

# Radical Palestinian leader willing to meet Israelis

JERUSALEM, Aug 3: Nayef Hawatmeh, a radical Palestinian guerrilla leader who has opposed the current Mideast peace talks, says he is willing to meet Israelis "anytime, anywhere," a legislator said Monday, reports AP.

Hassem Mahamid, an Israeli-Arab Parliament member from the Communist Party, quoted Hawatmeh from a meeting in Tunis. Mahamid and other Israelis returned from the Tunisian capital and PLO headquarters on Sunday. Mahamid said on Israel radio that he also met Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, during his trip last week. He said most Palestinians he encountered in Tunis believed "there is an historic opportunity (for peace) not to be

wasted" in the wake of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's June 23 election victory.

Rabin's Labour Party favours territorial compromise whereas the previous right-wing Likud Party government objected to yielding land to the Arabs.

But Mahamid seemed startled by remarks made by Hawatmeh, a stubborn opponent of Israel.

According to Mahamid, Hawatmeh said "he was ready to meet any Israeli personality, anytime, anywhere, to put an end to this situation existing for decades, that the time has come now for dialogue."

Mahamid also said he heard "from everyone I met, without exception, that the realistic solution they must reach is a Palestinian state alongside Israel."



ZAGREB, Croatia: Presidential candidate Drazen Budisa (R) walks with his wife after voting August 02 in the first presidential and legislative elections. — AFP/UNB photo

## Democratic Party heading for victory in Croatia

ZAGREB, Aug 3: President Franjo Tudjman and his Croatian Democratic Party appeared to be heading for victory in the first presidential and general elections since independence, according to early unofficial results, reports AFP.

Tudjman had won 57.09 per cent of the votes in Sunday's presidential poll after ballots were counted in 13 of the 64 electoral districts, according to the head of the national electoral committee Zlatko Crnic.

Drazen Budisa, leader of the Croatian social-liberal party, was in second position with some 21.20 per cent of the votes.

The leader of the Peasant Party, Savka Dasevic-Kucar, had 6.84 per cent and the leader of the Extreme-Right Rights Party, Dobrovoslav Paraga, 5.09 per cent.

In the general election, Tudjman's party was leading with 40.82 per cent.

## Koirala rushes to crash site First copter returns with bodies of 17 plane victims

KATHMANDU, Aug 3: A break in the monsoon allowed Nepali helicopters on Monday to start flying the remains of 113 plane crash victims from the Himalayan ridge where a Thai Airways Airbus crashed and exploded, reports Reuter.

Army officers directing the operation said the first helicopter arrived in Kathmandu on Monday morning carrying 17 plastic bags full of remains from the remote crash site.

An international team of forensic experts was due to start helping to identify the bodies of the 99 passengers and 14 crew aboard the Airbus 310-300 which crashed 40 km (25 miles) north of Kathmandu on Friday.

Nepali Prime Minister Gijra Prasad Koirala, whose niece by marriage was aboard the Airbus, flew by helicopter to the crash site this morning along with technical experts from the Thai Airways.

Retrieving the remains and wreckage strewn over a three-km (two-mile) radius from the

point of impact on a 3,500-metre (11,500-foot) ridge was proving a tough task, officials said.

Major General K N S Thapa, who is in charge of the operation, said soldiers were having to lower themselves by rope down the mountain side to search crevices and ledges.

Officials said searchers had found flight TO311's voice recorder before calling off operations at dark on Sunday, but that it had not yet arrived in Kathmandu.

The Thai pilot had twice reported unspecified technical problems to Kathmandu air controllers before contact was lost at around 0700 GMT on Friday.

Discovery of the wreckage was confirmed only on Sunday morning. It was found in the opposite direction to the main search area in rugged hills south of Kathmandu.

"What the pilot was doing north of Kathmandu no one knows yet," said one senior official in the retrieval operation.

# Iraq vows not to give up claim to Kuwait

BAGHDAD, Aug 3: An unrepentant Iraq marked the second anniversary of its invasion of Kuwait Sunday by vowing never to give up its claim to the oil-rich Emirate and proclaiming its readiness for any new international confrontation, reports AFP.

"By withdrawing from Kuwait, Iraq does not renounce its historic rights," the Defence Ministry stressed in its newspaper Al-Qadisiya. "Kuwait has been Iraq through out history and Iraq, under all the different political regimes that it has known, has never given up" the claim to its southern neighbour.

A play during an anniversary festival in Baghdad portrayed Kuwaitis as backward people and alcoholics and also mocked their western allies who helped drive Iraqi troops from the Emirate in February 1991.

"We are having a party to bring Kuwait back to its country," Iraq's Minister of Culture and Information, Hamed Youssef Hamadi, told journalists amid

a noisy crowd.

