

UN N-experts visit undisclosed site

BAGHDAD, Sept 6: A UN nuclear weapons team made its final inspection on Sunday at an undisclosed site, a day before its scheduled departure, reports AP.

Team leader Maurizio Zifferero, an Italian who works with the International Atomic Energy Agency, stayed behind at a Baghdad hotel to work on his final report. UN officials said he was not immediately available for comment.

Earlier, Zifferero described the work as "routine" and a follow-up to earlier visits. Iraq has been cooperative, he has said.

Iraq's treatment of the team had been considered a test, because the weapons inspectors were the first UN group to visit after the US-led allies began patrolling a "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq on August 27.

Iraqi officials had hinted that Baghdad might retaliate against the zone by defying UN inspection and humanitarian operations.

The ban on Iraqi military aircraft below the 32nd parallel is designed to protect Shi'ite Muslims who have sought sanctuary in the southern marshes.

Zifferero caused a stir last week when he said Iraq no longer has the facilities to produce atomic bombs. But the Atomic Energy Agency, based in Vienna, Austria, quickly backtracked with the caveat that unknown nuclear activity might be uncovered in the future.

On Saturday, a three-man team led by Briton Ron Manley arrived to check the incinerator and hydrolysis unit.



BANDUNG: Girls in local dress perform an indigenous dance for Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) leaders and a cheering crowd on Saturday. Heads of State of NAM visited the site where the movement originated from. — AFP/UNB photo

Final round voting starts in Lebanon

SIDON, Lebanon, Sept 6: Voting opened in southern Lebanon today in the third and final round of the country's first general elections in 20 years despite a Christian boycott, reports Reuter.

More than half-a-million voters are eligible to cast their ballots in the south to choose from among 131 candidates competing for 23 seats in the new 128-seat national assembly.

North and east Lebanon, Beirut and mount Lebanon voted on the two previous Sundays in the first general elections since 1972.

The Syrian-backed government tightened security in the south today with thousands of troops guarding towns and villages.

Soldiers with armoured vehicles were stationed at junctions in the city of Sidon.

Off the Record

Andrew hits them again

SOUTH MIAMI: A week-old baby boy named after Hurricane Andrew was found dead Saturday in his crib at a high school Red Cross shelter where his homeless family was staying, reports AP.

Police were investigating the cause of Andrew Juanchi's death at Coral Park High School. He was found by his mother, Natalia, said Detective George Reyes.

Reyes said there were no signs of foul play nor reason to believe shelter conditions contributed to the newborn's death. The Red Cross said it was also conducting an investigation.

Mrs Juanchi, 41, and her husband, Felipe, 48, checked into the shelter with their six boys, ages 1 to 14, after the August 24 hurricane heavily damaged their Florida City apartment building.

Mrs Juanchi went into labour at the shelter, and Andrew was born August 28.

'She was possessed by devil'

SANTA MONICA, Calif: The widow of actor Michael Landon obtained a restraining order to keep away her children's former nanny, alleging the woman threatened the family and demanded money, reports AP.

But Joan Hanna, who worked for the Landon for a year until her firing in February 1989, on Friday denied Mrs Landon's charges, calling them revenge for the ex-nanny's plans to expose Landon as "an angel with very tarnished wings."

"This is her way of getting back," Ms Hanna said. "It's a total lie."

Landon, star of the television series "Bonanza," "Little House on the Prairie" and "Highway to Heaven," died of cancer July 1, 1991. He was 54.

Landon had seven children from previous marriages and two children, Jennifer, 9, and Sean, 8, with Cindy Landon. Ms Hanna cared for Jennifer and Sean.

In papers filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, Mrs Landon alleged that Ms Hanna sent threatening messages and demanded money from the Landon family for three years.

The former nanny also threatened Jennifer, saying she was "possessed by the devil," Mrs Landon alleges.

Winnie's love letter

JOHANNESBURG: Newspapers Sunday published a letter allegedly written by Winnie Mandela to a former lover and incriminating them in the misuse of African National Congress funds, reports AP.

The Sunday Times and Sunday Star of Johannesburg each said a copy of the lengthy, bitter letter was delivered anonymously to their offices. It was not signed by Mrs Mandela, but both papers said investigations proved the handwriting was that of Mrs Mandela, wife of ANC President Nelson Mandela.

