



A file photo dated May 15, 1997 shows Mother Teresa greeting well-wishers at the Missionaries of Charity for destitute children in New Delhi. Mother Teresa, who died on September 5, 1997 at the age of 87, will take the fast track to sainthood, the Archbishop of Calcutta Father Henry De Souza said yesterday as the official inquiry into her canonisation began. —AFP photo

US, Japan and S Korea warn North against firing missile

SINGAPORE, July 27: The United States, Japan and South Korea on Tuesday delivered a strong warning to North Korea against carrying out any future missile test, vowing harsh punishment if it went ahead, reports AFP.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, South Korean Foreign Minister Hong Soon-Young and Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura also urged Pyongyang to use what they termed a unique opportunity to end its isolation.

Earlier, however, Hong admitted another missile launch was likely, despite all efforts to persuade the North otherwise.

Albright said: "We stressed that another long-range missile launch, whether it is declared to be a missile test or an attempt to place a satellite in orbit, would be highly destabilising and would have very serious consequences for our efforts to build better relations."

She was speaking at a press conference together with her counterparts from Japan and South Korea after they met on the sidelines of annual talks between the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its dialogue partners.

The meeting was held amid rising fears that Pyongyang was preparing to launch another missile following the firing of a Taepodong missile last August over Japan.

The ministers "called on North Korea to seize the opportunity to build a new and positive relationship with its neighbours and potential partners."

Albright said: "There has never been a better time than this. North Korea should take advantage of this opportunity to enhance prospects for growth and for a higher standard of living for North Koreans, she said."

"At the same time we have stressed to the North that improving relations depend on co-operation on security matters," she said.

"And this means... complete transparency on its nuclear issues and suspension of the development, export and testing of longer-range missiles."

The North, starving and cash-strapped after years of economic decay, agreed in 1994

to freeze its nuclear programme in return for energy aid to which the US, Japan and South Korea contributed.

Hong and Komura echoed the US position, urging the North not to risk hurting its chances of improving ties with the international community.

The three ministers have expressed their unified view that if North Korea takes the comprehensive approach, it will take benefits, Komura said.

"Should they choose the other way, there will be serious negative results for the North," he added, saying it was timely the three ministers issued the warning before "another potential launch".

South Korea's Hong said: "In case of another missile firing, there should be penalties... they will have to pay the price."

He hoped "Pyongyang will get the right message" and respond favourably to proposals for improving ties with the outside world.

However, in a speech delivered during the two-day post-ministerial conference, Hong also said that although all

channels were being used to dissuade North Korea from launching a missile, it was expected to go ahead.

"Given North Korea's unpredictable nature, we must think through the eventuality that it will go ahead with the launch," Hong said.

"If it does, South Korea, in close cooperation and collaboration with the United States and Japan, will respond with a firmness that matches the seriousness of the missile launch as a threat to regional and global peace and stability."

He said the three countries would "significantly cut down their economic assistance and other incentives to North Korea," which would "clearly be painful for the North."

Hong said the North was not expected to clearly state whether it would accept or reject the offers made by the three countries "given the secretive nature of the region."

"We believe it is still weighing the consequences of accepting or rejecting the offer. What it does with the possible missile launch will be an indication of its thinking."

India, Pakistan urged to sign CTBT

SINGAPORE, July 27: Asia's key security forum on Monday heard calls by leading powers for newly nuclear-armed India and Pakistan to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and revive a stalled peace process, reports AFP.

India claimed victory at the end of the day-long ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) talks which brought together 22 foreign ministers from Southeast Asia and leading powers, saying it had vindicated New Delhi's stand on a number of issues.

The ARF released a statement by chairman Singapore that noted "support for encouraging states that had tested nuclear weapons last year to exercise restraint."

Such encouragement included attempts to persuade India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT and to revive the Lahore peace process stalled by recent fighting over the line dividing the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, it said.

In prepared remarks to the ARF, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said last year's nuclear and missile tests by the South Asian rivals had intensified the spotlight on the region.

"We urge both India and Pakistan to avoid steps that would lead to arms race, and hope that both will sign the CTBT and support negotiation of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty in Geneva," she added.

Tarja Halonen, president of the Council of the European Union, said the nuclear and missile tests conducted by India and Pakistan underlined the need for measures to prevent an arms race from escalating in South Asia.

"We reiterate an appeal to refrain from further development of ballistic missiles and from deployment of new missiles in their military forces," she added.

