

**Offer premature : Palestinians**

**Israel proposes early empowerment in occupied areas**

WASHINGTON, June 23: Israeli negotiators have offered early empowerment in the occupied territories, but the Palestinians said the move was premature, officials from both delegations said, reports AFP.

Hanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation attending the 10th round of the Middle East peace talks here, said Tuesday that her team would respond to the Israeli proposal after consulting with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

"We have proposed the accelerated transfer of responsibilities in education, health, tourism, welfare, labour and other domains," chief Israeli delegate Eliakim Rubinstein said, at the close of Tuesday's meeting.

"This proposal is aimed at facilitating the establishment of

an interim autonomous authority, not to substitute it. It is important to get down to brass tacks as soon as possible," the Israeli official added.

Palestinian Deputy Chief Negotiator Saeb Erakat considered the Israeli proposal "premature."

"You can't start building the second story of a house if you haven't finished laying the foundation," Erakat added.

"We have a mandate from our leaders to discuss at this stage only a declaration of principles that will serve as a base for an autonomous authority," the Palestinian official said.

The 10th round of the MidEast peace talks that started in October 1991 in Madrid began June 15 and is expected to last three weeks.

Erakat said that the Israelis could not avoid such key issues as the status of East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in 1967, and the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

"There is still a chance for progress if the Israeli Government shows some wisdom," Erakat said.

Erakat replaced at the talks Palestinian Delegation Chief Ahdar Abdul Shafi, who will undergo an eye operation today.

Ashrawi stressed on her part that the Israeli proposal "is not new" and that its purpose was to "shatter the powers of the future Palestinian autonomous authority into little pieces."

"We want to reach a global agreement and an elected autonomous authority."

**Afghan cabinet meet put off amid fighting**

KABUL, June 23: A meeting of Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's cabinet scheduled for early this morning was postponed due to factional fighting that blocked the route to be travelled by the cabinet ministers, officials said, reports AFP.

"There was a meeting planned for 9:30 this morning but it was prevented due to clashes at Dehmazang Square," said engineer Sabawoon, the security chief for Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami faction.

**Declaration presented for inclusion in HR confce document**

**OIC rejects plan to create ethnic states in Bosnia**

VIENNA, June 23: The 51-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference yesterday presented a declaration for inclusion in a UN human rights statement rejecting a plan by Croats and Serbs to create three ethnic states in Bosnia, reports Reuter.

The declaration, intended for inclusion in the final document of the Vienna UN World Conference on Human Rights, being held in Vienna, also urged an end to the arms embargo.

The Islamic Conference issued a veiled threat that the success of the UN meeting hinged on its acceptance.

Agha Shahi, head of Pakistan's delegation to the human rights conference, said the declaration was intended for adoption at the UN meeting. He said it included rejection of plans to partition Bosnia and called for an end to the arms embargo against Bosnia.

"The special declaration and the final human rights document are interlocked," he told a news conference, speaking for the Islamic group.

"We are open to negotiations on the issue, but we have a bottom line," he added. "If the conference does not succeed some may blame us. The verdict must be left to others."

Shahi said the Islamic Conference had set up a working group made up of Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Egypt,

Senegal and Saudi Arabia to try to get the declaration adopted in the final document of the Vienna human rights conference.

The Islamic declaration was proposed last week and expanded with the rejection of the latest partition plans on Bosnia.

It calls for the lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia, condemnation of Croatia and Serbia for aggression and genocide, the withdrawal of forces from occupied territory, an immediate ceasefire and the implementation of the Vance-Owen peace plan dividing Bosnia into 10 semi-autonomous provinces.

Shahi said a working group met Australian Foreign Minister Alois Moch, Chairman of the rights conference, on Tuesday and would meet him again on Wednesday to discuss the declaration.

"If they don't come to a compromise it could mean that the declaration could be presented to the plenary session of the conference for discussion and a vote in the afternoon, and then who knows what might happen," one Westerner delegate said.

Western and other non-Islamic delegations have said they would not support the resolution as it was contrary to a conference rule barring specific mention of any country.

"It could become a horns nest," the delegate said.



Under the Bosnian flag, demonstrators protest the EC summit decision to maintain the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina Tuesday at the Bella centre where foreign ministers and heads of state met for two days. — AFP/UNB photo

**Off the Record**

**Fake auditions to have sex**

MELBOURNE, Australia: A man accused of forcing young hopeful actresses into having sex with him during fake auditions for a movie love scene was convicted on two counts of rape here Wednesday, reports AFP.

After deliberating for more than a day, a jury also found Kenneth John Roy, 38, guilty on five charges of procuring sexual penetration by fraud.

He pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The trial heard that two years ago Roy advertised in newspapers for young women to act in his movie about a sexually abused girl who has a number of affairs before she is murdered.

Applicants were told to bring a school uniform, stockings and high heels to a suburban Melbourne house where the so-called auditions were staged.

The young hopefuls were taken on separate occasions into a bedroom, asked to strip and lie on a bed with Roy.

The jury heard that seven women, aged between 18 and 26, who responded to the advertisements alleged they had been sexually abused by Roy, who later told police he was sick of being hurt by women.

**AIDS targets married Thai women**

BANGKOK: Thai health officials have detected an increase in AIDS cases among married women, news reports said Wednesday according to Reuter.

The incidence among wives had increased from 0.7 per cent of total cases in 1992 to one per cent. The Bangkok Post quoted Paichit Pavabut, Permanent Secretary of the Public Health Ministry as saying.

He said about 400,000 Thais in a population of some 57 million were estimated to be carrying the AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) virus.

The disease was first detected among homosexuals and drug addicts but the statistics showed clearly it was now spreading to families, he said.

Thailand has a massive sex industry, and many married men visit brothels, where AIDS has spread quickly.

**13th century Bible bought at \$ 480,000**

LONDON: A 13th century French Bible was bought by a private collector Tuesday for 320,000 pounds (480,000 dollars) at a Sotheby's auction, reports AFP.

The richly illustrated tome, printed in Paris, is the most important work of its kind to come on the market since Wenceslas's Psalm book in 1959.

The Bible was one of the first ordered by a layman, rather than a monastery or member of the clergy, probably an extremely wealthy noble.

Experts are divided on whether the Bible was ordered by John Warrene, brother in law of Henry III of England, or the then Earl of Warwick.

The work was transcribed by Michael of Cornwall, an English poet and scholar working in Paris. The text was corrected by Dominican monks at the Rue Saint-Jacques Monastery in Paris.

**Training video for prostitutes**

SYDNEY: Prostitutes in Australia may get their own training video — thanks to a grant by the Australian government, reports Reuter.

The Australian Council, the National Arts Funding Body, said Wednesday it had given Australian \$2,280 dollar (US 4,270) to the workers in sex employment collective in Canberra to produce a script for a training video.

The video will cover the history of prostitution, talk about safe sex, take cameras into well known brothels, interview prostitutes about discriminations and cover other prostitution issues.

The script will be produced for prostitutes in the Australian capital territory (Canberra), where brothels are legal.

"What they do for a living is not our concern," council spokesman Kerry Muniford told Reuters, "Whether the project has good community outcomes."

**BRIEFLY**

**Blast kills 4 in Philippines:** Four men were killed and another was seriously injured when a makeshift firecracker factory exploded in a nearby town, police said Tuesday, AFP reports from Manila.

Three of the workers were killed instantly in the accident late Tuesday at Bocaue town in Bulacan Province, north of here, while the fourth died in hospital. The fifth victim suffered severe burns.

Bulacan police said the workers were busy filling advance orders for the Christmas season when the explosion occurred for still unknown reasons. The factory, a one-room concrete shed in the middle of a farm, was obliterated.

**One more hanged in Egypt:** A Muslim militant convicted by a military court of killing a police officer was hanged Wednesday the second militant to be executed in Egypt in 10 days, a source at the military prosecutor's office said, Reuter reports from Cairo.

The source said Hassan Shehata Badran was hanged in a prison in Cairo.

Badran was sentenced to jail in December after being tried in his absence in a military court in Alexandria on charges of belonging to a group which plotted to overthrow the government.

Police tracked him down but during the operation to arrest him, he shot dead a police officer.

**Mount Unzen erupts:** Japan's most active volcano Mount Unzen erupted twice Wednesday, destroying more than 130 buildings, but no one was reported hurt, Reuter says from Tokyo.

An official at Shimabara city on the main southern island of Kyushu said 61 houses and 74 animal pens and warehouses in the city's Senbongi district were burnt down.

But he said city authorities had ordered the area be evacuated on Tuesday because of recent volcanic activity and continuing heavy rains.

Two years ago, the 1,359-metre (4,212-foot) volcano erupted for the first time in 199 years, spewing out huge amounts of hot rocks and ash. Some 42 people were killed and thousands of people had to leave their homes.

**4 Sikhs killed in Maharashtra:** Four Sikh rebels and two children were among 10 people killed when police raided a rebel hideout on a tipoff in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, the Press Trust of India reported Wednesday, AFP says from New Delhi.

