

## ROK accepts DPRK proposal to ease N-tension

SEOUL, Sept 2: South Korea on Thursday accepted a North Korean proposal to exchange special envoys to discuss how to ease mounting nuclear tensions on the divided peninsula, reports AP.

The acceptance opened the way for the two Koreas to resume dialogue cut off by Pyongyang early, this year to protest joint US-South Korean military exercises.

In a message to his North Korean counterpart, Kang Song San, South Korean Prime Minister Hwang In-sung proposed that working officials of the two sides meet at the border village of Panmunjom next Tuesday to arrange the envoys exchange.

North Korea was expected to accept that proposal, Seoul officials said.

"We don't see any big problems in exchanging special envoys, a senior government official said, speaking on condition

of anonymity.

South Korean officials said the envoys could be exchanged as early as mid-September.

A breakthrough in inter-Korea relations came Wednesday when the Communist North, easing its previous hard-line stand, agreed to discuss nuclear issues with its southern capitalist rival.

North Korea is suspected of trying to develop nuclear weapons, despite its claims that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only.

The North Korean move came a day after four officials from the UN International Atomic Energy Agency arrived in its capital of Pyongyang for talks on nuclear inspections.

In the past, the North had insisted on exchanging special envoys who would discuss only an inter-Korea summit, not nuclear issues.

## Imminent Israeli-PLO agreement

# King Hussein for Arab summit to face dangers

AMMAN, Sept 2: Jordan's King Hussein has urged Arabs to convene a summit to face dangers confronting them and he criticised the Palestinians for failing to consult over an imminent accord with Israel, reports Reuters.

"The Arab nation is going through a dangerous phase and the Arab future is threatened... we confirm our readiness to respond to an Arab move to convene an Arab summit," he was quoted late on Wednesday as saying by the state-run news agency Petra. He was speaking in a television interview to be broadcast in full today.

The monarch's call an Arab summit was prompted by "the need to rise above wounds and misunderstandings amongst Arabs to serve their future generations."

In his first public remarks on the imminent Israeli-PLO ac-

cord, King Hussein implicitly criticised the Palestinians for not keeping him fully informed of its details.

"We were not in the picture of the details of what was going on between the Palestinians and the Israeli government over the Gaza Jericho project," King Hussein said.

"We in Jordan do not accept the imposition of any agreement imposed on us we are not a party to," the King said in veiled warning that Jordan could reject the proposed accord.

The Jordanian monarch also expressed his displeasure with the level of Arab coordination in the Middle East peace talks.

Jordanian officials had declined to comment publicly on the Israeli-PLO agreement but they have been angered by not being consulted on the negotiations. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, were taken by surprise at the results of secret Israeli-

Palestinian meetings in Norway, which bypassed US sponsored peace talks in Washington in which they are taking part.

Meanwhile another report from Beirut says, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi lashed out at the PLO on Wednesday saying it had failed to inform and coordinate with Arab partners over its draft agreement with Israel.

"They have overlooked us for no reason," said a visibly angry Hrawi, referring to the PLO which reached agreement with Israel on a plan to give self-rule first to the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

"Arab morality dictates we stay together... when reaching solution and on the road to solution," he added.

The PLO, he said, "were not generous enough to notify or inform us".

## Dole opposes US role in Bosnia, Somalia

WASHINGTON, Sept 2: US Senate Republican leader Bob Dole, saying US foreign policy was at a crossroads, urged President Bill Clinton on Wednesday to pull American troops out of Somalia and oppose the proposed partition of Bosnia, reports Reuters.

"Mr President, I urge you to reconsider the current policies toward Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina," Dole said in a letter to Clinton that the Kansas Republican made public.

"The pursuit of Somali warlords does not require the resources of the world's only superpower. It is time for America to disengage and turn over the reins to the United Nations and to African countries who have a clear stake in the stability of the area," Dole said.

"The proposed partition of Bosnia would create a dangerous precedent and invite aggression in other areas of the world. I would strongly urge the administration to publicly oppose the plan," Dole added.

## Marcos' body in preparation for journey home

HONOLULU, Sept 2: Nearly four years after his death, the body of former Philippine President Ferdinand E Marcos was removed from a temporary crypt Wednesday in preparation for a final journey home, reports AP.

