

State Deptt tells all US diplomats to raise ME fund

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: The State Department has told all its foreign posts to stress contributions to a Middle East fund to help ensure that the PLO-Israeli peace pact is a success, a US official said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

In a cable sent Monday night to all US embassies and consulates, the State Department told its diplomats to help raise money for the fund, known inside the State Department as the 'EEF, or' Early Empowerment Fund.

"It basically said that there was an historic achievement here at the White House, it's important for us to create momentum, visit your host governments and tell them how much stress the United States puts on this agreement being a success," said the US official, who declined to be identified.

65pc Israelis support peace accord

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: Sixty-five per cent of Israelis support the agreement signed with the PLO this week but 60 per cent also believe it should be submitted to a national referendum, a CNN poll released on Tuesday said, reports Reuter.

The poll was based on a telephone survey of 1,005 Jewish adults conducted on Tuesday in Israel.

The official said this was to be interpreted as a request for financial and political support for the PLO-Israeli peace plan, which calls for Israeli troop withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the west bank town of Jericho, and the beginnings of Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories.

The State Department has put no dollar figure on the amount of money it wants to raise from international sources, and has not announced any specific US contribution to the fund.

The official said, however, while raising money is one problem, there are deep concerns about the Palestine Liberation Organisation's ability to spend it effectively.

The often chaotic structure of the PLO is "a source of concern," the official said. "How are they going to be able to pull together the type of leadership and procedures and accountability to move ahead," the official told reporters.

The official said members of the Palestinian delegation who attended a State Department luncheon after Monday's White House signing ceremony had themselves raised worries on this matter.

The Palestinians were "expressing almost a sense of amazement about all the things that are required now and how they are going to have to pull together and get their act together," the official said.

Palestinians have found a new friend in White House : Arafat

TUNIS, Sept 15: PLO leader Yasser Arafat returned to his headquarters in Tunis today and said Palestinians had found a new friend in the White House, says Reuter.

Arafat, returning from Washington where he signed a peace deal with Israel and met President Bill Clinton, said he hoped to go to the West Bank town of Jericho in 10 weeks to set up a Palestinian authority for the interim period.

"That will be followed by a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital and in confederation with Jordan," he said.

He said his brief meeting with Clinton was "cordial, friendly, positive and fruitful" and added: "I can say that for the Palestinian people there is an important friend in the White House."

Arafat, who changed back into his olive-green fatigues on the plane and had put his pistol back on his belt, told reporters the PLO and Israel had reached an understanding that the Israelis would make practical changes soon in the occupied territories.

"Things like deportees, detainees, human rights, ending the isolation of east Jerusalem and opening it up to all the

Palestinian people," he said.

Of the peace agreement Israel and PLO signed in Washington on Monday, he said: "I can say that it's an important step along the right path, the beginning of a comprehensive and permanent peace in the region."

"We started with Palestine, then yesterday it was Jordan and after that it will be Syria and Lebanon I hope," he added.

Israel and Jordan signed an agenda for further negotiations in Washington on Tuesday. Syria and Lebanon, the other Arab states negotiating with Israel, have not yet signed agreements.

Hanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman for the old Palestinian negotiating team, said change on the ground should be the next step in the peace process.

"I think the most important thing now is to go beyond the texts and to deal with realities, to translate the text into details and into realities... what matters is what you create on the ground now," she told Reuters.

Arafat told reporters on his plane that his next step would be to call meetings of the PLO executive committee and then of the PLO's 1000-member central council, which has not yet met to ratify the agreement signed in Washington.

Ashrawi said PLO-Israeli committees would have to decide how to put the agreement into effect but no timetable for meetings had yet been set.



Palestinian boys carrying a Palestinian flag, march in East Jerusalem Sept 14, side by side with Israeli border police on patrol, the day after Israel and the PLO signed the historical peace agreement in Washington. —AFP photo

Aideed seeks Carter's help to end violence

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: While the whole United Nations looks for him, Somali warlord Gen. Mohamed Farrah Aideed has been seeking former President Jimmy Carter's help to prove his innocence, reports AP.

"Aideed would like me to mediate," Carter told reporters after he attended the PLO-Israeli peace signing ceremony at the White House on Monday. "I have no desire to mediate. There's nothing to mediate about."