Local media have long linked Mrs Mandela, 56, romantically to lawyer Dali Mpofu, 30, to whom the letter was written. She and Mpofu have denied having an affair.

The newspapers said both people declined opportunities to comment on the letter, which was written in March. Telephone calls to Mrs Mandela's SowMO 19. W Mpofu's home number is unlisted.

US official due in China today to explain F-16 sale to Taiwan

BEIJING, Sept 6: A senior American diplomat will arrive in Beijing Monday in a bid to soothe the Chinese anger over President Bush's decision to sell 150 F-16 fighters to Taiwan, the US Embassy said Sunday, reports AP.

William Clark, the assistant secretary of state for Asian and Pacific Affairs, will meet with high-level Chinese officials to explain the decision, embassy spokesman Tony Hutchinson said. The duration of the trip was not announced.

Clark's trip represents an emergency attempt to mend US-China friction over the 6 billion dollar sale, announced by Bush Wednesday in Fort Worth, Texas, before a crowd of General Dynamics workers.

If the deal goes through, it could save thousands of jobs at General Dynamics at a time

when unemployment is a key issue in the US November presidential election.

Beijing's Communist government opposes any sale of military equipment to Taiwan, China's rival since the Nationalist Chinese fled to the island after losing a civil war to the Communists in 1949.

China has accused Washington of betraying it and playing power politics with the F-16 sale.

"On Sunday, the state-run Xinhua News Agency quoted several Chinese scholars as saying Bush's decision encroached on China's sovereignty and damaged US-China relations."

The agency said scholars are demanding that Washington "correct its unwise choice. Otherwise it will eat the bitter fruit of its own doing."

China considers Taiwan a renegade province. The United States recognized the Nationalists as the government of all China until 1979, when it switched to Beijing.

But under the Taiwan Relations Act passed by Congress that year over China's protests, the United States said it would continue supplying defensive weapons to Taiwan.

In 1982, the United States agreed to gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan and refused to meet Taipei's request to purchase 180 F-16s because they are considered offensive weapons.

Taipei maintains that it needs the jet fighters because the Communist government has refused to rule out using force to recover the island.

Another report says: Two Chinese women who took

refuge in Hong Kong, fearing arrest for their role in China's 1989 pro-democracy uprising have won a stay on deportation from the British colony, their lawyer said on Saturday.

The Hong Kong security branch said earlier that poet Liu Yijun, 29, and Lin Lon, 24, would be returned to China as illegal immigrants after their appeals to remain in Hong Kong had been considered and rejected by the colony's government.

But lawyer Pamela Baker was quoted by Britain's Press Association news agency as saying a Hong Kong judge approached with an application for leave to seek a judicial review, had granted a stay on deportation until Thursday morning.

Radical Palestinians reject proposals for self-rule

DAMASCUS, Sept 6: Two radical Arab groups have rejected proposals for Palestinian self-rule they said were presented to Israel by Palestinian delegates during the latest round of Middle East Peace Talks in Washington, reports Reuter.

Copies of the proposals were handed to journalists in Damascus on Saturday by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

The authenticity of the documents, which appear to allow Jewish settlers to remain in the occupied territories during a five-year transitional period of Palestinian self-rule, could not be independently confirmed.

Dawoud Talhaoui of the DFLP and Talal Ahmed of the PFLP told a news conference the draft proposal ignored Arab rights.

"We totally reject this agreement," Ahmed said.

Talhaoui and Ahmed, whose groups oppose compromise with Israel, said the draft proposals had been secretly approved by the headquarters of the PLO in Tunis.

The 13-point Arab-language draft covers issues including

the Palestinians' position on a transitional government and elections in Israeli-occupied land, water and natural resources, places of worship, security, Arab deportees, detainees and exiles.

It says the geographical rule are of the transitional government covers all Palestinian lands occupied by Israel since June 5, 1967 (the eve of the six day war).

The basis for the authority of the transitional government is a general and free election through secret and direct vote

in which Palestinians residing in the Palestinian lands occupied since June 5, 1967 take part in electoral districts covering all these lands.

It says all Palestinians in the occupied lands, including deportees and refugees, should take part in the elections for a transitional government with both legislative and executive powers.

Talks on the final form of self-government in the territories would start three years after the establishment of the transitional government.

Major's popularity takes a downward turn

LONDON, Sept 6: British Prime Minister John Major's popularity with the public has fallen, while at the same time public concern about the economy has plummeted to a two-year low, according to an opinion poll due to be published today in The Sunday Times, reports AP.

