

Govt accuses ANC of abandoning democracy talks

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 5: The South African government's chief negotiator accused the African National Congress (ANC) on Friday of abandoning democracy talks to pursue confrontation and provocation, reports Reuter.

"It would seem the organization is still intent on pursuing its own agenda to mass action, provocation and confrontation and that it does not yet have the political will to resume negotiations," Constitutional Development Minister Roelf Meyer said in a statement.

The statement, issued after a cabinet meeting to consider the ANC's refusal to resume talks, said the longer negotiations were delayed, the longer it would take to reach an acceptable solution.

"This in turn will lead to the further damaging of our economy and to more hardship for millions of South Africans."

The ANC agreed to maintain contacts with the government "to monitor the situation" and conceded president FW de Klerk's administration had gone a long way to accepting its demands on a popularly-elected assembly draw up a new constitution.

But it has resolved to step up demonstrations, strikes, sit-ins, and boycotts to end white rule.

The ANC pulled out of democracy negotiations in June after the Boipatong township massacre of at least 43 blacks.

It presented 14 conditions to be met by the government, including moves to end violence, release of political prisoners, quick installation of a non-racial government of national unity and commitment to the constitutional assembly.

India considers open skies treaty with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Sept 5: India is considering a US proposal for an Open Skies treaty with Pakistan allowing the two hostile neighbours to use spy planes against each other, a US diplomat said in an interview published Saturday, reports AP.

The treaty would be a big step toward defusing tensions between the two countries that have fought three wars in 45 years. Both are believed to possess nuclear weapons capability, and their armies frequently skirmish along the border.

NATO and former members of the defunct Warsaw Pact signed the Treaty on Open Skies in Helsinki, Finland last March allowing reconnaissance flights unimpeded access across 24 countries.

John Hawes, the US negotiator at Helsinki, said after

discussing an Indo-Pakistan treaty in New Delhi last month, that India "would certainly give serious thought to something like this treaty."

Hawes told The Weekend Observer unimpeded observation flights "could clear misunderstanding" when troops are concentrated near the border.

"In recent history there have been instances when large maneuvers across the borders caused concern across both sides," he said.

"This concern could have been mitigated to a great degree if the two countries were able to fly observation aircraft to see things for themselves," he said.

Under the treaty signed in Helsinki, Hawes said, the aircraft would not have sensors to detect evidence of nuclear weapons.

India and Pakistan adopted several confidence-building measures after they almost went to war a fourth time in 1990, including a hotline between military commanders to contain exchanges of fire.

Last month they signed agreements barring the use or possession of chemical weapons and governing the treatment of diplomats in each other's country.

India and Pakistan were partitioned along religious lines from Britain's colony on the Indian subcontinent and were given independence in 1947. They are still in dispute over the northern territory of Kashmir, which was split between them in the first Indo-Pak war.

PTI adds: The Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

has said an early solution to the Kashmir issue would help Islamabad and New Delhi to divert their resources towards economic development.

Talking to reporters on board the special plane which touched down at Lahore, Sharif said Pakistan had "convincingly" put across its point of view on Kashmir at the Jakarta NAM summit and would continue to raise the issue at international fora.

The official news agency, APP, quoted the Prime Minister as having said that the Indian delegation to the NAM summit had asked the Pakistani team not to raise the Kashmir issue but Islamabad decided not to give in to their pressure. India felt that the Kashmir issue should be resolved bilaterally.

Off the Record



File pictures of Princess Anne and commander Timothy Laurence. The Princess cut short a public engagement on Friday amid mounting speculation of an imminent official announcement that she will marry commander Laurence. — AFP/UNB photo

Lover must be well off rather than good-natured

TOKYO: The first thing a Japanese woman expects from her lover or spouse is that he be well off, rather than merely good-natured, according to a survey published on Friday by a woman's underwear company, reports Reuter.

The survey showed that women who have led comfortable lives do not want marriage to mean a step down in lifestyle, Wacoal Corporation said.

Similar surveys conducted by the company in 1974 and 1989 showed that women then considered "good character" rather than "economic power" the most important characteristic in their men.

