

International

Gujral offers unconditional talks to tribal rebels

GUWAHATI, India, May 20: Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral Monday offered unconditional talks to tribal guerrillas in the country's northeast where tens of thousands have died in separate homeland campaigns, reports AFP.

"My basic approach is to talk to all militant groups in the northeast who are willing," the Prime Minister told reporters in the Assam state capital of Guwahati.

The Prime Minister is currently touring the seven states which border either Bangladesh, Myanmar or China.

Gujral, who assumed office on April 21 at the head of a 13-party coalition government, said the talks will not be conditional.

"The talks will be unconditional, talks do not mean pre-conditions on both sides."

Lanka asks newspapers to report on war cautiously

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, May 20: The government appealed to local newspapers Tuesday to express caution while reporting on the military's latest offensive to capture a vital road link in northern Sri Lanka, editors said, reports AP.

Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte told the editors of the local newspapers that publishing maps and names of military officers could affect the offensive.

In separate meetings with representatives of individual newspaper groups, Ratwatte admitted blemishes in the military's releases of news and assured that some changes would be made shortly, the editors said.

Army soldiers were continuing to fortify positions around the towns of Nedunkerni and Omantai, which were wrested from Tamil rebels in fierce fighting during the past week, military officials said Monday night.

Rebel leaders vow to change political face of Zaire

KINSHASA, May 20: Victorious guerrilla leaders vowed on Monday to change the political face of Zaire and self-proclaimed President Laurent Kabila was expected in the capital Kinshasa to install a new administration, reports Reuter.

Under pressure to form a broad-based government, the leadership of the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo said their priority was political re-education from peasant collectives upwards before national elections could be held.

The euphoria over the weekend rebel overthrow of the 32-year dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko was mixed with continuing violence in the capital of five million people.

The local Red Cross said it retrieved 22 bodies across the city on Monday, taking the death toll since the rebel take over to 222.

BJP for changing corrupt image of leaders: Advani

KOLHAPUR, May 20: The BJP president LK Advani yesterday said his party wanted to change the "corrupt image of political leaders," reports PTI.

Addressing a rally here at the historic Bindu Chowk on the arrival of his "Svarna Jayanti Rath Yatra" Advani said this could be achieved by making the working of the government and political parties transparent.

Making a fervent appeal to the people to extend their active cooperation in building a healthy democratic society devoid of corruption, hunger and fear, he said "we shall pledge not to accept bribe, nor shall we give bribe."

During the 13-day rule of the BJP government, it had created a lot of confidence among the public, Advani said adding that the party could capture at least 300 seats if election to the Lok Sabha were held.

With the rebels still mopping up pockets of resistance, Kabila was expected to arrive in Kinshasa today from his temporary base in the southern city of Lubumbashi, according to official announcements by the United States and South Africa.

"We understand, based on meetings this morning, that Laurent Kabila plans to arrive in Kinshasa tomorrow, that he plans to formally establish an interim government by tomorrow evening," US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

South Africa's President Nelson Mandela, who led last-ditch mediation in the Zaire conflict, made a similar announcement in Zimbabwe where he is on a state visit.

New treatment to raise survival rate of lung cancer patients

DENVER, May 20: An aggressive treatment that combines two chemotherapy drugs with radiation therapy appears to dramatically increase the three-year survival rate of lung cancer patients, according to preliminary data released on Monday, reports Reuter.

Dr Chandra Belani of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute said the treatment could become the new standard of care in lung cancer, one of the hardest cancers to treat, if further tests confirm his findings. Belani presented his study at the American society of Clinical Oncology annual meeting in Denver.

While doctors already treat lung cancer patients with a combination of radiation therapy and chemotherapy, they do not administer the treatments at the same time for fear the combination will exacerbate the side effects.

Dr Belani said he found that giving the patient all three treatments from day one increased the side effects somewhat, but not significantly.

"The message here is that this early aggressive, well tolerated treatment appears to save a significant number of lives," Dr Belani said.

His study involved 38 patients with stage three non-small cell lung cancer, the most common form of lung cancer. Stage three patients are those whose cancer has advanced locally in the chest but has not yet metastasized.

The patients were given radiation therapy combined with the tumour-shrinking agents taxol and paraplantin. They showed a one-year survival rate of 63 per cent, versus 50 per cent for those receiving the current standard of care.

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One killed as Afghan rockets Pak border

ISLAMABAD, May 20: A girl was killed and six others injured on Monday when rockets fired from Afghanistan hit a Pakistani border village, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported, reports AFP.

The news agency said three rockets fired from the Asfar area in eastern Afghanistan pounded Toti Banda village in northwestern Dir District, killing a 10-year-old girl.

