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HEADLINE: Netanyahu in Japan

BODY:

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, begins a week-long visit to Japan and South Korea to discuss the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations with political and business leaders. His priority, however, will be to drum up more investment for his country and expand trade relations with Tokyo, which has been reluctant to deepen ties with Israel at the expense of its close links with oil-producing Arab states. Japan depends heavily on Middle East oil imports. Mr Netanyahu, who is leading a large Israeli business delegation, will meet Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Japanese prime minister, today and speak to the country's leading business association, the *Keidanren*. He will travel to Seoul on Wednesday, where he will meet Kim Young-sam, the president, and Koh Kun, the prime minister, as well as business leaders.

IMF tackles Albania

An International Monetary Fund mission is due to hold talks in Tirana on emergency funding for Albania's new Socialist-led coalition government. But Prime Minister Fatos Nano will have to launch a tough stabilisation programme before negotiations can start on a new medium-term IMF loan for Albania. The talks will focus on regulating the pyramid savings schemes that collapsed in January, triggering widespread violence and economic chaos. The Nano government is trying to restore order following a Socialist landslide at last month's general election. But it faces pressure to compensate savers who lost an estimated \$ 1.2bn in the fraudulent schemes.

Chinese network

More than 1,200 delegates have descended on Vancouver for the fourth World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (to 28). The convention serves as a venue for the Chinese business community to establish global networks, explore potential ventures and address important issues facing the community. It will be the first time the biennial event is held outside Asia. Key delegates include Mr Zheng Wan Tong, a member of the political consultative committee of the People's Republic of China, Mr Jing Shuping, chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry & Commerce, and Mr Stan Shih, chief executive of Acer, the Taiwanese computer manufacturer.

Nordic security talks

Ministers and diplomats from eight Nordic and Baltic rim countries meet in Helsinki for a two-day congress on regional security. The meeting, organised by the Nordic Council, will discuss the implications of Nato enlargement for the Baltic Sea region as well as ways of minimising the risk of armed conflict. The talks, to be opened by Finnish prime minister Paavo Lipponen, will also cover economic co-operation, pollution and the problem of unsafe nuclear power stations.

Li Peng visits Singapore

Li Peng, China's premier, is in Singapore on the second leg of his two-nation trip in Southeast Asia. He is due to meet Goh Chok Tong, the prime minister, and Lee Kuan Yew, the senior minister in Singapore's cabinet. Mr Li is using his trip in Southeast Asia (he visited **Malaysia**

last week) to build relations with the nine-nation Association of South East Asian Nations and promote a "new political and economic order" in which poorer countries are not bullied by the more wealthy. Although he does not mention the US by name, it is clear Mr Li is seeking to balance Washington's power in the region by engaging Asean.

Politburo trial verdict

Berlin's district court is expected today to issue a verdict in the trial of three former members of the East German Politburo on charges of manslaughter in connection with the killing of people along the border which once divided the two Germanies. If found guilty, the three men, Egon Krenz, Gunter Schabowski and Gunther Kleiber, face sentences of up to nine years in prison. Mr Krenz, who in 1989 succeeded Erich Honnecker as first secretary of the SED, the East German communist party, has denied personal responsibility and said the trial was a case of "victor's justice".

UN hears Cuban claim

Members of the UN biological weapons convention meet in Geneva to consider Cuban accusations of "biological aggression" by the US. Havana claims a US crop-spraying aircraft last October deliberately released a damaging pest known as thrips palmi over Cuba. The insect, hitherto unknown in Cuba, ravages many types of crop and is resistant to a wide variety of pesticides. Washington denies the charge. The UN convention, ratified by 138 states, prohibits the production and use of biological weapons but contains no mechanism for international verification.

Taiwan's new cabinet

Taiwan will this week appoint a new cabinet during the ruling Nationalist party's 15th party congress. The move follows the resignation last week of the premier, Lien Chan. The new cabinet will be headed by Vincent Siew, a parliamentary legislator who has held the posts of economic planning minister and minister for China affairs. The cabinet reshuffle is likely to include the defence, foreign affairs and deputy premier posts. Economy, finance and central bank are expected to remain. The new cabinet will focus on improving ties with rival China, law and order and economic growth.

Canberra agenda

Australian federal politicians return to Canberra today after a two-month parliamentary break. John Howard, prime minister, has pushed income and indirect tax reform to the top of the agenda. Other issues due to come up in the session are amendments to the Native Title Act and a policy on industry, especially a decision on tariffs for the textile, clothing and footwear sectors.

Golf

New York Open (to September 7).

Public holidays

Summer bank holiday in the UK but not Scotland.

