturday ruled out again the use of force to free the 72 VIPs held hostage by Marxist rebels, Reuter reports from Santa Cruz.

American teenager held in ROK:

An American teenager was arrested Sunday on charges of stabbing to death a South Korean man during a fight inside a fast-food restaurant, police said, AP reports from Seoul.

Church against move to extend Ramos's term

MANILA, Apr 6: The Philippines' powerful Roman Catholic church today attacked moves to extend President Fidel Ramos's term in office, warning it could provoke street demonstrations, endanger the economy and destabilise the nation, reports Reuter.

Rebels murder 80 civilians in Algeria

ALGIERS, Apr 6: More than 80 civilians have been murdered by suspected Islamic guerrillas, including some who were beheaded with a chainsaw, in the worst such massacres in six months, news paper said today, reports AFP.

Two die, 11 hurt in Punjab bomb explosion

AMRITSAR, India, Apr 6: A bomb went off Sunday in a bus coming from the northern state of Jammu-Kashmir, killing two passengers and injuring 11 others, police said, reports AP.

US intends to keep one lakh troops in Asia, says defence secy

HONOLULU, Hawaii, Apr 6: The United States intends to keep about 100,000 troops in Asia — mainly in Japan and South Korea — even if a permanent peace is established on the Korean peninsula, Defence Secretary William Cohen said Saturday, reports AP.

and his first to Asia, a region he visited frequently during his 18 years as a Republican senator from Maine. He said he hoped to travel to China before the end of this year in search of ways to establish more regular US-Chinese military contacts.

sula would not bring major changes to the level of American military commitments in the region. "We intend to remain in Korea, assuming there's a unification, into the indefinite future," he said.

Turkish troops kill 30 Kurdish rebels

ANKARA, Apr 6: Turkish army troops killed 30 separatist Kurdish rebels and lost five members in fighting in the trouble southeastern region, the government said Saturday, reports AP.

Cohen stopped here on the first leg of an Asia-Pacific trip designed to highlight the Clinton administration's commitment to maintaining a large troop presence in the region. He was to receive private briefings Sunday from commanders of the US Pacific Command, based at Camp H.M. Smith near Pearl Harbor.

Although a Korean peace treaty to replace the armistice signed at the end of the Korean War in 1953 is far from certain, North Korea is considering a US-South Korean proposal for peace talks. Both sides hope this eventually leads to some form of reunification of the communist North and capitalist South.

Rebels agree to repatriate Rwandan refugees

KINSHASA, Apr 6: The Zairean opposition on Saturday confirmed it had withdrawn support from newly appointed Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, reports AFP.

Zairean opposition backs out support from new PM

The radical opposition, which had traditionally supported Tshisekedi, and parties supporting President Mobutu Sese Seko issued a statement officially declaring their withdrawal of support.

US urges ROK not to buy Russian missiles

HONOLULU, Apr 6: US Defence Secretary William Cohen on Saturday urged South Korea not to buy Russian SA-12 anti-aircraft missile, suggesting they might accidentally threaten friendly US jets in the confusion of any new Korean war, reports Reuter.

Bomb scare leaves thousands stranded in Liverpool

LIVERPOOL, England, Apr 6: Thousands of people sought overnight shelter in this central English city after bomb threats pinned on the Irish Republican Army cancelled Britain's premier horse race, reports AP.

Some 60,000 people were forced to leave the Grand National grounds, site of the world's most famous steeplechase, on Saturday while police and soldiers searched abandoned bags, 20,000 cars and hundreds of buses for explosives. None were found.

Security already was tight because of the two bombings last week, which were also near Liverpool. For the first time in the race's 158-year-old history, armed police were on duty.

Separated from their vehicles, thousands of fans were forced to find lodgings in Liverpool, about nine kilometres (six miles) away. "We have had a whole variety of people seeking shelter — from a horse owner trying to find a chartered plane to other who cannot afford a bed and breakfast for the night," said the Rev Roger, Driver of the Emmuel Church.

There were two coded telephone warnings typical of the IRA's operating style, police said. "The messages indicated there could be a bomb within Aintree but no specific location was mentioned which made it extremely difficult for us," assistant chief constable Paul Stephenson said.