Members of Marcos' staff, who accompanied him here in exile in February 1986, carried the gold-trimmed black casket from the makeshift hillside crypt to a waiting hearse.

Marcos died here on September 28, 1989, and his casket was placed in the quickly-built, air conditioned structure on October 15, after then-Philippine President Corazon Aquino refused to allow the body to be returned to the homeland for burial.

President Fidel Ramos, who succeeded Aquino, allowed the remains to be returned directly to Marcos' home province of Ilocos Norte. He denied a Manila burial requested by the Marcos family.

## China to set up military expert group with India

BEIJING, Sept 2: China and India will set up a joint diplomatic and military expert group to help maintain peace and tranquillity on the border, Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen announced today.

He made the announcement in written answers to questions submitted by PTI correspondent here in connection with Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's visit starting on Monday.

The expert group will be set up under an agreement on the maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to be formally signed during Rao's visit, Qian said.

## Cambodian MP locks in six UN peacekeepers

PHNOM PENH, Sept 2: A Cambodian member of parliament locked six UN peacekeepers inside his front gate and demanded a warrant today after they went in to see whether his Toyota landcruiser was stolen UN property, reports AP.

UN police outside trying to negotiate their release said the official, Chheang Vun, threatened to have his guard shoot them if they tried to leave.

But no armed presence could be seen from outside, and one of the hostages, a Brazilian mechanic, said they were not threatened and were well treated.

"There was no hostility. He just closed the door," Philippe Secera said.

## Off the Record

### Diana buys French vacation villa

PARIS: Princess Diana, the Princess of Wales, has bought a simple farmhouse in the village of Saint-Remy-De Provence, where one of her neighbours will be Princess Caroline of Monaco, the weekly Paris Match reports in its edition out yesterday, says AFP.

The Princess, who is separated from her husband and heir to the throne, Prince Charles, purchased the property from the celebrated Dutch baritone Jose Van Dam for 10 million francs (1.7 million dollars) last Easter, according to sources in Marseilles.

The six-bedroom house in a traditional provincial style is sheltered by a wood and has its own swimming pool. It stands in eight hectares (20 acres) of land, some of it used to grow lavender.

Paris Match noted that France had often been the chosen country of British royals, particularly to lick their wounds, as in the case of Edward VIII and the American divorcee Wallis Simpson after his abdication.

In province, the magazine predicted, the Princess will be able to achieve "the terrible ambition of a woman who has just celebrated her 32nd birthday, to be free and live in peace, as if she were unknown."



### Jealous Chinese blows up himself, girlfriend

BEIJING: A jealous Chinese man blew up himself and his girlfriend next to a government compound in China's western Gansu province, the Legal Daily reported yesterday, says AFP.

The 21-year-old man was convinced that his girlfriend, who was one year older, was having an affair after he found a photograph of her with another man, the newspaper said.

The woman denied any infidelity, but her boyfriend refused to believe her and barged into her private tailor shop on July 21 with explosives and blasting caps, the report said.

After a 90-minute shouting match, the enraged man set off the explosives, which killed the couple and injured two passers-by. Neighbouring homes were also damaged by the blast.

The incident occurred in a district of Yumen city, next to the district's government compound.

### 5-yr-old boy survives killing of family members

MONTGOMERY: A 5-year-old boy with a gunshot wound in the neck was found watching television Wednesday, three days after his father apparently went on a rampage that left the rest of the family dead, authorities said, reports AP.

Bodies of a woman, man and two children were found Wednesday in a bedroom of a one-story house several blocks south of the state Capital, said police spokesman Capt. Wyatt Gantt. They were identified as Equador Moore, 23; Vanessa Taylor Moore, 21; Avondria Deandress Taylor, 2; and 7-month-old Quintin E Moore.

Moore shot the mother and infant in the head while they were in bed together, then shot the 2-year-old in the head, he said. She was in a separate bed in the same bedroom.

Authorities believe Moore then went into a second bedroom and shot the older boy. Then, believing the 5-year-old was dead, he returned to the first bedroom, sat on the end of the bed where his dead wife and baby lay, and shot himself in the head, Gantt said.