Halonen, who is Finland's foreign minister, welcomed the recent reduction of hostilities across Kashmir and the "disengagement of the infiltrators" from the Pakistan side who crossed over into the Indian-controlled area.

On behalf of the European Union, she urged both New Delhi and Islamabad to resume their dialogue, to respect the sanctity of the Line of Control and agree on a cessation of fighting.

US eases sanctions against Iran, Libya, Sudan

WASHINGTON, July 27: Starting Tuesday, sanctions against Iran, Libya and Sudan will be eased to allow American companies to sell them food, medicine and medical equipment, reports AP.

All three countries are listed by the State Department as exporters of terrorism, which makes them subject to military and business sanctions. Tougher embargoes that bar other dealings, including humanitarian aid, are being eased.

"Sanctions on food, medicine and medical equipment do not generally advance our policy goals and may have adverse consequences in the humanitarian realm," Stuart Eizenstat, the deputy Treasury secretary, said Monday.

He said companies selling humanitarian goods would need licences from the Treasury Department.

At the same time, the new

policy offers US companies, particularly farmers, an opportunity to boost exports. American farmers, feeling lingering effects of a global financial crisis, are suffering their worst economic period in a decade.

"With farm prices still low and global demand still soft, this action could not have come at a better time," Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said. "Our farmers are hurting, and they deserve every opportunity to reach out to as many potential consumers as possible around the world."

The new policy offers farmers the opportunity to sell more than 13 million tons of grain, worth as much as \$2 billion, to Iran, Libya and Sudan, administration officials estimated.

The new policy generally allows licensed companies to sell "agricultural commodities and products that are intended for ultimate consumption as food by humans or animals," Eizen-

stat said.

Agricultural items permitted for export would include raw, processed and packaged foods, animal feeds, live food animals and seeds for food crops, Eizenstat said.

The regulations do not allow sale of nonfood agricultural commodities such as cotton or tobacco, he said.

The State Department announced the intended policy change in April. It said barring sales of food and medicine usually fails to hurt targeted regimes but deprives American companies of export opportunities.

Embargoes will continue as before against Iraq, North Korea, Cuba and Serbia, all sanctioned countries to which sales of certain items are already permitted. All but Serbia also are on the State Department terrorism list, along with Syria, which is not under further embargo.



US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (C) addresses a press conference while her counterparts, Japan's Masahiko Komura (L) and South Korea's Hong Soon-Young, listen during a joint press conference at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) yesterday. —AFP photo

EU urges wide support for war crimes court

UNITED NATIONS, July 27: The European Union urged all nations to support the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal, saying Monday that recent atrocities in many parts of the world have again highlighted the need for global action, reports AP.

While the EU did not single out any holdouts, its call was at least partly directed at the United States, one of just seven countries to vote against the establishment of an International Criminal Court last July.

The treaty to establish the court was approved by 120 countries and has since been signed by 83, and ratified by four. It will come into effect when 60 countries have ratified it, which diplomats estimate will be in 2 1/2 to 5 years.

As the commission preparing for the court's operation began its second round of meetings Monday, the EU called for quick ratification to ensure the treaty's early entry into force and offered legal assistance to

countries to move the treaty forward.

"For the court to come into operation early and to be fully effective, the widest support of the international community is needed," said a statement issued by Finland, which holds the rotating EU presidency.

It noted that all 15 EU members, which include many of Washington's closest allies, have signed the treaty.

The United States voted against the treaty because American officials felt it yielded too much prosecutorial power to the new court, leaving US troops and citizens vulnerable to politically motivated prosecutions.

The EU stressed the court's important future role "both in preventing serious violations of international humanitarian law and serious human rights violations, and in ensuring that those responsible for atrocities are brought to justice."

BRIEFLY

Russian PM in Washington:

Russian Prime Minister Sergei Stepashin arrived in Washington Monday on a fence-mending mission after making a brief stop on the west coast of the United States, AFP reports from Washington.

Stepashin, who is on his first visit to the United States since his appointment as premier, stopped in Seattle en route to Washington to make a "goodwill" visit to a Boeing plant.

Heatwave claims 12 in US:

Temperatures soared above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius) across the United States on Monday, continuing a heatwave blamed for killing at least 12 people and prompting health officials to warn the sick and elderly to stay cool. Reuters reports from Cleveland.

In Cincinnati, where eight people have died since last Friday in heat-related ailments, Dr. Carl Parrott, the Hamilton County coroner, and local health officials issued a list of do's and don'ts to help residents get through the eighth consecutive day of scorching temperatures. The four men and four women died in what Parrott called "a major natural disaster."