Those led away from the Aintree racetrack included Princess Anne and American actor Gregory Peck, who was celebrating his 81st birthday. A single stable boy was left in charge of the prized horses. Some 400 million people around the world had been expected to tune in to television coverage of the Grand National, and about 75 million pounds (£20 million dollars) had been wagered on the 38 horses. No new date was set for the 4.5-mile race, which had a 400,000 dollars purse. The evacuation began only a half-hour before the race was to start and went smoothly with no injuries, although in their haste many fans abandoned shoulder and shopping bags. The race itself was canceled just as it was about to begin.

Russia accused of continuing war against Chechnya

MOSCOW, Apr 6: The president of Chechnya said Russia was continuing its "war" against the breakaway region by means of an economic blockade and he would not demobilise his guerrilla army until Moscow signed a lasting peace treaty.

Security forces and ethnic Cossacks in neighbouring regions say they have stepped up controls on passage in and out of Chechnya. Russian media said more than 100 Chechen pilgrims on their way to Makkah had been turned back at the border with the Dagestan region on Friday because of passport problems.

Yeltsin pulled Russian troops out of Chechnya after Maskhadov's several thousand-strong guerrilla force recaptured the capital Grozny last August after 20 months of fighting. The two sides agreed a ceasefire but Maskhadov, who was elected president in January, said last week that months of talks on a lasting peace and economic compensation for the mainly Muslim Chechens had run into a dead end. Maskhadov has insisted on full sovereignty for Chechnya, Moscow is prepared to grant

only autonomy within Russia. "They are holding us to ransom. First Cossacks, then checkpoints, now a blockade, this too is war," Maskhadov told ORT, saying the proposing a treaty defining relations on the basis of the cease-fire reached last August. Security forces and ethnic Cossacks in neighbouring regions say they have stepped up controls on passage in and out of Chechnya. Russian media said more than 100 Chechen pilgrims on their way to Makkah had been turned back at the border with the Dagestan region on Friday because of passport problems. Yeltsin pulled Russian troops out of Chechnya after Maskhadov's several thousand-strong guerrilla force recaptured the capital Grozny last August after 20 months of fighting. The two sides agreed a ceasefire but Maskhadov, who was elected president in January, said last week that months of talks on a lasting peace and economic compensation for the mainly Muslim Chechens had run into a dead end. Maskhadov has insisted on full sovereignty for Chechnya, Moscow is prepared to grant

Canadian experts say Charisma to be key deciding factor in Britain's May 1 polls

LONDON, Apr 6: Charisma, or lack of it, will be a big deciding factor in Britain's May 1 general election, Canadian experts said today, reports Reuter.

