

BRIEFLY

Shevardnadze to form new party: Soviet reformers, including former Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, have agreed to set up a new political party in September...

The statement called for "uniting the democratic movements and parties in the republics and regions" of the Soviet Union.

Alexander Iakovlev and Arkadi Volokh are close associates of President Gorbachev, while Yeltsin supporters such as Russian Republic Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, Prime Minister Ivan Silaev and the mayors of Moscow and Leningrad, Gavril Popov and Anatoli Sobchak respectively, also signed.

PLO disputes Kuwaiti allegations: The Palestine Liberation Organisation on Monday sharply disputed allegations by Kuwait that it had sent 2,500 supporters into the Emirate to terrorise Kuwaitis during the Iraqi occupation, reports Reuter from United Nations.

The PLO, in a letter to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, said it had been trying to show restraint in polemics with Kuwait at the United Nations "despite the barbaric acts perpetrated against our people."

Kuwait's UN representative Mohammad Abul Hasan last week said the PLO had sent to occupied Kuwait some 2,500 people who were deployed at intersections and checkpoints. The PLO's UN observer, Nasser al-Kidwa, had previously called for an end to death sentences in Kuwait against alleged collaborators, an issue that has disturbed human rights groups around the world.

US fought to stop aggression: Bush: President George Bush said on Monday the United States fought the Iraqi occupiers of Kuwait not for democracy but to stop aggression, reports Reuter from Kennebunkport.

"Let me say this — I hope it doesn't come out wrong — the war wasn't fought about democracy in Kuwait", Bush told reporters at his Kennebunkport holiday home. "The war was fought about aggression against Kuwait."

The President who was asked about the post-Gulf war crackdown in Kuwait, also defended the imposition of Martial Law there and the strong reaction against people suspected of sympathy for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, whose troops occupied Kuwait last August. A US-led coalition drove out the Iraqis at the end of February.

But Bush added that he wanted to see a fair judicial system in Kuwait.

PLO asked to abandon rebel bases: The Lebanese army told the PLO on Tuesday to abandon guerrilla bases in south Lebanon or be driven out by force, Reuter from Sidon says.

Contacts lasted late into the night but it was unclear whether a PLO withdrawal from frontline positions facing Israeli-backed forces further east was enough to stop an offensive.

Thousands of army reinforcements backed by tanks poured into the southern port of Sidon and into guerrilla territory to the east in a show of force which lasted into the early morning.

The army deployment is the hardest stage of the government's plan to extend state control and end the civil war, which began in 1975 with clashes between Palestinian and Christian gunmen.

Nasser's death sentence to be abrogated: The Yemeni government plans to abrogate a death sentence passed four years ago against former President Ali Nasser Mohammad and five of his close aides, the official Al-Mithaq newspaper reported Monday, says AFP from Sanaa.

It said the decision would be announced within days. Ali Nasser Mohammad was the President of the former South Yemen until he was driven out of the country following bloody clashes in January 1986 between his partisans and rivals within the Yemeni socialist party.

Three years later he announced his resignation from politics to facilitate the unification of the two Yemens — which were merged in May 1990.

Cuban newsman decries Castro gov't: A senior Cuban journalist, who defected to the United States at the weekend, issued a statement on Monday decriing the Castro government and saying that if it did not resign "the people are going to throw them out," Reuter reports from Miami.

Roberto Casin, 43, the Mexico Bureau Chief of the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina, who arrived in Miami from Mexico City on Saturday, told reporters that he had been considering defection since a visit home last year. It was then he concluded that Cuban President Fidel Castro would do nothing to turn the country's disastrous economic conditions around.

Li leaves for Middle East: Premier Li Peng left Beijing Tuesday for a six-nation tour of the Middle East, the first Chinese leader to visit the region since the Gulf war, AFP from Beijing says.

The 13-day visit includes stops in Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Kuwait.

Accompanying the Premier were Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, Vice Foreign Minister Yang Fuchang, Trade Minister Li Langqing and a host of other officials under the state control.

Li's visit was billed by China as an "important diplomatic move" and was expected to include talks on Middle East peace efforts, regional arms control and economic and trade cooperation.

Assam seeks Army's help to rescue Soviet engineer

GUWAHATI, India, July 2: The Indian army was put on standby on Monday night in the northeast state of Assam after suspected Maoist guerrillas kidnapped a Soviet Engineer and 14 government officials, police said, reports Reuter.