Six others, including three children, were wounded in the incident which occurred at about 2:00 pm (0900 GMT), it added.

This is the first time that rockets have hit Pakistan from Afghanistan since the Taliban Islamic militia seized control of Kabul and the country's western and eastern provinces along the Pakistan border in September last year.

The attack coincided with reports of a rebellion by senior commanders against Uzbek warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum who controls northern Afghanistan.

Key opposition commander changes side Faryab, half of Badghis fall to Taliban control

KABUL, May 20: The already shaky alliance battling Afghanistan's dominant Islamic Taliban has been dealt a body blow by the loss of at least one northern province after a key commander changed sides, according to reports, reports Reuter.

The province of Faryab and the opposition-held half of its western neighbour Badghis fell to the purist Taliban on Monday when alliance commander general Abdul Malik switched sides and publicly announced his support for the Taliban, according to the reports.

The uprising spread to three other provinces. Reports from Faryab's provincial capital said that government buildings were flying the Taliban's trademark white flags and that a number of opposition fighters had been captured.

The front line in Badghis had remained static for more than 18 months until Monday and, despite frequent skirmishing, neither group had been able to break the lines until Malik's defection.

The Taliban control almost two thirds of Afghanistan, but they had made little strategically important headway since taking the capital Kabul last September.

Japan sets up task force for India's power industry development

TOKYO, May 20: Japan has set up a task force to mobilise capital, technology and industrial planning know-how for fastest possible development of India's power industry, reports PTI.

A committee of private-sector which advises the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) on Indian economy has recommended Japanese private sector's involvement in the Indian power sector.

Private-sector Japanese enterprises were helped and guided into it by the World Bank with assurances from their government.

Labour govt faces first challenge on foreign policy

Sanjay Suri writes from London

Britain's new Labour government faced the first serious challenge in Parliament when it claims is the ethical thrust of its foreign policy.

The general questions about an ethical foreign policy raised in the debate are expected to have implications for the Kashmir policy the new government pursues. "It will have to be seen how consistently the new government can pursue its policies," an Indian diplomatic official told IANS.

In fact Kashmir did not come up in the debate at all, Indian officials said that was "significant in itself." Labour, which had singled out Kashmir for adopting a party resolution, had declared that Kashmir will be on top of its international agenda. But none of the MPs from any party who joined the debate on foreign policy considered Kashmir a subject worth mentioning.

Although the Labour foreign policy statement does not specify Kashmir, yet Kashmiri groups here have welcomed the

policy, saying it is worded to include Kashmir among other international trouble spots.

The challenge to the foreign policy came in the House of Lords from Viscount Cranborne, who spoke for the Conservatives. However, he raised the moral question in relation to Tibet, not Kashmir.

A senior Labour leader noted, "The Labour government has talked of Cyprus but omitted any reference to Kashmir." But that, he said, "could be a matter of timing rather than a retreat from what it said before."

Lord Cranborne asked Baroness Symons, who was assigned to speak for Labour, "Will the noble Baroness give some idea of her ethical position on the present situation of the people of Tibet and what representations the government will make to the Chinese government in that regard?"

In her reply Baroness Symons said that China is a "country of great and growing importance." She said: "We will speak up when we should in areas such as human rights, but that should be in the context of a much more wide-ranging and constructive relationship than has so far been achieved."

Interior minister appeals for calm following violence Opposition parties in Cameroon call for annulment of polls

YAOUNDE, Cameroon, May 20: Both major opposition parties in Cameroon called Monday for the annulment of general elections, charging vote fraud after the ruling party announced it was winning before all votes were counted, reports AP.

The interior minister appealed for calm after violence over this weekend's elections left at least seven dead.

State run radio announced Sunday night that the vote tally showed the ruling Cameroonian People's Democratic Movement to be on its way to winning more than 100 seats out of 180 in the legislature. It had 88 seats in the previous parliament.

The counting was not yet over, and the results have to be confirmed by the Supreme Court within 20 days of election.

Gaddafi violated air embargo, rules UN committee

UNITED NATIONS, May 20: Fights by Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi to two African countries earlier this month violated an international air embargo, the UN Sanctions Committee ruled Monday, reports AFP.

The head of the UN Sanctions Committee for Libya, Polish Ambassador Zbigniew Wlosowicz, told reporters here that the UN Security Council would discuss a formal reaction to the sanctions breach today.

He said after a sanctions committee meeting that the panel had "established that the flights of the head of state of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya took place to Niger and Nigeria between 8th and 10th of May and that they constituted a breach of the sanctions regime."

But under pressure from China and Egypt, according to diplomats, the committee also noted that the flights to Niger and Nigeria and return to Tripoli from May 8-10 were of a religious nature.