The United Nations issued an arrest warrant and put a 25,000 dollar bounty on Aideed's head after 24 Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in a series of ambushes in Somalia on June 5.

Despite a high-tech effort by United Nations troops, Aideed has eluded capture ever since.

Carter said Aideed contacted him about a month ago at the Carter Center in Atlanta and asked if he would receive a delegation from him.

"So we asked the State Department and the United

Nations if this was appropriate, Carter said. "We got an affirmative response from both."

The delegation came to Atlanta. "He wanted to see some accommodations made," Carter said. "He claimed he was innocent; that he hadn't done anything that warlords hadn't done, although he didn't use that phrase, and that he wanted to end the violence."

Carter said he got another letter from Aideed last week in which he said he would accept the findings and decision of an international investigative commission appointed by the UN.

The former president said he passed that information on to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the State Department.

"I don't know what might come out of it," he said. "I'm not involved in any sort of negotiation. But I think it's important that we explore, at least, some peaceful alternative to the conflict on the streets of Mogadishu every day."

Mitterrand asks DPRK to open N-sites to outside inspections

SEOUL, Sept 15: French President Francois Mitterrand warned Wednesday that his country would not ignore mounting nuclear tensions on the Korean Peninsula and asked Communist North Korea to resolve them by accepting inspections, reports AP.

Addressing South Korea's National Assembly, Mitterrand said North Korea, as a member of an international nuclear controls treaty, has the obligation to open its nuclear facilities to outside inspections.

North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons development was a major topic in Mitterrand's talks with his South Korean counterpart, Kim Young-sam, on Tuesday, the first of Mitterrand's three days here. The two agreed to cooperate to resolve the issue.

The international community, including France, would not overlook new nuclear threats building up on the Korean Peninsula, Mitterrand said in the 30-minute speech. "South Korea's demand that

North Korea fully abide by all regulations of the IAEA that it has joined on its own would be fully supported by international society," he said, referring to the UN International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mitterrand said France, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council is ready to support South Korea on the North Korean nuclear issue at the world body.

Some South Korean officials, increasingly disappointed at a lack of progress toward inspections in the North, want the Security Council to consider possible sanctions against Pyongyang.

Despite a hectic schedule that included a visit to an international exposition in central South Korea earlier in the day, Mitterrand looked fine as he spoke in the parliament.

A few hours after his arrival Tuesday, Mitterrand became sick and vomited, delaying summit talks with Kim by 30 minutes. He recovered after a rest.

In the nationally broadcast speech, Mitterrand also called for closer economic cooperation with South Korea through expanded and balanced trade and speedy technology transfer.

He said France and South Korea have the potential to benefit from each other's complementary economies, especially in the fields of energy, environment, aeronautics and cars.

Two-way trade totaled 2.2 billion dollars in 1992, slightly in France's favor. Officials of both sides said the trade volume could double in a few years.

Mitterrand's visit, the first to South Korea by a French president, followed by weeks Seoul's choice of a French company over a German competitor for its first high-speed railway, a 5.3 billion dollar project.

In August, the French-British consortium GEC Alsthom was awarded the right to negotiate the largest single Korean contract — for 2.5 billion dollar worth of trains and related equipment.

Another Chinese pro-democracy activist freed

BEIJING, Sept 15: A Chinese student leader of the 1989 pro-democracy protests was released from prison after serving out his three-and-a-half year sentence, the Justice Ministry said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Zhai Weimin, who was sixth on a government list of 21 most wanted students, was freed Monday from a prison in Hebei Province, which surrounds the capital, ministry spokeswoman Chen Ming said, adding that he "should be at home."

Zhai's release came a day before China said it paroled Wei Jingsheng, the country's longest serving political prisoner.

Diplomats said the human rights gesture was a bid by Beijing to strengthen its bid to host the 2000 Olympics, which will be decided September 23.

Zhai, 23, went into hiding after the Tiananmen Square crackdown and continued a clandestine campaign for democracy through an underground group, the Democratic Front for the Salvation of China.

Kurds raid Turkish army posts, kill 20

ANKARA, Sept 15: Kurdish rebels killed 20 Turkish soldiers in two raids on military posts in Sirt and Van provinces, security sources in the region said today, reports Reuter.

Rebels of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) mounted the overnight raids in southeastern Turkey on Tuesday, the sources said.