"Japanese women must be looking to marriage to provide a rich life," the company said of its latest survey.

Elephant kills keeper at zoo

LISBON: An elephant attacked and killed a zoo keeper who was carrying out his routine checks in the animal's enclosure at Lisbon Zoo, news reports said Saturday, reports AP.

Joaquim Porfiro Teles Ribeiro, 54, an elephant keeper at the zoo for more than 15 years, had showed "excessive trust" in the animal, the zoo said in a statement.

The accident occurred Friday inside the elephant compound, away from public viewing, Lisbon daily Publico said.

Mother's smoking linked to children's behaviour problems

CHICAGO: The more cigarettes a mother smokes, the more behaviour problems her children are likely to have, researchers say, reports AP.

Women who smoke at least a pack-a-day have children with twice the rate of extreme behavior problems — such as anxiety, disobedience or conflict with others — compared with children of non-smokers, the researchers say.

Refraining from smoking only during pregnancy didn't help, according to the study published in September's Pediatrics journal.

Children of pack-a-day mothers who smoked after the child's birth had problems just as often as children of pack-a-day women who smoked during pregnancy and afterward.

Smoking less than a pack-a-day also was linked to elevated rates of behaviour problems, but the rates were not as high as for heavier smokers, the researchers said. They used data from a Labour Department survey in which parents of 2,256 youngsters ages 4 to 11 were interviewed. The survey didn't ask about fathers' smoking.

Yugoslav PM survives no-confidence

BELGRADE, Sept 5: The Yugoslav parliament late Friday voted to support federal Prime Minister Milan Panic, after a motion of censure had been laid down against him by MPs of the ruling ex-communist Socialist Party (SPS) and the ultra-nationalist Serb Radical Party (SRP), reports AP.

The two-chamber parliament came out in favour of Panic after several hours of debate.

In a show of hands, the lower house, the Chamber of Citizens, passed the confidence vote by 66 to 30 against seven abstentions.

SPS leader Borislav Jovic, who had come out with vehement criticism of Panic and his government of the Rump Yugoslavia, said his party would "maintain confidence" in the government as long as it "takes into account" the criticisms that had been levelled against it.

After the vote, Panic, a multi-millionaire American businessman who has been increasingly at odds with Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, promised to "examine" the suggestions put forward by the SPS.

The two houses also approved Panic's report on the proceedings of a peace conference in London last week. He had come under fierce criticism from SRS MPs for making concessions at the talks.

Panic and Milosevic met late Friday with United Nations special envoy Marrack

Kashmiris kill 3 policemen

JAMMU, Sept 5: Kashmiri Muslim rebels ambushed and shot to death three policemen of a patrol party, but other officers returned fire and killed one guerrilla official said Saturday, reports AP.

Friday's killings are the first in the Hindu-dominated Kachua district of Jammu-Kashmir state since a separatist insurgency by Islamic militants flared up three years ago in Kashmir.

The predominantly Muslim Kashmir, comprising snowy mountains and lush valleys, forms the northern part of the state. To the south are the dusty plains of Hindu-dominated Jammu area, including Kachua.

At least 5,000 people have been killed in the war between armed Islamic guerrillas and Indian security forces.

Former Fijian PM sworn in as Acting President

SUVA, Fiji, Sept 5: Former Fijian Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was sworn in as acting president of the south Pacific nation on Friday after ailing president Ratu Sir Penaia Ganiavu flew to the US for medical treatment, reports Reuter.

A government statement said Mara was sworn in after Ganiavu left Nadi Airport in Fiji's west aboard a specially provided US military C-141 aircraft.

Rabbani postpones visit to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 5: Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani has postponed a planned visit to Pakistan today because of flash floods and landslides in northern Afghanistan, a Pakistani foreign official said on Friday, reports Reuter.

"The Afghan President has sent a message to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif informing them about the postponement of his visit," Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan said.

Rabbani had been scheduled to visit Pakistan on his return from the Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta this week, he said.

"Rabbani will be rescheduling his visit after the situation returns to normal in northern Afghanistan," Khan said.