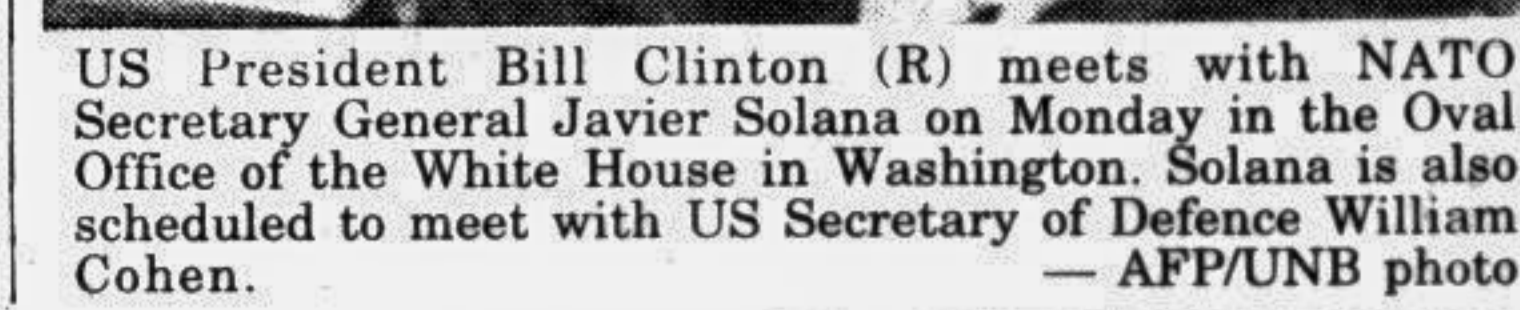
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US President Bill Clinton (R) meets with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana on Monday in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. Solana is also scheduled to meet with US Secretary of Defence William Cohen. — AFP/UNB photo

Some turn to napping amid epidemic of sleep deprivation

NEW YORK, May 20: Winston Churchill partook. Thomas Edison did it secretly. President Bill Clinton indulges more often since turning 50, reports AP.

The nap, that brief spell of daytime sleep most commonly associated with babies and cats, has long been reviled by many and reveled in by some. It's never been something to boast of, especially when taken at work.

That may be changing. Amid an epidemic of sleep deprivation, a determined few are napping during business hours and more may be following.

"More people are willing to admit privately that they nap," said William Anthony, author of "The Art of Napping," published this month, and a pro-

fessor of psychology at Boston University. "You can't as yet acknowledge it at work. That's what I'm hoping to change."

In his book, he argues that the United States is a "napping" society, prejudiced against the siesta because of the country's drive to produce. "Our culture has developed on the mistaken belief that productivity and napping are two different extremes," Anthony said.

As a result, the country is filled with "clappers" — people who hide their napping from others — and "nappers" — people who try to make nappers feel ashamed of their naps, writes Anthony, whose family is so devoted to the ritual that they hold napping contests.

Edison may have invented the electric light bulb that arti-

ficially extended the modern day, but he was both a "clapper" and a "napper," a napper who pretends that they don't nap, Anthony said. Edison apparently liked to persuade others that he didn't need much sleep.

Churchill, on the other hand, made no effort to hide his afternoon siesta. Nor does Clinton try to keep his snoozes a state secret.

"He works long hours and sometimes keeps late hours and finds a nap is helpful in catching up on sleep when he needs to," said Deputy White House Press Secretary Barry Tove. "He does it more now, as he's reached the ripe old age of 50, but it's still occasional."

Graig Yarde, for one, is all for dozing on the job.

The Bristol, Connecticut, businessman is planning to include a "napping room" in a new 220-worker facility to be completed in 1998 for his metals distribution business. The factory will be open 24 hours a day, but napping will be available to both day and night workers.

"Our greatest resource is the people who work here," said Yarde. "We're trying to see how we can give them a break or a perk, a napping area where they can unwind."

Employees liked the idea, said Yarde, but "were kind of shocked when I asked them. They thought I was crazy."

That may be partly because few people realise how much sleep they need and how little they get.

Before the invention of the electric light, Americans slept an average of 10 hours a night, according to James Maas, a Cornell University professor and authority on sleep. Today, they sleep an average of 7.1 hours a night and a third of Americans sleep get six hours nightly. The popularity of night work has also, taxed Americans' sleeping hours.

Yet if someone loses as little as an hour of sleep a night for a week, his productivity drops 25 per cent, said Maas, author of a book on sleep techniques for professionals that's to be published in 1998 by Villard.

Increasingly, Mass is sounding his warnings to corporations, where he gives seminars entitled "Asleep in the Past Lane" or "Power Sleep" to executives and managers.