The sources said nine soldiers died in an ambush in southeastern Sirt province and eleven, including a non-commissioned officer, in eastern Van province.

Security forces have started a widespread search operations in both provinces to hunt the PKK rebels, fighting for an independent state since 1984 in southeast Turkey.

More than 7,000 have lost their lives in the PKK's violent campaign.

Meanwhile, seven western tourists, freed unharmed on Tuesday by PKK in eastern Turkey, began their journey home today, diplomats said.

The seven were released near the remote eastern town of

Dogubeyazit after begin held for more than a month by the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

An Italian diplomat said one Italian, Angelo Palego, and a Swiss couple, Nico and Anna Pianto, had arrived in the eastern city of Van, where Italian and Swiss chartered planes were waiting to fly them directly out of the country.

Diplomats said two Germans, Christoph Lehmann and Henry Butler, another Swiss, Giuseppe Rezzonico, and New Zealander Paul Thomson were driving their own vehicles under police escort and it was not clear what route they would take home.

The freed hostages were all reported to be in good health after their captivity in the rugged mountains near Iran.

"He seems to be fit, well and keen to get home," said a New Zealand diplomat after speaking to Thomson by telephone.

Turkish authorities questioned the tourists for several hours in Dogubeyazit on Tuesday.

BRIEFLY

3 killed in Italian plane crash:

An Italian air force plane crashed at Venice Airport today, killing all three crew members on board, an airport spokesman said, Reuter reports from Venice.

The spokesman said the plane was a Piaggio 808, airport firemen put out a blaze caused by the crash.

The spokesman said the airport, which is on the mainland side of the Venice Lagoon and away from the centre of the historic part of the city, was closed after the crash.

He said officials had not yet determined the cause of the crash. The plane went down near the airport's fire station.

There were no immediate reports of injuries on the ground.

Typhoon Abe kills 11 in China:

Typhoon Abe struck southeastern coastal China killing at least 11 people and injured more than 149 others, it was reported here Wednesday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Typhoon Abe hit land between Hailai and Chaoyang in Guangdong Province on Tuesday with an average wind speed of 45 meters (148 feet) per second, killing at least nine people in Hailai county and two in Chaoyang, the Wen Wei Po daily said.

More than 149 others reported to have been injured in the storm, the 15th to hit China this year.

Palestinian killed in West Bank:

A Palestinian gunman was killed and three Israeli soldiers were wounded in a clash in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron on Tuesday, the Israeli army said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Palestinians in a car opened fire on soldiers at a roadblock, critically wounding two and slightly wounding a third. The gunmen's vehicle overturned as they tried to escape.

Israeli soldiers chased the gunmen on foot and shot dead one of them, the army said in a statement.

PLO's top diplomat in Iraq:

The PLO's top diplomat arrived here Tuesday to brief Iraqi officials on the PLO-Israeli autonomy accord in the occupied territories, the signature of which he did not attend Monday in Washington, reports AFP from Baghdad.

"I came to Baghdad to meet with our [Iraqi] brothers and brief them on the latest developments in the Palestinian cause as well as the situation within the Palestine Liberation Organisation," said Faruq Kaddumi, the head of the PLO's Political Department who is considered the movement's foreign minister.

Cambodia to resume ties with Israel:

Cambodia is ready to resume diplomatic relations with Israel following the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation accord, head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk said on Wednesday, reports Reuter from Phnom Penh.

"Cambodia, which has long accorded legal recognition to the PLO and the Palestinian state, is pleased to declare that it is willing to resume diplomatic ties at ambassadorial level with the state of Israel if the Israeli government so wishes," the Prince said in a statement broadcast on Cambodian Radio.



Firefighters trying to extinguish the blaze rising from a Lufthansa airbus which caught fire while landing at Warsaw airport Sept 14. —AFP photo

2 killed, 50 hurt in Lufthansa airbus crash

WARSAW, Sept 15: A co-pilot and a woman passenger were killed and more than 50 were injured when a Lufthansa airbus A-320 crashed and caught fire on landing in Warsaw on Tuesday, according to a provisional toll issued overnight reports AFP.

Earlier Polish medical sources and PAP news agency put the number of injured at 54.

Warsaw Airport Manager Maciej Kalita said rescuers were "still searching the wreckage of the aircraft with the help of a Lufthansa team". However the casualty toll was not expected to increase, he said.