Police said the state government sought the army's help as paramilitary troops searched for the kidnapped officials, who included eight oil executives.

Gristeno Sarekvi, a Soviet Engineer on secondment to India's state-owned coal Mines, was abducted from Margherita, 500 km (300 miles) northeast of Guwahati, the police said. No group has claimed responsibility for the kidnappings but senior police officials said they suspected the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which is fighting for an independent state, was responsible.

A senior official said he expected ULFA to issue a statement soon claiming responsibility and demanding the release of some of their jailed colleagues. Monday's kidnappings would be the biggest operation by the militants since a five-month army crackdown on their activities began in November last year.

US probes China's missile sales to Pakistan: WASHINGTON, July 2: The United States is probing China's missile sales to Pakistan to determine if they are prohibited by an international non-proliferation pact and whether to impose sanctions against Beijing, the State Department said Monday, reports AFP.

"The point we are trying to verify is whether China has sold or transferred a missile to Pakistan with capabilities that exceed missile technology control regime (MTCR) guidelines, said a state department spokesman, David Denry.

He added that sanctions would be imposed if the missiles sold did exceed the guidelines.

No compromise on 'illegal' settlements Bush threatens to divulge secret Middle East formula

KENNEBUNKPORT (Maine) July 2: US President George Bush on Monday threatened to go public with his thus-far confidential Middle East peace formula if he is unable to get Arab and Israeli leaders to attend a peace conference, reports Reuter.

At a press conference at his oceanside vacation home here, he also took a tough line on the contentious matter of Israeli settlements on occupied Arab lands, saying: "We're not giving one inch on the settlements questions."

Bush and Secretary of State James Baker have been work-

ing since March to bring Arab and Israeli to a peace conference that would lead to direct negotiations. Within that time Baker has made four trips to the Middle East.

Despite some progress, they have failed to reach agreement and to many the process now looks stalemated. Some American experts have suggested Bush should just issue invitations to a peace conference and see who shows up — a move some feel would dramatically prove which parties want peace and lay blame on those who do not.

Senior US officials have said that option has been discussed but Bush refused to say if it was something he might seriously consider.

So far, Bush and Baker have been quite secretive in their diplomacy, a strategy designed to make it easier for historic enemies to compromise.

But Bush told reporters: "at some point I think I owe the American people my view of the details I'm not willing to discuss right now, and that wouldn't bother me one bit, to get up and say here's what we've been trying to do."

"I think there's a lot of people wondering what in the

world is going on and I've invoked quiet diplomacy and the need for confidentiality, but I can't do that forever. I just simply can't do it. I owe it to the American people, and I think the people around the world to say, hey, here's what the United States thinks is a good formula," he added.

As it pursued its new peace initiative following the Gulf war, the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, calling them an obstacle to peace.

Bush was quoted recently as telling an American Jewish delegation that as a result of the settlements dispute, he could not support giving Israel new loan guarantees worth 10 billion dollars to house a flood of new Soviet emigrants.

But on Monday he refused to be quite that specific, saying: "I don't think it ought to be a quid pro quo."

"So I'll leave it right there and avoid the linkage that you understandably ask about, but say that the best thing for Israel to do is to keep its commitment that was given at one point not to go in and build further settlements," he said.

He made a direct appeal to the Israeli people, asserting "we're not going to change our position on settlements. So please, those in Israel, do what you can to see that policy of settlement after settlement is not continued. It is counter-productive."



ALGIERS: Hooded military forces stand in front of the Islamic Salvation Front headquarters here June 30, prior to the arrest of ISF leader Abassi Madani. Madani and deputy Ali Belhadi were both taken into custody, and may face trial for rebellion, according to police. —AFP/UNB photo

BJP to vote against central govt: Joshi

ALLAHABAD, July 2: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, categorically asserted today that the BJP would vote against the central government when it seeks vote of confidence in Parliament, reports PTI.

Dr Joshi said his party was not responsible for rescuing the Congress (I) government because people had given a mandate to the BJP to act as an opposition, being the largest opposition party in the tenth Lok Sabha, "we will not do anything going against the verdict of the people."

One lakh illegal foreign workers in Japan

TOKYO, July 2: Japanese companies are generally cautious about hiring unskilled foreign workers, with only one-third of them welcoming them, an official survey showed Monday, reports AFP.

The survey, conducted by the Labour Ministry last September, covered 4,500 companies with 100 or more employees each.

It found that only 31.5 per cent of firms in the survey think Japan should accept unskilled foreign workers.