Only 16 per cent of respondents to the Mori poll believe the British economy — currently experiencing its deepest recession since the 1930s — will improve over the next year, while 48 per cent think

it will worsen.

Meanwhile, Major's popularity has been hit for the first time, with the number of people satisfied with his performance falling by eight points to 47 per cent since the April general election.

The Mori survey puts the opposition Labour Party in the lead, at 44 per cent, three points ahead of the ruling conservatives, with the Liberal Democrat Party on 13 per cent.

Mori interviewed 1,535 adults.

6 opposition politicians held in Sind

KARACHI, Sept 6: Pakistani authorities arrested six opposition politicians on Saturday in troubled Sind province, police and family sources said, reports Reuter.

Five former provincial deputies of the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) party were arrested in the provincial capital Karachi on charges of kidnapping and torture, the police said.

Zafar Ali Laghari, a former federal minister and a member of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, was arrested in the Sind town of Hyderabad, family members said.

Police declined to name the five men arrested in Karachi, but said they were wanted to answer charges by victims of alleged torture committed when the MQM was a partner in the present coalition government in Sind.

The MQM quit the government and resigned its parliamentary seats last June to protest at an army-led crackdown on crime.

The grounds for Laghari's arrest from his Hyderabad residence were not immediately known. His son Irfan Laghari said two police officers in plain clothes served arrest orders on his father and took him to an unknown place.

World expects too much from UN, says Ghali

MOSCOW, Sept 6: United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said on Saturday that the world expected "too much" from the United Nations but did not seem prepared to pay for it, reports Reuter.

There are too many countries now which think only the UN can save their problems. We face a crisis of too much confidence, Boutros-Ghali told students at Moscow's elite state institute of international relations.

"But at the same time the UN is suffering a severe financial crisis as its members fail to pay their contribution to the budget," he added.

Boutros-Ghali said cumulative dues to the UN amounted to 1.85 billion dollars the two leading debtors — the United States and Russia — respectively owe 555 million and 138 million dollars.

Boutros-Ghali said the UN's role had significantly increased since the cold war ended and that over the last year the organisation had undertaken more peace-keeping missions than in its entire previous history.

UN forces are now deployed in Lebanon, Cambodia, Angola, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. A contingent is soon due to fly to the

famine-torn African country of Somalia.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin promised on Friday to pay the United Nations 80 million dollars of Moscow's debt in September.

Yeltsin also told the UN chief, on an official visit to Moscow, that Russia would cover its dues by giving another 80 million dollars to the budget in the first quarter of next year.

Former Soviet republics caught in a series of bloody conflicts have also put in a bid for UN peace-keeping efforts over the past months.

But Boutros-Ghali said the UN would be especially cautious about involving itself in any conflicts which he said had been launched by separatist forces.

The UN should not encourage the creation of micro-states, he said.

Armenia, locked in bitter fighting with neighbouring Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh says it would like UN peace-keepers to be sent to the region. Azerbaijan opposes the idea.

In Moldova, Russian-speaking separatists in the self-styled Dnestr republic have also expressed interest in a UN peace-keeping force.

Pawar leaves for Moscow

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Indian Defense Minister Sharan Pawar left Sunday for Moscow for talks with Russian defense officials, United News of India news agency reported, reports AP.

Pawar is expected to hold high-level talks concerning India's decades-old policy of purchasing Russian arms, which has undergone a sea change since the collapse of the former communist giant.

Russia wants to boost its weapon's sales abroad to revive its tottering economy, and India is concerned that the arms may be bought by China and Pakistan — two neighbours with which it has fought four wars.

About three-fourths of the weapons presently held by India are Soviet-made and it has long relied on the former Soviet Union for technology and spare parts.

For decades, India paid for Soviet weapons in rupees, but that practice stopped after the end of the cold war.

Both India and Russia are strapped for hard cash and Pawar is expected to try and work out a barter deal for the purchase of Russian weapons, the Times of India newspaper said.

US starts airlifting relief to famine-hit Somalia

BAIDOA, Somalia, Sept 6: Two US Air Force cargo planes flew 21 tons of food to Baidoa Saturday, the start of an emergency airlift to a shell of a southern city where hundreds starve everyday after years of drought and civil war, reports AP.

