

BRIEFLY



Pope John Paul II (L) holds a hand of Mother Teresa as they meet at the Vatican, Tuesday. Mother Teresa was received during a private audience for the first time since stepping down as leader of the religious order she founded, the Missionaries of Charity. — AFP/UNB photo

2 French men killed in Zaire: Two French nationals were shot dead by men in uniform in the Zairean capital on Tuesday evening a French diplomat said. Reuter reports from Kinshasa.

The two long-term residents of Zaire, Michel Tournaire and Herve Rigaud, were leaving a factory in the Western Kinete district of the sprawling capital around 7.00 pm (1800 GMT) when they were killed. The identity of the uniformed killers was not immediately clear.

Violence claims 63 in Burundi: Police clashed in Bujumbura Monday with students protesting government negotiations with Hutu rebels as national radio reported that 63 people were killed in rebel violence in northeast Burundi. AFP reports from Bujumbura.

Major Pierre Buyoya, a member of the Tutsi minority who came to power in a coup last July, disclosed last week that negotiations were being held in Rome with the aim of a cease-fire. Meanwhile Radio Burundi reported that 63 people were killed and 12 injured Sunday at two "regroupment" camps at Murwi and Buganda, in northeast Burundi's Cibitoke province.

Polish president in Ukraine: Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski arrived Tuesday on a state visit, aimed at putting more than half a century of bad blood between Poland and Ukraine to rest, AP reports from Kiev.

Kwasniewski and his Ukrainian counterpart, President Leonid Kuchma, plan to sign a reconciliation declaration calling on their citizens to end the lingering distrust spawned by painful memories of World War II and its aftermath.

Indian deputy army chief to visit China: India's deputy army chief, Lieutenant General VP Malik, will visit China for 11 days beginning Thursday, newspapers reported yesterday. AFP says from Delhi.

The trip "is part of the ongoing confidence building measures agreed upon by India and China," the Pioneer said. Lt. Gen. Malik will meet the Chinese defence minister, the deputy chief of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and other Chinese military commanders, the newspaper said.

Sino-Pak team fails to climb Everest: A joint China-Pakistan expedition has failed in its attempt to climb Mount Everest. China's official Xinhua news agency said Tuesday. AFP reports from Beijing.

In a dispatch from Lhasa, in Tibet, the agency said the team of 10 Pakistanis and five Tibetans had to turn back after reaching 7,700 metres (25,400 feet). The mountain's summit stands at 8,848 metres (29,198 feet).

Yeltsin to sign Russia-NATO accord in Paris May 27

MOSCOW, May 21: Russia's new agreement with NATO is open to interpretation but President Boris Yeltsin will proceed with plans to sign it in Paris on May 27, the president's spokesman said Tuesday, reports AP.

The signing of the agreement is not the end, but the beginning of its life: it begins the struggle over its interpretation," Yeltsin spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky told reporters.

The Russia-NATO agreement reached last week is designed to alleviate Moscow's opposition to Western alliance's plan to invite several ex-Soviet allies in Eastern Europe to join its ranks. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are expected to receive invitations this summer.

NATO says the agreement

gives Russia a consultative voice — but not a vote — in NATO affairs and offers Moscow some assurances on limiting military operations on the territories of new members of the alliance.

However, the accord, whose text has not been released, appears to have few firm guarantees and is being interpreted differently by Moscow and NATO.

For instance, Yeltsin has said it contains a promise from NATO not to deploy nuclear weapons and other forces on the territory of new members.

However, NATO says the accord only restates its existing position: The alliance has "no intention, no reason and no plan" to deploy such forces, but the agreement does not preclude such a move.

Solution to Kashmir issue vital for progress on Indo-Pak talks

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan said here that despite a promising beginning to the revived Indo-Pak dialogue, little would be achieved without a solution to the Kashmir issue.

He also maintained that the US should "play a role" to get this issue settled.

Khan, making his first visit here after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government took power in February, asserted that Islamabad would never forsake the "core issue" of Kashmir and that this simmering imbroglio had to be resolved before there could be any chance of normalising relations with New Delhi or even conducting a meaningful dialogue on other issues.

In a luncheon address organised by the Henry Stimson Centre here, a think tank that has an exclusive confidence building measures programme on South Asia, Khan continued to adopt his extremely hawkish position on Kashmir that was evident during the South Asian

Association for Regional Cooperation's (SAARC) conference recently in the Maldives and later at the press briefing at the end of the parley.

Sources here said that this apparently was a double-pronged strategy that Islamabad was deploying — Sharif adopting a reconciliatory posture while Mr Khan and Pakistani ambassadors around the world, especially its envoy to Washington Riaz Khokhar, would keep hammering away at the Kashmir issue.

Khan, who is scheduled to meet Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and Defence Secretary William Cohen, both in his prepared remarks and the question and answer session that followed, was unyielding in his contention that there was no way to resolve the Kashmir issue could be pushed to the backburner or swept under the carpet.

"For 50 years," he said, "the people of this disputed territory

have been deprived of their inalienable right to self-determination. This is a right accorded to them by history, by both Pakistan and India and by the international community through several resolutions of the United Nations Security Council."

Kashmir, he declared, "is a flashpoint where the largest concentration of troops are deployed eyeball to eyeball along the Line of Control."

"India maintains a force of approximately 700,000 in Kashmir," he added, and noted that Pakistan also had close to 500,000 troops along the Line of Control.

Consequently, Khan told several senior State Department officials, Congressional leaders, academics and media, who attended the luncheon, that it was in Washington's interest to get involved and try to defuse the situation.

"I am particularly confident

that the United States," Khan said, "with its demonstrated commitment to human rights, will do its utmost to ensure that the fundamental rights of the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir are restored who are facing gang rape, extrajudicial killings, house burning, arrest and detention on a very large scale."

Acknowledging that the resurrection of the Foreign Secretary talks between the two countries and the Sharif-Gujral discussions are a good beginning, Mr Khan, however, noted that "it is still premature to conclude that a solution to the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir will be reached."

Khan conceded that "it will take time and we will with patience go step by step for a peaceful settlement" and emphasised that as long as he remains Foreign Minister, he would not give up on trying to bring about a rapprochement

between Islamabad and New Delhi on Kashmir.

While reiterating that the "US can play a role to encourage our talks," he said this did not mean that "we want them sitting across the table," but use their good office, which over the past few years has been Islamabad's way of ostensibly urging Washington to pressure India to yield on its contention that Kashmir is an integral part of India.

Khan said it was the Kashmir issue that stood between India and Pakistan being able to eschew its massive defence spending and use their scarce resources for the betterment of the peoples of both countries.

Saying India and Pakistan, which should have been tigers by themselves, today lagged so far behind the countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) "and we are not able to give the benefit to our people for what we achieved independence."

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Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in 1967, to be the capital of any future independent state.

The Palestinian Authority is not currently interested in a confrontation with Tsahal (the Israeli army) and prefers to try and score diplomatic points in the international arena," Shabak added.

The UN General Assembly has condemned Israel's settlement policy in East Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Another report says: Israel and the Palestinians must make "tough decisions" if peace talks are to resume US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said in Washington Tuesday.

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