Foreigners with special talent of skills are allowed to work in Japan but unskilled people from abroad are not authorized to do so.

The number of illegal workers in Japan is estimated by officials at some 100,000.

Indefinite curfew in Sind as 6 killed in ethnic frenzy

ISLAMABAD, July 2: An indefinite curfew was imposed and army called out on Monday in Sukkur, a city in southern Pakistan, after bloody ethnic violence which claimed six lives, according local press reports Tuesday, reports Xinhua.

The clash took place between supporters of the two major rival parties in Sind province — the Pakistan People's Party and the Mohajir Qaum Movement following a relative of a People's Party leader was killed in the city by unknown gunmen.

The reports said that in spite of patrol by the army and police forces in the city, rounds of firing were still heard from different parts of the city.

Police and law enforcing agencies cordoned off the old

city where the clash took place and advised people to stay at home.

Sukkur is the third largest city in Sind province where law and order situation has been poor for the last few years. Hundreds of people have died in ethnic and political

violence as the rival groups are armed with various kinds of weapons.

Meanwhile, traders in Rawalpindi, sister city of the capital Islamabad, observed a strike in the city on Monday to protest against the murder of two families by unknown terrorists in Lahore and Sheikhpura last week.

The traders declared that if the terrorists involved in the recent murder cases were not arrested within 36 hours, a countrywide strike will be observed.

The deteriorating situation in the country has forced Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to postpone his visit to Japan on Monday.

Bush to host lunch for Gorbachev

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine, July 2: President George Bush will host a working lunch for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in London on July 17 and discuss a broad range of issues, the White House announced today, reports Reuter.

Landon, the little Joe, dead

LOS ANGELES, July 2: Television star Michael Landon, known around the world as Little Joe in the popular "Bonanza" western series, died on Monday from inoperable cancer of the liver and pancreas, reports Reuter.

The actor, 54, had been diagnosed with the condition less than three months before, and on April 8, he invited journalists to his Plush Malibu Estate to break the news personally.

"Every moment gets a little more important after something like this," he said, adding that he was hoping for his own personal miracle.

He said he did not want his family and friends inundated with calls from reporters.

Landon starred in three long-running television series — he was little Joe, the youngest son of the Cartwright family in "Bonanza", Charles Ingalls in "Little House on the Prairie" and the angelic drifter Jonahan Smith in his most recent series, "Highway to Heaven".

His career spanned more than three decades, and the news of his fight with cancer made headlines in the tabloid press.

Cancer specialists were widely quoted as saying Landon did not have long to live, perhaps six weeks at the most. And the actor himself, while saying he hoped to beat the disease, added realistically, "It's one of those wait-and-see things. There's no estimate on how long, how short, how good, how bad."

It was not immediately known if the actor died at home or in hospital. He was being treated at Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre in Los Angeles on an outpatient basis.

A spokeswoman for his lawyer, who asked not to be identified, issued a short statement saying he had died shortly after 1 P.M. PDT (1900 GMT).

Landon and his third wife, Cindy Clerico, lived in Malibu with their two children. The actor fathered six children and adopted another three.

Although colleagues often complained that Landon was arrogant and difficult, his boss at NBC television, where all three of his long-running series were shown, said he was happy with the star.