The 5-year-old, whose name wasn't released, told police he woke up Monday morning and realized he was shot. He suffered wounds to his neck, shoulder and arm and was taken to Baptist Hospital, where his condition wasn't immediately known.

Police recovered a .38-caliber revolver in the house. Neighbours told police they had seen the couple arguing Sunday afternoon and heard gunshots that evening. They found the boy watching television late Wednesday afternoon, and police later found the bodies.



PARIS: US rock star Prince and one of his dancers perform during the first of two concerts at the Paris-Bercy Palace August 31.

## BRIEFLY

**Freeh sworn in as FBI director:** The new chief of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, Louis Freeh, was sworn in on Wednesday as the fifth Director in FBI history, marking what President Bill Clinton called a new era at the nation's premier law enforcement agency, Reuters reports from Washington.

"Today celebrate the elevation of a genuine law enforcement legend" to take control of the FBI, Clinton told a crowd gathered in the courtyard at FBI headquarters for the swearing-in ceremony. "It is a new day for the FBI."

Freeh was nominated by Clinton in July to replace William Sessions, a Republican appointee who had served nearly six years in office. Sessions was fired by Clinton for weak leadership and abusing the privileges of his office.

**Gas explosion kills two in Iran:** An explosion caused by a gas leak killed two people and injured scores of others in the northwestern Iranian city of Arak on Wednesday, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported, says AP from Nicosia.

The agency, monitored in Cyprus, said several shops and a laboratory were damaged in the explosion.

It did not give an exact number of those injured or provide other details.

**Chinese bus blast claims 7:** Gunpowder being carried on a bus ignited and seven people died, an official report said Wednesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Another 44 people suffered burns in the accident Sunday on a bus traveling from Nanchang, capital of south China's Jiangxi province, to the city of Shanghai, the Legal Daily (Fazhi Ribao) reported.

The paper said five people burned to death and two died after jumping from the bus.

A passenger had boarded the bus with several hunting rifles, bullets and gunpowder in violation of bus regulations, the paper said. Bumps caused the gunpowder to ignite, it added.

**Myanmar frees 25 more prisoners:** Myanmar's military government on Wednesday freed 25 more political prisoners, bringing to more than 2,000 the number released since a partial amnesty was announced in April of last year, state-run Radio Yangon reported, says AFP from Bangkok.

The radio monitored in Bangkok said without elaborating that the 25 men were freed from a prison in southern MA U-bin province.

**Two Lankan soldiers die:** Two soldiers died when a truck they were loading with ammunition and explosives blew up in eastern Sri Lanka, the military said yesterday, reports AP from Colombo.

Soldiers were loading the truck at a military facility in Poonani in the Poonaruwa district when the accident in which six others were seriously wounded occurred, a military spokesman said. Four of the injured were civilian employees of the army.

The truck was to take supplies to security forces battling the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the island's northeastern region.

**Peru to hold referendum:** Peru is to hold a public referendum later this year on a new constitution allowing the death penalty for guerrillas and rolling back government economic controls, reports AP from Lima.

Congress voted Tuesday to hold the referendum sometime between October 26 and November 26 on the constitution to replace one suspended by President Alberto Fujimori when he imposed one-man rule in April 1992.

The draft constitution also would allow life sentences for drug traffickers and repeal the ban on Presidents serving consecutive terms.

**30 cult members held in Argentina:** About 30 members of a religious group were arrested Wednesday and 300 children including some from Europe, the United States and Canada, were placed in orphanages, a court official said, reports AP from Buenos Aires.

Some of the children showed signs of sexual abuse, a prosecutor said.

The adults — members of the Children of God — were charged with conspiracy of kidnap and conceal children, federal court secretary Jorge Sica told the Associated Press in a telephone interview. He declined to give the names of those arrested.

The Children of God was founded in 1968 in the United States by David Brant Berg, a former pastor known as David or Father Mo, according to journalist Alfredo Silletta, author of a book on cults in Argentina.

## Three Maoists shot dead in India

HYDERABAD, India, Sept 2: Police killed three Maoist rebels who attacked a patrol in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, police said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

They said three rebels were shot dead when they opened fire at a police party taking part in a sweep and search operation in the northern part of the state on Tuesday.