TUESDAY 26

El Nino looms large

The effect of El Nino weather system on the world's climate will be one of the main themes of an international climate conference that starts today in Geneva (to August 28). The World Meteorological Organisation, one of the conference sponsors, says this year's El Nino is shaping up to be the most important climate event of the century. The impact of El Nino, an abnormal surface temperature rise of the tropical Pacific, is already being felt in South America and east Asia. Researchers say the final consequences are likely to surpass those of

the 1982-83 El Nino which severely affected crop production worldwide.

WEDNESDAY 27

Japan-Singapore talks

Goh Chok Tong, Singapore's prime minister, arrives in Japan for a four-day visit to discuss bilateral relations and regional issues ahead of the Japan-Asean summit in **Malaysia** in December. Mr Goh, one of the most active leaders in the Association of South East Asian Nations, will meet Ryutaro Hashimoto, Japan's prime minister on Friday. The two are expected to talk about the recent currency crisis in Thailand and other Southeast Asian markets and regional concerns about the strength of Japan's commitment to help prevent further currency havoc.

Venice on screen

Film buffs will be descending on Venice for this year's film festival which has already pronounced that the emphasis is going to be on top quality, not top names. The festival (to September 6) organisers have emphasised that it is not just for the photographers. Having said that among the top names on the bill will be Demi Moore, Woody Allen and Emma. The few star-filled productions are Woody Allen's *Deconstructing Harry*, with Demi Moore, Robin Williams and the director himself; Mike Figgis' *One Night Stand* with Nastassja Kinski and Wesley Snipes, and Alan Rickman's *The Winter Guest* with Emma Thompson.

Cook in Southeast Asia

Robin Cook, the UK foreign secretary, is due to pay a two-day official visit to **Malaysia** at the start of a Southeast Asian tour which will take in Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore. Mr Cook, on his first visit to the region since the Labour Party took power, will deliver a key speech in Kuala Lumpur which will set out strands of UK policy toward Southeast Asia. He is expected to discuss with regional leaders Asean's diplomatic efforts to promote stability in Cambodia since a recent coup in that country. He also intends to discuss efforts to promote reform in Burma.

China trade talks

Japanese and Chinese negotiators to begin three-day talks in Tokyo on issues related to Beijing's bid to join the World Trade Organisation. Japan's support for China's application is crucial.

Show jumping

European show jumping championships (to August 31), Mannheim, Germany.

THURSDAY 28

Bonn-Paris meeting

Progress towards European monetary union will be the focus of a meeting in Bonn between Helmut Kohl, German chancellor, and Lionel Jospin, the new French prime minister. Relations between the two countries have been ruffled in recent months as Bonn viewed with concern an apparent softening in France's determination to meet exactly the financial criteria set for members of the proposed Euro currency block. Mr Kohl may well see the meeting as an opportunity to reinforce the Bonn/Paris relationship.

FRIDAY 29

Tokyo textbook ruling

Tokyo Supreme Court is due to hand down a ruling on controversial case about textbook censorship filed 13 years ago by a leading historian, Saburo Ienaga. Mr Ienaga, now 83, filed a damages suit against the government in 1984 over revisions made to school texts he

authored - in particular, censorship of items dealing with Japanese atrocities in China in the 1930s. Mr Ienaga is seeking Y2m in compensation for the mental anguish caused by the revision of his texts, and has specifically challenged eight of more than 400 revisions demanded by the Education Ministry to his textbooks between 1980 and 1983. Among them is the ministry's deletion of a passage stating that Japanese soldiers killed large numbers of Chinese civilians and soldiers and "not a few" Japanese officers and soldiers raped Chinese women.

WEEKEND 30-31

Sudan peace bid

Omar el-Bashir, president of Sudan, plans to meet John Garang, leader of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement, on Saturday in a bid to end the country's 14 year-old civil war. The talks will be hosted in Pretoria by Nelson Mandela, the South African president, and Yoweri Museveni, the Ugandan president. Mr Museveni, a staunch critic of the Bashir regime, was instrumental in supporting the rebel forces which toppled Mobutu Sese Seko, the former Zairean despot earlier this year. His participation in Mr Mandela's mediation effort has raised hopes Mr Garang will attend the meeting.

Rocking on

Elvis is back again. This time Bonhams, the London auctioneers, is on Saturday offering Presley fans one of the largest collections of his possessions, stage suits and memorabilia to be collected in one sale. The sale features the collection of Paul Lichter, the Elvis fan, author and collector, and includes two of the pop star's most lavish stage suits. The Peacock suit is expected to fetch between £ 90,000-£ 120,000 and the Turquoise Phoenix suit £ 80,000-£ 90,000. The auction will be held simultaneously, via a live satellite link, at the Hard Rock Cafe, Berlin. *Compiled by Bob Vincent Fax: (+44) (0)171 873 3194.*

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