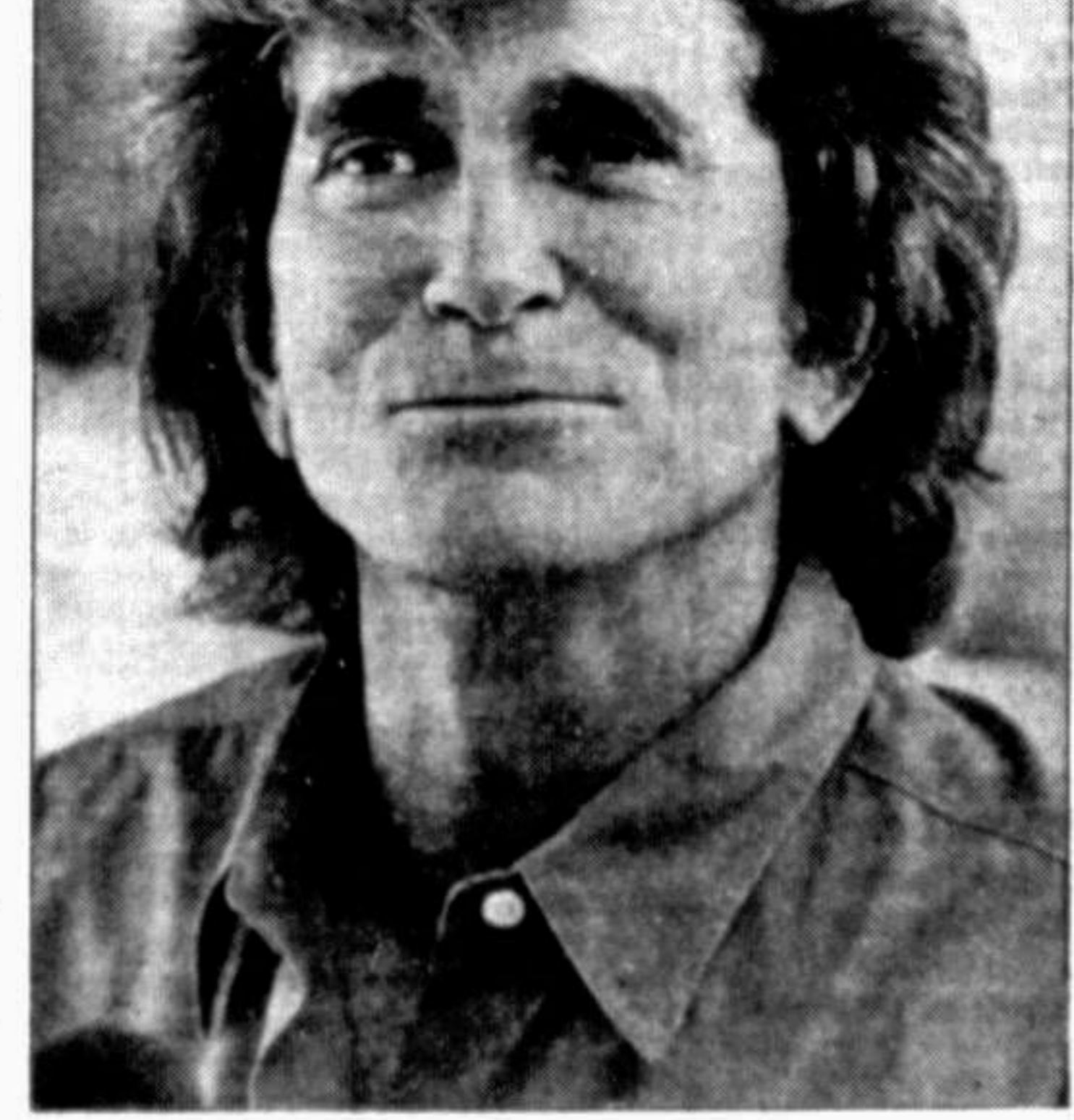
"My dream network would be 22 hours of talent like his. I like him a lot," said Brandon Tartikoff.

"Bonanza" is one of the most popular television series ever filmed. When the show's 14-year run ended in 1973 it had been seen in 87 countries and had held the No 1 rating in the

United States for seven years. Born Eugene Orowitz on October 31, 1936, in Collingswood, New Jersey, Landon was the youngest son of a Catholic mother, Broadway comedienne Peggy O'Neal, and a Jewish father, Landon had a troubled childhood and witnessed fights between his mother and father.

He also had painful memories of anti-semitism as a half-Jewish child, being called a "Jewish bastard" by his classmates at school.

"Basically I was a loner. I'm a driven man because from the time I was a kid, I wanted to show myself and others I was somebody," he once told an interviewer.



Off the Record

Oldest Bible on sale

LONDON: One of the World's earliest printed Bibles, a rare version valued at more than one million pounds (1.6 million dollars) will come up for sale on the open market this year, Auctioneers Christie's said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

The Bible is a Vulgate, an ancient Latin version, which was printed in Bavaria from type used by Johann Gutenberg, who produced the first printed Bible, Christie's said. It is believed to be around 530 years old.

The Bible, the only copy of an edition of 14 to be still in private hands, will be sold by the auction house in a lot of rare German in November.

Headaches often mistreated

WASHINGTON: Severe headaches afflict millions of people whose suffering often is underestimated, misunderstood and mistreated, according to doctors at the largest conference ever convened on the subject, reports AP.

More than 1,000 experts from 43 nations were gathered Monday for the International Headache Congress, whose organizers said head pain doesn't get the respect it deserves as a serious ailment.