Khmer Rouge to have 'zero' power in govt: Ranariddh

PHNOM PENH, Sept 15: The Khmer Rouge will have "zero" power in Cambodia's new government, one of the country's leaders said Wednesday, reports AP.

Prince Norodom Ranariddh, co-chairman of the interim government, said the guerrilla group had not contested the UN-organized elections this past May and therefore had no right to any power.

The Khmer Rouge, which controls about 20 per cent of Cambodia, signed a 1991 peace accord with three other factions to end 13 years of war and hold elections, but then boycotted the poll.

But since its former battlefield ally, the party led by Ranariddh, won the most seats in the election, the Khmer Rouge has made overtures to join the new administration.

At first the guerrilla group offered to give up its territory and turn over its 10,000 guerrillas if

they were made advisors to the new government, which is to formally take power after a new constitution is adopted, probably at the end of this week.

But on Monday the Khmer Rouge, which does not hold a single seat in the national assembly, said it wanted a 15 per cent share of control over government ministries, saying national reconciliation depended upon power-sharing.

"If they are democratic they have to abide by the will of the people and if they did not participate in the election, why do they want 15 per cent?" Ranariddh said to journalists at the national assembly, where debate began Wednesday on a new constitution.

He said the four parties that won seats in the election will divide power according to the number of representatives they have in the assembly. The Khmer Rouge, with no representatives, will therefore have

"simply zero" power, Ranariddh said.

The Khmer Rouge said Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC party, along with it and a third group which fought for 13 years against the former Phnom Penh administration, should have the most power, instead of forming a coalition government with the Phnom Penh party.

It said FUNCINPEC, which placed first in the poll, should have 45 per cent control of the administration; the Phnom Penh party, which won the second highest number of seats, 40 per cent; the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party, which placed third, 10 per cent and Khmer Rouge, although it did not participate, 5 per cent.

FUNCINPEC and the Phnom Penh party should each control 35 per cent of the various ministries, the BLDP should control 15 per cent and the Khmer Rouge should control 15 per cent, the guerrilla group said.

Hekmatyar's forces pound Kabul

ISLAMABAD, Sept 15: Fighters backing Afghanistan's Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar pounded the Afghan capital of Kabul with heavy artillery for several hours, causing numerous civilian deaths and injuries, state-run Radio Kabul reported, says AP.

The tank and artillery attack on the east side of the devastated city began Tuesday afternoon and lasted into the evening, according to the radio report, monitored in neighbouring Pakistan.

It appeared to be the heaviest fighting in recent weeks, but no casualty figures or additional details were available.

Hekmatyar and his Hezb-e-Islami faction remain bitter rivals of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, whose Jamiat-e-Islami supporters control most of the war-ravaged capital.

Rabbani and Hekmatyar reached an agreement in April that named Hekmatyar as prime minister. But he remains on the outskirts of the capital.

Pak drug barons hard hit by interim govt

ISLAMABAD, Sept 15: The powerful drug kings who have put Pakistan alongside Myanmar in the front ranks of the world's heroin producers, have been hard hit in the past two months by a government whose mandate soon runs out, reports AFP.

Fifteen suspected drug barons who had hoped to run in the coming national and regional elections October 6 and 9, were slashed from the electoral list and half a dozen others were arrested.

Yet others are on the run, like Ayub Khan Afridi, a former congressman who says he built his enormous fortune on importing crockery from Afghanistan and whose extradition is demanded by the United States.

At the same time the army has played its part. A specially anti-drug force has been created, financed by the Americans and headed by General Salah Uddin Tirmizi and several officers.

Western experts hope that the military, some of whom are suspected of protecting the traffic, will involve themselves with the "Jihad" (the holy war) launched by the government against the traffickers.

The press has also taken sides. The independent daily, the News, Monday published a list of names of 138 Pakistanis suspected of involvement in international drug trafficking.

Kobalia is aligned with former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was ousted in January 1992 in a military putsch that allowed Shevardnadze — Georgia's former Communist boss — to assume power three months later.

Shevardnadze asked the parliament to impose a state of emergency to let him fight Gamsakhurdia's supporters. The law would allow him to disarm fighters, declare a curfew and ban rallies, among other things.

The 65-year-old leader also wanted more power to fight rampant crime an armed gangs

about 285 kilometers (175