The C-130 Hercules flights — carrying corn flour from Europe — were the Americans' first to the area of Somalia worst hit by the famine.

In a reminder of the chaos ripping the country apart, the greeting party included a demonstration, organized by local officials backing one warlord. It welcomed the food but protested UN plans to send troops to guard shipments.

Before the civil war Baidoa, 140 miles (225 kilometers) northeast of the capital Mogadishu, was a town of 30,000. Now there are 60,000-80,000, many with skeletal frames.

In an igloo-shaped hut made of sticks partly covered by strips of plastic and oil cloth, a woman and her teenage daughter somberly, resignedly washed the feet of the girl's baby sister. The child's face was covered in death.

Belt Huen, 155 miles (250 kilometers) to the northeast where an emergency U&K119630n eight days earlier to cheering crowds who had almost no firearms, the Somalia version of security was much in evidence at Baidoa.

Dozens of ragtag gunmen, one with a machine-gun and a bandoleer draped around his shoulder and touching the ground, accompanied local politicians who came to meet the first plane from the airlift based in Mombasa, Kenya, 580 miles (930 kilometers) to the South.

But guards riding atop and inside trucks and vans of relief agencies had to leave their firearms at the airstrip gate.

There also was none of the celebrating and dancing that greeted the operation commander, Brig. Gen. Frank Libutti, when the Belet Huen airlift began. A handful of demonstrators, holding professionally prepared English-language signs saying "Foreign Army No, Food Yes," stood silently as Libutti shook hands with local politicians.

"The general and his men are here. They are welcome," said one of the officials, Abdi Wosame Isak, whose party is aligned with one of Somalia's leading warlords, Gen. Mo-

hamed Farrah Aidid. "Those people do not like what happened in the Security Council", Isak said, referring to plans to send armed troops to Somalia for the first time.

UN sources said Friday that the warring factions agreed to plans to send 500 Pakistani troops to the Mogadishu area by Sept. 25. The council authorized 3,000 more soldiers but have yet to get Aidid's approval.

Aidid's militia fears that a large UN presence would amount to an occupying force recognizing his chief rival, Ali Mahdi Mohammed, the country's interim president who controls little territory.

Fifty unarmed UN military observers have been in Somalia monitoring a cease-fire signed by the two main factions in March. Looters last month seized hundreds of tons of relief aid and wounded two of the peacekeepers.

The clan warfare broke out after dictator Mohammad Siad Barre was ousted in January 1991.

President Bush ordered the Somalia emergency programme, Joint Task Force Provide Relief, on the prediction of relief experts that without immediate and massive relief, 1.5 million Somalis

will starve in coming months. The United Nations estimates that altogether 6 million Somalis require food and other emergency assistance.

Australian Phoebe Fraser, Baidoa team leader for CARE, the consignee of the 21.3 tons of European Community corn flour on Saturday's flight, estimated that perhaps more than 500 people die everyday in Baidoa. Most fled anarchy and banditry in the countryside, looking for food the violence has denied them.

Inside one of two compounds in Baidoa operated by the New York-based charity, four small bodies lay covered outside a cargo container that two dozens refugees sat in or beside.

"You do what you can, but it's never enough," said Miss Fraser, 26, from Melbourne, who stands a head taller than most of her skeletal charges.

"We drive through the camp in the morning and we find at least forty to sixty dead bodies. And those are only the people who died overnight," she said. "We don't know how many died during the daytime, but we estimate that 300-500 people are dying in Baidoa everyday, probably more than that."



SOMALIA: A victim of the famine — AFP/UNB photo

Shevardnadze to be sole candidate for parliament president

MOSCOW, Sept 6: Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgia's interim leader, will be sole candidate in forthcoming elections for the presidency of parliament, a post which will make him De Facto head of state, Itar-Tass news agency reported late on Saturday, says AP.

The ruling state council, of which Shevardnadze is now chairman, was set up amongst other things of organise new legislative elections. It decided recently that the president of parliament would be elected by popular suffrage at the same time.

Shevardnadze who took over as Georgian leader in March after the ouster of former ruler Zviad Gamsakhurdia, said last month that if elected, he would seek to build a democratic and free Georgia where people may live in peace and harmony.

With the help of Russia, Shevardnadze recently concluded a truce with nationalists in Abkhazia while in the north, a fragile ceasefire was recently agreed, also with Russian mediation with separatists in South Ossetia.