The tone of defiance and mockery follows the US announcement on Friday that it was sending more than 2,000 troops backed by a mechanised unit for military exercises in Kuwait, turning up the pressure on Baghdad.

The United States led the military coalition of western and Arab armies that expelled Iraq from Kuwait in the January-February 1991, Gulf War, after seven months of Iraqi occupation.

Baghdad has since the August 2, 1990 invasion faced crippling economic sanctions, maintained to ensure its full compliance with post-war United Nations resolutions.

But the Defence Ministry insisted Sunday that "Iraq of the mother of all battles (Gulf War) will remain indestructible, capable of resisting and foiling any aggression aimed at its sovereignty."

when and how."

In Washington, Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said Saturday that the US military exercises were meant to demonstrate the readiness of US forces to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Cheney, in a television interview, brushed aside suggestions that Washington's decision to send 2,400 troops to Kuwait sought to provoke Baghdad into a new confrontation.

"This notion that somehow this is designed to be a provocative act, I put over there in the category with their (Iraq's) claim in recent days that Kuwait is part of Iraq," Cheney said. "It would be laughable if it weren't so tragic."

In Kuwait, Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah called on his people for "more vigilance to face the hostile intentions of the Baghdad regime."

## Imelda plans to bring home Marcos' remains

MANILA, Aug 3: Former Philippine first lady Imelda Marcos said today that she planned to bring home the remains of her husband, former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, in September, reports AFP.

"We hope to be able to bring the mortal remains of the late president by September 1 so that he could be buried by his birthday (on September 11)," Marcos told reporters upon her return to Manila from Hong Kong.

"We are taking the statement of President Fidel Ramos that president Marcos would be brought home with honours as should be accorded to a former president," she added.

The former dictator died in exile in Hawaii where he fled after a 1986 popular revolution that toppled him and put Corason Aquino to power. His remains lie in a refrigerated crypt.

Marcos refused to disclose the names of the associates of the former president whom she talked to during her stay in Hong Kong, but described her trip as "quite fruitful."

# Off the Record

## Murdered 20 years ago but died last night

CASPER, Wyoming: A 37-year-old woman plunged to her death from a bridge where she had been raped 19 years ago, police said Saturday, reports AFP.

It was not immediately clear whether Rebecca Thomson Brown jumped or fell from the 34-meter (112-foot) Fremont Canyon bridge over the north Platte river, Natrona county Sheriff Dave Dovala said.

In 1973, two men abducted Brown and her 11-year-old stepister for a Casper parking lot. Brown was raped and both girls were thrown off the bridge. The younger girl, Amy Burridge, died in the fall but Brown survived and crawled out of the Canyon for help. Brown's testimony helped convict two assailants, who remain in prison for murder and rape.

"I know this has troubled her for 20 years," Dovala said. She was raped and murdered 20 years ago but she died last night.

## Father indeed

ABU DHABI: A court in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has sentenced an Indian to three months in prison for torturing his six-year-old son with a lit cigarette because of his poor marks at school, AFP reports.

Court officials in Dubai said Mirza S burnt his son's chest and back more than 40 times. He also punched the boy and lashed him with an electric wire, leaving him with a broken hand and scars all over his body.

Mirza, 35, was found mentally fit and jailed on Saturday for cruelty. Doctors said the boy needed treatment for 20 days.

## Smoking allowed to give up habit

TOKYO: A Japanese high school is allowing nicotine-addicted students to break the law and smoke in an effort to make them kick the habit, reports Reuter.

"Smoking under the age of 20 is illegal in Japan and a transgressor's parents, or shopkeepers found selling tobacco to anyone under 20, face a maximum fine of 4,000 yen (31 dollar).

So far, four students at the school in Nagano in central Japan are being allowed to smoke in a teacher's room several times a day on the condition that they gradually cut down and eventually give up.

## Love drives her to death

KATHMANDU: Vivienne Frances, on a vacation in Melbourne, wasn't supposed to return home in Kathmandu until next week. But she missed her husband so much that she decided to fly back five days early, reports AP.

She took the Thai Airways flight TO311 on Friday from Bangkok to Kathmandu, where her husband, Bikash Man Shrestha, was waiting eagerly since noon so that they could celebrate his 34th birthday together.

Instead of landing in Kathmandu, the aircraft, with 113 people on board, flew past the red-brick airport in torrential rain and slammed into a rocky mountain slope, 22 miles (36 kilometers) away.

The Airbus A310-300, authorities say, probably exploded and caught fire, blowing apart humans and metal. After more than 40 hours of search, soldiers Sunday found small pieces of the wreckage, two bodies and some charred mortal remains. Authorities said there was no sign of survivors.