"Why mandate that people have coffee or Coke breaks when they can put their head down on the desk for 15 minutes?" he asked. "It affects the bottom line."

Public television news anchor Jim Lehrer once was shy about revealing the daily naps he started taking after a heart attack in 1983. But no more.

"I've decided this is good for people. It's good for the soul," he said after awakening one day from his 30 to 45 minute office nap.

"I look forward to it, he added. "I know that whatever I do, whatever happens, whoever I see, I'll have my nap."

BRIEFLY

Basu concedes Shambhus death: The West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu Monday expressed shock at the demise of Shambhu Mitra and said, his death had created a great void in the field of theatre, PTI reports from Calcutta.

In a condolence message, Basu said, Mitra had contributed significantly to bring about a revolution in modern drama, both in West Bengal and the country.

As a dramatist, director and actor, Mitra also introduced new art and technique. He had also given a new dimension to Tagore's plays.

Vietnamese PM visits Europe: Looking to strengthen post-Cold War ties with former communist allies, Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet on Tuesday began a state visit to three Eastern European countries, AP reports from Hanoi.

Kiet will also visit Italy during his week-long trip, the Communist Party newspaper, The People, reported. The prime minister's visit will focus on rebuilding ties with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Mild quake hits Japan: A moderate earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.7 hit waters by an island near Tokyo on Tuesday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries, AP reports from Tokyo.

The quake was centered about 110 kilometres (68 miles) beneath the sea floor near Miyakejima Island, 152 kilometres (95 miles) south of Tokyo, the Meteorological Agency said. A police official on Miyakejima said there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage from the quake.

1 executed in US: A carpenter who beat three people to death with a claw hammer in 1985 was executed by injection Monday in the first of four executions scheduled this week, AP reports from Huntsville.

Richard Drinkard, 39, was sentenced to die for bludgeoning Lou Ann Anthonny, 44; her sister, LeDean Hendrix, 47; and Ms. Hendrix's boyfriend, Jerry Mullens, 43. At his 1986 trial, Drinkard became the first convicted killer in Texas to merit a death sentence under the new law that made multiple murders a capital offense.

Lion kills small boy in Brazil: A four-year-old boy was killed in a small town in northeastern Brazil by a lion that broke loose from its tamer, local television news said on Monday, Reuter reports from Rio de Janeiro.

The lion tamer was taking the animal for a stroll around the town's streets to advertise the performances of a visiting circus when the lion broke loose from its cord, Globo News said. The tamer yelled for everyone to shut their doors immediately, but the lion managed to get inside a video rental shop where Jose Vinicius Silva was playing video games and mauled the four-year-old to death, Globo News said.

6 executed in S Arabia: An Afghan citizen and five Nigerians were beheaded Monday in Saudi Arabia for drug trafficking, assault and bank robbery, the Saudi Interior Minister said, AFP reports from Riyadh.

The Afghan Abdel Karim Mawlawi Mohamad Khan, was decapitated in Riyadh for drug trafficking. The Nigerians, Ali ibn Mohamad ibn Abdel Aziz, Adam ibn Issa ibn Suleyman, Yussef ibn Othman Jayan, Lukman Abassalo and Ali ibn Less ibn Mohammed, were executed in the Red Sea city of Jeddah for armed assault and bank robbery.

Road mishap kills 20 in India: At least 20 people were killed and 49 injured yesterday when a bus toppled into a gorge in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The news agency said the bus, carrying 84 tourists, plunged into a ravine about 30 km (20 miles) from the hill resort of Kodakkal after the driver lost control of the vehicle. A similar crash on the same road on May 2 killed 32 people, PTI said.

Yeltsin to visit Ukraine: Russian President Boris Yeltsin is to visit Ukraine on May 30 and 31, the government in Kiev announced Monday, AFP reports from Kiev.

It will be Yeltsin's first visit to Kiev since Ukraine and Russia split with the break-up of the Soviet Union and he took over at the helm in Moscow, despite the various differences between the two countries. Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin will be in the Ukrainian capital on May 28 and 29 to put the finishing touches to preparations for Yeltsin's arrival, already begun with the arrival Monday of a 37-strong team headed by vice-premier Serov.

Chirac set to meet Kohl: French President Jacques Chirac was set to meet his German counterpart Helmut Kohl in Paris yesterday to discuss an informal EU summit meeting later this month, officials said, AFP reports from Paris.

The two will have a working dinner at the Elysee Palace, said the officials, to discuss plans for the EU gathering. The talks come five days before the first round of the French general elections. Chirac is keen to take on the steatman role in the run up to the poll, and returned just on Sunday to Paris from Moscow, following a visit to China.