Pakistan has ordered a plane-load of relief aid to be sent to survivors of the floods that have killed at least 450 people.

"We will send more relief later," Khan said.



PARIS: Italian writer Umberto Eco (R) and French Nobel Peace prize winner Elie Wiesel (L) present their international committee to support a "Yes" vote for the French referendum for the Maastricht treaty in Europe on Thursday, in company of the president of Foreign Affairs Commission of the Polish "Dieta" (Parliament), Bronislaw Geremek. — AFP/UNB photo

Bush has jeopardised ties: China

BEIJING, Sept 5: China accused President George Bush of "excuses and lies" to justify selling F-16 jets to Taiwan, saying he had seriously jeopardised Sino-US relations, reports Reuter.

Beijing kept up its stream of vitriol over the jet sale on Friday, with the National People's Congress (NPC), China's rubber-stamp parliament, issuing a "serious demand" that Washington rescind its decision.

"This is an actual display of hegemonism and power politics," the parliament's statement said, using rhetoric reminiscent of the radical days of the late chairman Mao Tseung in the 1960s.

The official Xinhua news agency let loose a strongly

worded commentary late on Thursday, saying Washington's plan would create new tension between China and nationalist Taiwan.

The Bush administration has fabricated various excuses and lies trying to justify its arms sale decision, which is seriously jeopardising Sino-US relations," it said.

Bush on Wednesday said he would reverse Washington's 10 year ban on weapons sales and permit the sale of up to 150 advanced F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province.

Bush said the proposed sale did not represent a change in US policy toward China and was intended to help maintain "peace and stability in the re-

gion."

This is "absolutely confusing right and wrong, and cheating people of the world," according to the NPC statement, which was passed by the group's standing committee as it ended a regular meeting on Friday.

Bush's premise that the F-16 sale to Taiwan would counteract China's purchase of foreign fighter jets was "an ill-based argument," the Xinhua commentary said.

The NPC echoed China's earlier warnings of severe consequences if Washington kept to its decision to sell the jets.

"On issues concerning sovereignty, internal affairs and dignity, the Chinese people will not yield," it said.

Diplomats said they expected China to pour on the invective, but added that hopes of membership to international organisations like GATT would probably prevent the Beijing leadership from taking rash action.

On Thursday the foreign ministry in its official reaction said China threatened to withdraw from arms control talks with the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

China's blistering attack marks a severe downturn in relations with Washington, which are already under strain because of US complaints over Beijing's human rights record, trade policies and arms sales overseas.

Australia to deport 10 Chinese boat people

PORT HEDLAND, Australia, Sept 5: A group of 10 Chinese boat people involved in a protest at a detention center last month will be deported, the Immigration Department said Saturday, reports AP.

Department spokesman Harley Dadsweil said the seven men and three women had been told their applications for refugee status were rejected.

Members of the group went on a hunger strike in early August, reportedly after hearing their applications probably would be rejected, and five jumped from the detention center roof. Two remain in a Perth hospital with spinal injuries.

The 10, from the southern Chinese city of Nanning, arrived in Darwin on May 21 aboard a rickety wooden junk.

Dadsweil would not say when they will be deported.

"I can't be any more specific than to say it won't be in the next few days, but we have put the people on notice that it is our intention to remove them from Australia," he said.

Timing of the injured pair's

deportations will be subject to medical advice, he said.

In a statement with the announcement, Immigration Minister Gerry Hand said a detention-grabbing by boat people would make no difference to their refugee claims.

"Rejected asylum-seekers have no claim to remain in Australia, and I put people on notice that threats, demonstrations and other dramatic action will not alter the situation," Hand said.

Dadsweil said a man who was among a group of 79 Cambodian arrivals in June 1990 had been granted refugee status after complying with United Nations criteria.

The remaining Cambodians are among some 390 boat people in Port Hedland, Sydney and Perth awaiting final decisions on their claims for refugee status, he said.

A lawyer representing the 10 Chinese, Michael Kennedy of Australian Lawyers for Refugees Inc, said he fears they may be persecuted in China as an example because of their high-profile protest.