"I am clinging to a hope that she is still alive. I go crazy every time I think it was love for me that drove Vivienne to her death," said Shrestha, a Nepali handicrafts exporter.

# BRIEFLY

**8 Kurds killed in clash:** Eight Kurdish rebels were killed and another three wounded Saturday in clashes with Turkish security forces in the south-eastern towns of Sirnak and Idli, local Turkish officials said, AFP reports from Ankara.

They said the security forces seized a large quantity of weapons in two separate operations in the mountainous region where rebels of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) have been waging a guerrilla struggle since 1984.

Some 4,100 civilians, rebels and members of the security forces have been killed by both sides since the conflict began.

**Bus mishap claims 28 in Nepal:** At least 28 people were feared killed when a passenger bus bound for Kathmandu from Kakadbhita in southeast Nepal plunged into a torrential river on Sunday, a Home Ministry spokesman said, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

According to witnesses, the driver lost control of the bus where a part of the road was badly damaged because of torrential rainfall and a landslide on Friday night, the spokesman said.

The 28 believed to have died included women and children, he said.

**Quake shakes Indonesia:** An earthquake measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale was recorded on Sunday in central Indonesia, US seismologists said, Reuter reports from Golden.

The quake occurred at 8.03 pm (1203 GMT) and was located on Sulawesi, Indonesia, about 980 miles (1,580 km) east of Jakarta, officials at the US National Earthquake Information Centre said.

There were no reports of damage or injuries, officials said.

**Israel raids Hezbollah bases:** Israeli helicopters raided suspected bases of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah movement in southern Lebanon Sunday, an army spokesman said here, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

"Our aircraft attacked bases of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah movement near Rashidiyah in south Lebanon. The targets were hit and our aircraft returned to base unharmed," he said.

Security sources in southern Lebanon said one woman was hurt when Israeli helicopters fired two rockets at a house in the village of Qlayeh, south of the coastal city of Tyre, without hitting it directly.

The Israeli spokesman said it was the 22nd Israeli air raid this year against targets in southern Lebanon.

# Bush brushes aside call to quit race Who do you trust to change America?

CHICAGO, Aug 3: President George Bush shaking off calls from conservatives for him to quit the presidential race, portrayed himself Sunday as the man Americans should trust if they want change, reports AFP.

Bush made a campaign stop in the key midwestern state of Illinois as two newspaper editorials published Sunday, one of them in a traditional Republican stronghold of southern

California, urged him to drop out of the race for the good of the party and the Conservative cause.

Those pleas in California's orange country register and the Waterbury Republican-American in Connecticut came after a week of similar comments from top Republican fundraiser Richard Viguerie and syndicated columnist George Will.

Bush attended a fundraiser here for Republican Senatorial candidate Rich Williamson, who like the President is lagging far behind in the polls against his Democratic Rival, Williamson is up against Carol Braun, who has gained national prominence as the first black woman with a good chance to be elected to the Senate.

Bush downplayed his standing in the polls behind Democrat Bill Clinton, and took issue with the Arkansas governor's repeated assertion that the United States is in desperate need of change after 12 years of republican rule.

"Who do you trust to change America? Bush asked the fundraiser.

He seized upon the issue of health care in an effort to depict the Democrats as addicted to big government, saying the national health care system they advocate would simply create a new government bureaucracy.

The President stuck to his policy of not naming Clinton, but this time he did identify him by his job. If the Arkansas governor is elected, within a year the government would run the health care system with the compassion of the KGB.

Bush instead favours revamping the current system of health care provided mainly by private insurers, more than 30 million Americans, out of a population of about 250 million, have no health insurance.

Later in the day Bush attended a Republican picnic organized to celebrate family values, but the party was rained out.

The several thousand people on hand scurried for cover under tents and Bush, wearing a raincoat lent to him by a secret service agent, addressed the crowd for only about two minutes.

En route to Chicago aboard Air Force One, Bush ignored a reporter's shouted question about the editorials calling for him to end his drive for reelection.

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# Yeltsin, Kravchuk to talk future of Black Sea Fleet

YALTA, Aug 3: Russian President Boris Yeltsin left for this Crimean resort Monday for talks with his Ukrainian counterpart over the future of the disputed Black Sea Fleet, a news agency reported, reports AP.

Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk were to continue discussion on the fleet based on an agreement reached in June in the nearby seaside town of Dagomys.

Russia and Ukraine have been feuding over ownership of the 300-ship fleet and other economic, political and military issues since the Soviet Union's collapse last year. The fleet was once the Soviet strategic counterbalance to the US 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean.