Police told the news agency that the suspected Sikh militants, fugitives from the strife-torn state of Punjab, and their families died in a shootout late Tuesday in the town of Amravati.

He said a policeman, a member of a special squad from Punjab which attacked the separatists' house near the local jail, and three women were also killed in the raid.

The rebels used AK-47 assault rifles in the counterattack, he added.

**Radiation sickness grips British Gulf War veterans**

LONDON, June 23: Hundreds of British Gulf War veterans are developing radiation sickness, including infections, fatigue, and in some cases bleeding gums, hair loss and facial paralysis. The Today newspaper reported Wednesday, says AFP.

The report said that similar symptoms had affected 14,000 veterans in the United States.

A dozen British victims could have suffered damage to their immune system caused by exposure to uranium-tipped weapons, toxic fumes from Kuwait oil fires or Iraqi Nerve

Gas, Today said.

The paper said the radiation could have come from depleted uranium used on tankbusting missiles fired by the US Thunderbolt planes. The missiles fragment on impact, releasing particles into the atmosphere, it said.

The Ministry of Defence early today said it knew nothing of such cases. "As far as we are aware, there have been absolutely no cases of mysterious illness reported here," a spokesman said.

British forces fired a "miniscule" number of depleted

uranium anti-tank rounds in the Gulf, and if someone was close enough to be endangered by the dust they would have been injured by the blast, the spokesman added.

The spokesman added, however, that the United States was investigating claims from US servicemen that they have suffered mysterious sickness since returning from the Gulf in April 1991.

Nuclear physicist Frank Darnaby said the government should launch an inquiry into the sickness.

**Indo-Pak troops exchange fire in Kashmir**

NEW DELHI, June 23: One person was injured as Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged cross-border fire overnight in the northern Indian state of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

An official spokesman told the news agency that Pakistani troops began "unprovoked firing" and that Indian forces responded with small arms fire.

One civilian was wounded by a stray bullet, he said.

The spokesman said, the incident in the frontier district of Poonch was the latest in a series of sporadic attacks by Pakistani troops along the Line of Control during the last two months.

Meanwhile, Kashmiri Muslim militants fired as rocket into the state government headquarters Tuesday in the Kashmir capital Srinagar, PTI said.

No casualties were reported. Muslim militants have been waging a secessionist campaign in Kashmir, claimed by both India and Pakistan, since 1989.

**Khmer Rouge won't join interim govt**

PHNOM PENH, June 23: The radical Khmer Rouge will not seek to be included in Cambodia's interim government, the official of the Royalist Party FUNCINPEC said today, reports AFP.

Khmer Rouge nominal leader Khieu Sampha stated his position in a letter Tuesday to Cambodian Head of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk, said the official who declined to be identified.

The Khmer Rouge also said they would not oppose the interim government, the details of which are still being negotiated between the winning opposition FUNCINPEC party and the incumbent Phnom Penh government, the FUNCINPEC official said.

US Deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton, on a one-day visit to Cambodia, said Tuesday that while Washington did not

**Nixon's wife Pat dead**

WASHINGTON, June 23: Pat Nixon, the wife of former US President Richard Nixon, died Tuesday of lung cancer. She was 81, reports AFP.

Pat Nixon was married to Nixon throughout a political career which included his resignation as US President over the Watergate scandal.

Richard Nixon and their daughters Tricia and Julie were with her when she died.

The couple celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary Monday.

Pat Nixon was officially named Thelma but was known by her nickname Pat given her by her father because she was born the day before St Patrick's Day.



This October 1972 file photo shows Pat Nixon, the late wife of former US President Richard Nixon, during a campaign trip in northeastern Ohio. — AFP/UNB photo

**Flood claims 188 in China**

BEIJING, June 23: Flooding has killed 188 people in southern and eastern China since the beginning of June, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said in an official statement on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Particularly hard hit was Guangdong Province where 140 people have died.

In Hunan 30 people were killed and 500 injured, and 4,000 head of cattle perished during the first two weeks of June.

In Guizhou, 11 people died and 20 went missing on May 31.

Between June 17 and 20, seven deaths were reported and 48 were injured as torrential rains hit the central and western regions of Zhejiang Province, where floods have affected almost two million people in the province.

The Ministry's disaster relief department said the situation would deteriorate in Guangdong and Zhejiang due to renewed flooding.

**Japan's opposition starts talks to reach accord on forming coalition govt**

By S Y Bakht from Tokyo

JAPAN, June 23: Hectic moves by Opposition parties are on to re-align the political forces as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) strives to retain its hold on power by winning a simple majority in the upcoming Lower House elections slated for July 18.