Cop, son killed in Aceh:

Suspected rebels shot to death a policeman and his teenage son Tuesday in the latest bloodshed in Indonesia's strife-torn Aceh province, officials said, AP reports from Lhokseumawe.

The attack comes after 41 civilians died in a weekend sweep by security forces in a village in West Aceh. Police officials identified the dead as rebels of the secessionist Free Aceh Movement and said they were killed in a surprise raid on their base. But witnesses and human rights activists said troops had executed a group of unarmed villagers.

Lanka bans foreign trips of ministers:

Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga has asked her ministers and senior bureaucrats not to travel abroad until the end of this year, her office said yesterday, AFP reports from Colombo.

"Since priority has to be given to major (development) projects, the president has instructed them (ministers) not to undertake foreign trips," the president's office said in a statement.

Clinton urges Assad to 'move forward' on ME peace

WASHINGTON, July 27: US President Bill Clinton wrote to President Hafez al Assad last weekend and urged the Syrian leader "move forward" on starting peace talks with Israel, a White House official told AFP Monday, reports AP.

In the letter, Clinton briefed the Syrian leader on his talks here last week with the newly-elected Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak, and said it was an opportune time for Syria and Israel to renew their contacts.

He wanted to convey that he believes Barak is fully committed to the peace process and therefore the president hopes that Assad and other leaders in the region will look at this and engage," National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer said.

Tribal militants Kill 8 policemen in Assam

GUWAHATI, India, July 27: Nearly two dozen separatist tribal guerrillas ambushed and killed eight policemen Tuesday in the eastern state of Assam, local officials said, reports AP.

A police spokesman said the attack, in which five other police personnel were seriously wounded, was carried out by militants of the banned National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN).

The ambush took place near a village in Karbi Anglong district, 250 kilometres east of the Assamese capital Guwahati.

"The militants fired indiscriminately with automatic weapons on a police patrol vehicle, killing eight on the spot," the district police chief, Debojit Deuri, told AFP by telephone.

It was the second major attack by NSCN rebels in Assam state in the past four months.

Annan refuses to set date for East Timor vote

UNITED NATIONS, July 27: Secretary-General Kofi Annan said voter registration could continue in East Timor but sporadic violence still prevented him from making a final decision on holding a ballot on the territory's future, reports Reuters.

The United Nations is responsible for organising a vote that may be held on August 21 or 22 in the former Portuguese colony, which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. East Timorese can choose between independence or autonomy within Indonesia.

Diplomats said Annan might delay the vote to a later date in August because of security concerns and logistic considerations but he had not yet made a decision.

India to build N-powered submarine by 2005

NEW DELHI, July 27: India's long-delayed project to build a nuclear-powered submarine has received a shot in the arm following the Kashmir conflict, a report said on Tuesday, reports AP.

The Times of India newspaper quoted defence sources as saying the project would be completed by 2005.

The advance technology vessel will have the ability to carry nuclear weapons, but this will have to be a government decision, a source told the daily.

The source, in an indirect reference to Pakistan, said the submarine would act as a powerful deterrent "unless, of course, someone is hell bent on committing suicide."

The navy is also on the prowl for a range of electronic warfare equipment, surveillance

equipment and "quick reaction strike capability" which has become imperative after the Kashmir crisis, the daily said.

The lesson learnt from the (Kashmir) episode is that when you are faced with an adversary whose actions can be abnormal and strange, one always has to maintain high vigil and guard," the source said.

On Monday, New Delhi announced that the last of the Islamic guerillas who fought Indian troops for two months in Kashmir had been cleared and pushed back over the border into Pakistan.

The Times said the government had also cleared a proposal to build two HDW class submarines and air defence ships.

The government has similarly approved and sanctioned construction of Project 17, which involves construction of

newly-designed frigates," the daily said.

Recently a parliamentary panel argued that India needed nuclear submarines to counter China's missile capability in the Indian Ocean.

The committee urged the government to speed up efforts to construct or acquire a nuclear submarine capable of carrying long-range ballistic missiles.

The report by the permanent standing committee on defence said China had seven nuclear submarines in the region in 1995-96.

It cited defence ministry experts as warning that China's sea-based nuclear deterrent, in the form of intercontinental ballistic missiles, had provided it with "unlimited bargaining capacity" in the international arena.

Barak plays down 15-month target for ME peace

JERUSALEM, July 27: Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Monday played down the 15-month target date he set for peace agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours during six days of talks in Washington earlier this month, reports AP.