"Fifty to 70 million Americans experience severe headache, which may account for more missed days of work and more visits to physicians than any other condition," said Dr Joel Saper, president of the American Association for the Study of Headache, the host organization for the congress.

He said no other serious medical condition is more shrouded in myth and misconception, its victims "shunted down an assembly line" of inappropriate treatments ranging from nose surgery to allergy shots.

But Saper said there is growing recognition of headaches as a legitimate medical problem rather than an excuse to miss work or a target for jokes.

"Headache is emerging to join the ranks of what society now accepts as legitimate illnesses," he said. "It should no longer be an embarrassment to have a headache."

Survey results released at the conference showed migraine headaches affect 14.6 per cent of women and 4.8 per cent of men in the United States, with an average of 12 to 15 attacks a year. More than 80 per cent of people with severe migraines are temporarily disabled, some of them requiring bedrest, researchers reported.

Yogis live in Moscow

MOSCOW: Raja-yoga centres operate in Moscow and three other Soviet cities — Leningrad, Brest and Perm. Like the roughly 2,000 centres of this kind in 67 foreign countries, they are financed from their students' donations, reports IAN. The first Raja-yogis came to Moscow from India in 1989. They delivered a course of lectures and then, in compliance with the Muscovites request, stayed in the Soviet capital and set up their centre here.

According to director of the Moscow centre Barma Kumari Sudha, many people want to attend their lessons but few are prepared to comply with the main principles of Raja-yoga: purity of thoughts, words and actions, communication with "good society," vegetarianism and prohibition of drinking and smoking.

Radiation cures

MOSCOW: Having carried out necessary research, Soviet scientists have arrived at the conclusion that small doses of atomic radiation are necessary to all living things, from elementary to mammals. It has turned out that small doses of radiation stimulate fission of cells and the growth and development of organisms, boost immunity, lower the level of spontaneous emergence of malignant cells and increase life span, reports IAN.

The basic idea of this discovery is that the general biological law of hormesis — a diametrically opposite effect produced by large and small doses of a substance on an organism — operates in radiobiology. According to this law, arsenic in big doses is a strong poison but in small doses it is a valuable medicine. It has been found out that this is also true of radiation.

S Arabia denies report of seizing Iranian air planes Afghan minister resigns

RIYADH, July 2: Saudi Arabia has denied a report that it seized eight Iran air planes that belonged to Kuwait and had been repainted the colours of the Iranian national carrier, reports AFP.

A civil aviation official, quoted by the Saudi press agency late Monday, said the report in an Iranian newspaper, the world of Islam, was "totally false and without any foundation."

It accused the paper, which is close to Muslim hardliners in Iran, of having "invented" the report.

"All the Iranian planes have been arriving at king Abdul Aziz International Airport (in Jeddah, western Saudi Arabia) and leaving on schedule," the official said.

The World of Islam had said Sunday that the aircraft were seized at Jeddah airport where they had been flown to repatriate Iranian pilgrims from the nearby Muslim holy city of Mecca.

Afghan rebels fail to reach accord

ISLAMABAD, July 2: The leader of Iran-based Afghan guerrillas said on Monday he was returning to Tehran after failing to reach agreement with Pakistan-based guerrillas on seats on a rebel commission, reports Reuter.

But Wahdat-e-Islami party leader Rehmattullah Mortazavi told a news conference he would return 25 days later to resume talks on the issue as well as on a United Nations plan for a political solution to the 12-year-old conflict between the guerrillas and the Kabul government.

Mortazavi said his party, grouping eight Shi'ite Muslim guerrilla groups in Iran, was seeking five of 25 seats of a commission proposed by the Guerrillas to form a future Afghan government.

But he said the major Sunni Muslim guerrilla groups based in the northwestern Pakistani town of Peshawar agreed to only three seats. He has met several guerrilla leaders in Peshawar during the past two

weeks. Some hardline Sunni guerrillas do not want to give representation to Shi'ites on a religious basis.

"We have given our ideas to Peshawar leaders", Mortazavi said. "We have no animosity with them, they themselves have problems within themselves."

But he said he hoped a consensus on the issue would be reached.

Murtazavi met Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in Islamabad on Sunday, an official statement quoted the President as calling for unity among the Mujahideen guerrillas and urging them to work for an early Afghan settlement.

A row over seats has also kept the Iran-based guerrillas out of a rebel government: inside set up in Pakistan in early 1989 after the Soviet Union withdrew more than 100,000 of its troops from Afghanistan.