Another Maoist rebel was killed in a separate clash with police near a railway station that came under attack on Saturday, police said.

The rebels of the People's War group, commonly known as Naxalites, have staged many such ambushes in their long fight against the authorities.

# Extreme secrecy led PLO, Israel to draft agreement

JERUSALEM, Sept 2: An isolated farmhouse in Norway. An Israeli professor who probably broke his own country's laws. A 4-year-old boy who helped break the ice between warring Israelis and Palestinians.

All played a role in what insiders called "the Oslo Channel," secret talks that led Israel and the PLO to set aside their blood feud and draft the outline of a peace agreement.

The talks blended extreme secrecy, tough bargaining, fine food and calculated hospitality.

In interviews this week with the Associated Press (AP), participants and other Israeli and Arab officials described how the Oslo Channel worked, and what accounted for its success.

"One of the factors for the

success was secrecy," said Yair Hirschfeld, professor of Middle East history at Haifa University, one of two Israeli academics to initiate the dialogue. "Because of the strong desire for secrecy, there were very few people involved."

The contacts were such a tightly guarded secret that only 10 people in Israel knew that one of the Middle East's most enduring taboos had been broken: Israel was talking to the PLO.

Insiders say Norway was chosen in part because it was off the beaten path and because Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yoassi Lelcman, who sought the back channel, had a chance meeting with a well connected Norwegian researcher, Terje

Roed Larsen, at an academic conference in Tel Aviv. Talks began in earnest in January at the Boregaard estate, a 19th century wooden mansion in the farm country southeast of Oslo. The setting was elegant furniture, Old World paintings and wooden floors.

While the meetings went on inside, often late into the night, Norwegian agents patrolled the woods and grounds to protect the guests and keep the secrecy.

There were other encounters: a farm house north of Oslo where the hosts were an ordinary farm family and the 32nd floor of the steel-and-glass Oslo Plaza Hotel, near one of the city's busiest intersections.

The key throughout appears to have been the intimacy: good food, relaxed attire, privacy, often a family atmosphere.

At one point, Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst's 4-year old son Edvard acted as an icebreaker. Norwegian newspapers said the Palestinians and Israelis crawled on the floor, playing with him during breaks.

"The hospitality was extremely well thought-out," said Hirschfeld.

Keeping the secret was not easy, however.

"You wouldn't believe how complicated it was sometimes," Larsen said. He had to make sure that the PLO and Israeli officials were routed through different airports and on sepa-

rate flights so they would not be spotted by accident at the same place and at the same time.

The encounters — there were at least 14 sessions produced the promise of history-making change in the Middle East: a detailed plan to start Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 26 years of occupation.

"Our mission was to check common ground, to see what was realistic, to check the mobiles and immobiles, what was flexible and what not," said Hirschfeld.

After several sessions, Hirschfeld presented a document — a rough draft of the declaration of principles that eventually found its way to the table in Washington and is expected

to be signed next week.

"Nobody took us seriously in the beginning," said Hirschfeld, who has long served as a conduit between Israeli officials and local Palestinian leaders in the occupied lands.

Last November, he said, Palestinian negotiators Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi approached him and urged a dialogue be started with the PLO and the Israelis because the talks in Washington were stalled.

Hirschfeld set up a meeting with Ahmed Qurei or Abu Ala, head of the PLO's financial arm known as "Banned."

Hirschfeld concedes that his first meeting with the PLO came in December, before the January 13 repeal of a law banning such contacts.

## Hospital fire leaves three dead in NY

NEW YORK, Sept 2: A fire engulfed a room in a Brooklyn hospital on Wednesday, killed three elderly patients. Eight fire-fighters and 15 to 20 patients were hurt, reports AP.

The fire broke out shortly before 6 am (1000 GMT) at Maimonides Hospital. Officials at first suspected arson, but later said the blaze was caused by some sort of equipment failure and was fed by oxygen.

The blaze killed two women patients in the room where it started and a man found unconscious in an adjoining bathroom.

"It was like a blowtorch going out the window, said Lt. Fred Sharon.