"The 15-month deadline I set for reaching peace agreements isn't sacred," Barak told the Israeli parliament.

"All we meant to say was that we have no miracle solution, but that we have no intention of dragging things out for years and years either," he told MPs.

"We will not ask for a medal if we achieve our goal in nine

months, but we won't be making any apologies if it takes 20 months," he said.

"We will do all we can and leave no stone unturned to avoid a useless war while preserving the essential interests of Israel. We want to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict."

Speaking on the eve of key talks with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Barak said his government was "bound" by last October's US-sponsored Wye River agreement with the Palestinians.

"My government is bound by all the international agreements signed by Israel, including the Wye accord with the Palestinians," he said.

"Israel will implement the Wye agreement in its entirety but I am proposing that just one part of it be implemented now and the rest be merged into the framework of a final settlement."

Barak is due to discuss with Arafat his proposals for implementing the Wye accord, which have angered both Palestinian and Egyptian leaders, as well as his plans for launching so-called final status talks on a permanent settlement.

"If Arafat refuses my proposal, I undertake to implement the Wye agreement as signed," he vowed.

Laden moves to new hideout for fear of US attack

DUBAI, July 27: Alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden has abandoned his Jalalabad hideout in eastern Afghanistan for fear of an "imminent" US attack, an Arab newspaper reported on Tuesday, reports AP.

The London-based daily Al-Hayat said the Islamic militant first met with officials of the Taliban militia in power in Afghanistan to review "information that a US attack was imminent."

Taliban officers supervised his move to a secret location elsewhere in Afghanistan, the paper said, quoting "informed sources."

The Saudi dissident, who has been stripped of his nationality, was based in Jalalabad since February.

Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said last week that his country would not allow its territory to be used for any action against bin Laden.

His remark followed unconfirmed reports in the Pakistani press that US commandos were in Pakistan for an operation to detain the alleged terrorist after

the Taliban spurned Washington's demands to expel him.

The United States last year attacked suspected bin Laden terrorist camps in Afghanistan with cruise missiles.

According to the Pakistani newspaper Jang, the Saudi dissident has moved to a secret hideout made up of fortified bunkers. The refuge is guarded by some 450 Arab guerillas, along with hundreds of local fighters, it said.

Washington suspects bin Laden of plotting the August 7, 1998 bomb attacks on its embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that killed 224 people, and has offered a five-million-dollar reward for his capture.



Megawati Sukarnoputri, the leader of Indonesian Democracy Party for Struggle (PDI-P), shouts slogans during a mass gathering in Senayan in Jakarta yesterday. —AFP photo

Megawati marks third anniversary of attack on party office

JAKARTA, July 27: Indonesian opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri Tuesday marked the third anniversary of a bloody raid on her party's headquarters with a call to her followers to avoid violence in their drive to make her president, reports AP.

"Only through non-violence can we take the right path and violence will never solve any problem. Believe this," Megawati told about 15,000 cheering supporters at Jakarta's indoor Istora stadium.

It was the first public speech by the daughter of the country's first president Sukarno since her Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDI-P) became the clear winner of the June 7 elections taking 33.7 per cent of the some 105 million votes.

Megawati, dressed in the party's trademark red, appealed to her supporters to trust the party's struggle for reform, without recourse to violence.

She was speaking at a rally to commemorate the third anniversary of an attack on her former party headquarters in central Jakarta by a government and military-backed splinter party faction.

Megawati said the next major national event on the country's political calendar was the convening of the country's highest legislative body, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) to pick a new president in November.

"I call on all my friends among the masses of the Indonesian nation... we should again show, during the conven-

tion of the MPR, that we are a civilised nation," Megawati said to resounding cheers.

Many have expressed fears Megawati's wide grassroots support could turn violent if she fails to clinch the presidency.

And to ensure Tuesday's rally did not turn violent, some 5,000 PDI-P members were deployed around Jakarta in areas where loyalists were marking the event.

Suharto's doctors bar all visitors

JAKARTA, July 27: Former Indonesian president Suharto's team of doctors have barred him from receiving any visitors except close family members, a report said Tuesday, reports AP.

The ban was necessary to expedite the recovery of the 78-year-old former strongman from a stroke, the head of Suharto's team of doctors, Ibrahim Ginting, was quoted as saying by the state Antara news agency.

"This is for the sake of the healing process... so only close relatives of Suharto can visit him," Ginting was quoted by Antara as saying.

He added the restriction also applied to Suharto's hand-picked successor current President B.J. Habibie, and that Habibie understood the reason for the restriction.