Moroccans approve political reforms

RABAT, Morocco, Sept 5: Moroccans overwhelmingly approved a referendum on constitutional reform called by King Hassan II, officials said Saturday, reports AP.

The reforms would retain the powerful monarchy but strengthen some of Parliament's powers in advance of legislative elections planned before the end of the year.

Several opposition parties and labour federations urged their followers to boycott the referendum, arguing that the reforms were insufficient. Voter turnout was being closely watched as a gauge of the opposition's support.

The Interior Ministry said late Saturday that the referendum had been approved by 99 per cent of voters, and 97 per cent of eligible voters had cast ballots.

The 11 million eligible voters included residents of the disputed Western Sahara. Their inclusion was part of a bid to consolidate Morocco's claim to the former Spanish colony it annexed in 1975.

Minister of State Ahmed Alaoui wrote in a Friday newspaper column that the extension of the voting to the Western Sahara affirmed that its residents are Moroccans.

The fate of the region, an area the size of Italy on the northwest corner of Africa was to have been decided by a UN-sponsored referendum this year.

But the plebiscite on whether residents wanted independence or incorporation into Morocco has been postponed repeatedly due to disputes between the government and separatists over voter eligibility.

Critics charge that the government has flooded the territory with Moroccan settlers to skew the vote.

The Polisario guerrilla movement favours independence for the Western Sahara and fought a 17-year war with Morocco. But recent defections by front leaders have weakened it politically.

Allies have no evidence of Iraqi action against Shi'ites

ON BOARD THE USS INDEPENDENCE, Sept 5: Allies warplanes policing southern Iraq have seen no evidence of large-scale Iraqi military activity against Shi'ite Muslims, a US Navy air wing commander said Friday, reports AP.

"And I hope it's because we stopped it. I'd like to think that," said Capt Arthur N Bud Langston.

"I can't tell if secret police are arresting people of those kind of things," said Langston.

Crisis deepens as Tajik lawmakers fail to oust Nabiyeu

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, Sept 5: Lawmakers failed for the second day to muster a quorum for a special legislative session called to oust hard-line Communist President Rakhmon Nabiyeu, reports AP.

Only 74 members of the Supreme Soviet registered for the session, little more than half the required 154. More than 100 pro-Nabiyeu lawmakers are boycotting the session they say is unconstitutional.

The impasse deepens the political crisis in this Central Asian nation, which revolves around Nabiyeu's refusal to heed demands by the Cabinet

of Ministers, senior lawmakers and opposition groups that he resign.

Nabiyeu was elected president in November 1991 with 60 per cent of the popular vote, but opposition groups say he has not introduced political and religious freedoms quickly enough and has failed to curb tribal violence.

Dushanbe Radio reported fighting Saturday in the central Kurgan-Tyube region. It said 100 people have been killed and 200 wounded there in the past three days.

Four former Soviet republics said Friday they would

send troops to police Tajikistan's southern border with Afghanistan to curb the smuggling of arms and drugs into the country, the poorest in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan also warned in a strongly worded statement that political instability in Tajikistan was threatening security throughout Central Asia.

"Southern borders of the commonwealth must not be violated," said statement issued by the Kazakh foreign ministry.

The escalation of the civil

war in the republic, which is threatening the security of our nations and upsetting the political stability in the region, must not be permitted," it said.

Lt Gen. Oleg B. Shalymov, the commander of a commonwealth military observation team already in Tajikistan, said a peacekeeping force was needed to prevent ethnic fighting from spilling into neighboring countries.

"In certain circumstances it could be successful," Shalymov said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The important thing is to stop the the

fighting, to stop the blood-

shed."

Shalymov, who declined to blame any particular Tajik group for instigating the bloodshed, said a heavy flow of arms was crossing the southern border from Afghanistan and confirmed that Afghan guerrillas were helping train Tajik fighters at a camp in northern Afghanistan.

Nabiyeu's whereabouts remained unknown Saturday, and he has not been seen in public all week. Rumors persist that he has taken refuge at a commonwealth army garrison in Dushanbe.