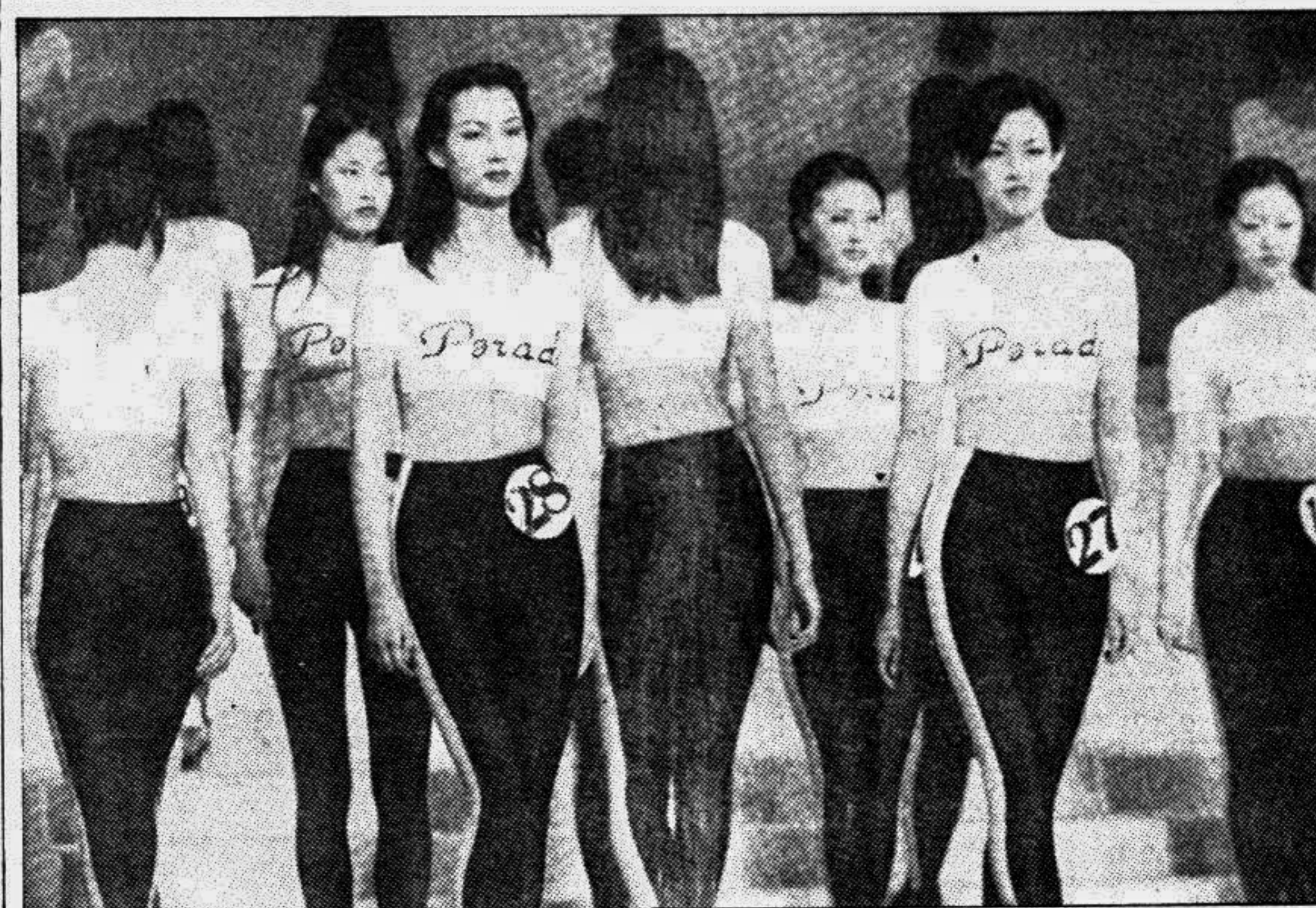
Britons value charisma much more than Canadians or Americans do, researchers from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, told a meeting of the British Psychological Society.

This meant things looked bad for Prime Minister John Major, already trailing opposition Labour leader Tony Blair by at least 20 points in opinion polls, said psychologist Mark Pancer, who worked with two political science experts on the study.

Major was pretty low in terms of charisma, Pancer said in an interview before he presented his findings to the Edinburgh meeting. Pancer's group surveyed voters at universities in Britain, Canada and the United States for the study — a total of 700 students aged between 22 and 25. They were representative of the general population in terms

of stated political preference. Each was asked to rate three politicians from their own country, three from other countries, and then three international or local celebrities, they were given a list of 40 standard personality traits to use. Britons were asked to rate former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, Major and the late Labour Party leader John Smith. The surveys were done before Smith's death in 1994, when Blair took over. Americans were asked about President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush while Canadians were questioned about ex-prime minister Brian Mulroney and Prime Minister Jean Chretien. International leaders included Clinton, Thatcher and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, while Madonna and Prince Charles were among the celebrities. Pancer said people tended to rate their own politicians lower than those in other countries. British students held Thatcher

in low regard, while Americans and Canadians admired her. Nevertheless he was surprised how low Major rated. "In the British sample, his ratings were lower than any ratings in any sample," Pancer said. "He got a moderate rating in competence, a moderate rating in integrity, and a somewhat low rating in terms of strength." Thatcher scored high in terms of strength and competence in all three samples, while Clinton was voted most charismatic. Voters everywhere valued integrity first in their assessment of politicians. "That included traits like honesty, straight forwardness, trustworthiness and were they approachable," Pancer said. The British students valued charismatic traits like charm, energy, likeability and looks. Canadians preferred their politicians to be competent and looked for capability and hard work while Americans concentrated on integrity over competence.



The finalists from among three hundred Chinese girls parade before the judges at a national model competition Saturday in Beijing, in the hope to win the chance to walk out on foreign catwalks. The judges made up from US, Italian and French designers must select the girls who could one day be called to grace the catwalks of Paris, Milan or New York.

Rebels agree to repatriate Rwandan refugees

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UN refugee agency said Saturday. The Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF) approved a repatriation plan drawn up by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for particularly vulnerable refugees in camps near rebel held Kisan-gani, the agency said.

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