In June, the two presidents signed a friendship treaty agreeing temporarily to keep the fleet under unified command. They agreed the fleet would be divided up after further talks on the issue.

The agreement skirted the issue over control of the Crimea, which historically has been Russian but was transferred to Ukrainian jurisdiction in 1954.

Yeltsin told reporters in Moscow before leaving for the Crimea that implementing the Dagomys agreement would be the focal point of discussion between the leaders of the two most populous former Soviet republics, the Interfax and Itar-Tass news agencies reported.

"We succeed in some matters and do not succeed in others," he said, according to the Tass report.

"One of the all-important issues is that of the Black Sea Fleet," Tass quoted Yeltsin as saying. "The commissions set up to solve this problem failed to reach agreement. The defence ministers also could not attain accord. The ball is now in the president's court."

Yeltsin told reporters in Dagomys that the fleet would be jointly financed by the two countries and would serve as a basis for building separate Russian and Ukrainian navies.

The Dagomys treaty, which Kravchuk called "a major turning point" in relations between the two countries, also allows Ukraine to introduce its own currency and meets a Russian demand that the nations' border remain open to free travel with only customs checkpoints.

# Sikhs kill 25 more

NEW DELHI, Aug 3: Suspected Sikh separatists shot and killed at least 25 people after kidnapping them in the jungles of central India, a news agency reported Monday, reports UNB.

United News of India said the bodies were found in the forests of Pilibhit, 250 kilometers (155 miles) east of New Delhi.

The agency said at least 29 people were kidnapped on Friday by suspected militants who are demanding secession from India for the state of Punjab and separate Sikh nation.

Pilibhit, about 30 miles (50 kms) south of India's Uttar Pradesh state east of Punjab where many Sikh militants fled after the Indian army reinforced the Punjab police against the separatist earlier this year.

United News did not identify the victims by name or religion, in line with the practice of the Indian media which they believe avoids fanning communal strife.

But Sikh militants often target Hindus, the religious majority that accounts for 82 per cent of India's 844 million people.

The militants say they are discriminated culturally and politically in India. Though they are only two percent of the population, but they are in a slight majority in Punjab. At least 2,471 people have died in separatist-related violence this year.

## Opposition MPs stage sit-in in Karachi

KARACHI, Aug 3: Pakistani opposition deputies on Sunday staged a protest sit-in in Karachi against what they called "State terrorism" reports Reuter.

"We are protesting against state terrorism," Qaim Ali Shah, Opposition Leader in the Sindh Assembly, told reporters as 38 opposition deputies staged an hour's sit-in at the provincial Parliament.

Shah said policemen blocked the entry of two deputies in the legislature and tried to arrest them on fake charges.

# Radiation from TV dangerous than emissions from N-test site

FRENCH POLYNESIA, Aug 3: Radiation from a television set is more dangerous than the emissions from France's South Pacific nuclear testing site, according to a newly published report prepared by those in charge of the tests.

The report, "the radiological situation in French Polynesia in 1991," was made available to Reuters during a two-day visit to the Mururoa test site, 1200 km (750 miles) southeast of Tahiti.

"The results show that man-made radioactivity measured in the French Polynesian environment continues

to fall, matching the fall in man-made radioactivity since worldwide atmospheric test were halted," the report says.

It was compiled by France's Centre for Nuclear Experimentation (DIRCEN) and the country's Atomic Energy Commission (CEA).

Opposition groups dismiss French statistics on radiation as worthless and false, saying they are manipulated to allay criticism of the nuclear testing programme which has mainly military applications.

The report says artificial radia-

tion resulting from test explosions or nuclear accidents in the South Pacific is (tiny compared with natural radiation found in rocks and stone formations).

It says exposure to radiation from domestic electronic devices such as televisions was five times higher than that from worldwide atmospheric nuclear tests. They were halted about 15 years ago but their effects are still felt as radiation circulates around the earth.

The report says France's underground nuclear tests under the atolls of Mururoa

and Fangataufa make no contribution to the amount of radiation affecting people in Polynesia.

It also denied allegations that an unusually high level of plutonium found by an international monitoring team in March 1991 in waters between the two atolls could be attributed to underground nuclear testing.

It says tests at a monitoring site named E2 showed plutonium levels three times higher than at other sites because water washing out from Fangataufa atoll contained higher plutonium

levels due to previous atmospheric test.

The environmental organisation Greenpeace says such findings are alarming and France should permanently halt all tests and open up the atolls to independent scientists.

French officials on Mururoa said extensive monitoring of the waters around atolls would reveal to a potential enemy exactly what kind of nuclear devices were being exploded, thus compromising military secrets.

France has suspended its nuclear test campaign for one