Opposition political parties and rebel LDP members have already initiated steps to reach an accord on forming a coalition government if the LDP, in power since 1955, fails to win a majority to form a government.

Former finance minister Tsutomu Hata, leader of the 34-member ruling party Diet group which voted for the opposition no-confidence motion against the cabinet of Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa last Friday, is being seen by political analysts here as the possible candidate to head a coalition government.

The dissident Hata faction of the LDP has announced the formation of a centre right Wednesday and al-

ready started talks with other opposition parties on forming a coalition government after the polls.

The Japan Times, the largest circulated English-language daily in the country, reported Tuesday that the momentum was building towards endorsing Hata as leader of a coalition government and the next prime minister.

Sadao Yamahana, chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), hinted that his party may endorse Hata as prime minister if the coming election results in the LDP losing its Lower House majority.

"When electing a new prime minister in a special Diet session, the SDPJ aims to field a candidate reformist forces can jointly endorse," the paper quoted him as saying in a public meeting Monday.

However, it has been reported that the SDPJ and the Hata faction sharply differ on security issues.

The Hata faction has also reportedly initiated talks with

the Komeito (Clean Government party), the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and the Japanese Trade Union Federation or Rengo, a powerful lobbying group which backs candidates with pro-labour policies.

Akira Yamagishi, chairman of Rengo, was quoted in the local press as saying on Sunday that a study group representing all major parties and Rengo will look for ways to form an "emergency coalition government for political reform".

Komeito, the other major opposition party in Parliament, has not yet mentioned Hata as a possible prime minister choice. However, analysts pointed out that the party is known to have close relations with the Hata faction and is not believed to be opposed to supporting him.

But Keigo Ouchi, chairman of DSP, was quoted as saying that it is too early to float the idea of Hata as prime minister.

Meanwhile, the ruling LDP came under sharp media criticism for its failure to bring about political reform and its inability to accommodate party members seeking a change in the nation's scandal-plagued political system.

The brunt of the criticism was directed at Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa for failing to



Miyazawa... uncertain future

deliver on a promise to bring about political reforms and for his inability to provide leadership to the heavily factionalised party.

The conduct of a majority of Liberal Democrats in the events leading to Friday's dissolution of the house of Representatives has demonstrated that they are not qualified to govern," said a stinging editorial of The Japan Times.

To the public, the paper wrote, this showed that Miyazawa was more concerned about saving face than making any effort to keep alive the possibility of future political reform.

Through their own behaviour, they have apparently made the public recognise that these domestic-oriented, parochial interest-driven politicians are political dinosaurs, who should have departed from the political scene long ago," the newspaper added.

In a related development, ten Diet members who left the LDP last week, set up a new party Monday. In a written statement the newly floated party, called Sakigake, meaning pioneers or heralds, said existing political forces are not fully capable of coping with the fresh needs of the times since the end of the Cold War and in changing economic times.

Led by Masayoshi Takemura, the new party is expected to seek tie-ups with reform-oriented forces after the July 18 election.

The LDP, meanwhile, is actively trying to regroup and retain a majority in the Diet and yesterday announced an initial list of 202 candidates, all incumbent Lower House members, for the upcoming polls with a total of 511 seats on offer.

Surprisingly, former Prime Minister Noburo Takeshita was not included in the initial list of LDP candidates. Takeshita became prime minister in 1987 and resigned in 1989 for

his involvement in the Recruit shares-for-favours scandal.

LDP Secretary General Seiroku Kajiyama told reporters Monday that the final list of candidates will be announced later this month and that the ruling party is planning to field a total of about 280 candidates in the elections — barely above the 256 seats needed for the so-called comfortable majority in the Lower House.

Earlier, on Friday, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Miyazawa succumbed to the vote of no-confidence under a motion submitted by the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), Komeito (Clean Government Party) and Democratic Socialist Party (DSP). They blamed the cabinet for discarding a promise to carry out political reform.

The LDP, of which Miyazawa is also the president, abandoned a compromise with the opposition over reform during the closing days of the 150-day

Diet Session that came to an end with the Lower House resolution Friday.

Fifty-five of the 274 LDP members voted for the motion or abstained with 255 in agreement, 220 opposed and 21 abstentions.

In a bid to change the current multi-seat constituency system for the Lower House, the opposition proposed for a proportional representative system while the LDP opted to change to single-seat constituencies. Both sides had agreed to lower the number of seats from 511 to 500.

The Opposition, however, put forward a compromise in which 275 seats are reserved for single-seat constituencies while the remaining 225 are to be designated on the basis of proportional representation based on population density. But the compromise move broke down at the last minute as ruling party hardliners, resisting change, rigidly held their position.