

UNITA kills 50 civilians Savimbi plans to declare unilateral ceasefire

LUANDA, Sept 20: The leader of Angola's armed UNITA opposition, Jonas Savimbi, plans today to announce a unilateral ceasefire in the country's civil war, UNITA's radio Vorgan declared, reports AFP.

Troops of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) will lay down their arms as soon as Savimbi has issued the order, the radio said in a broadcast early today.

UNITA also accused government troops of killing hundreds of people in weekend shelling of the central highlands city of Humbo, Angola's second biggest town where the opposition has set up its headquarters.

Before the UN Security Council met last Wednesday to

review the Angolan conflict, Savimbi's chief of general staff, General Arlindo Pena, announced a unilateral ceasefire in situ from September 20.

But the Security Council also suspended implementation of the measure for 10 days, warning that UNITA should in that time stop fighting and return to the negotiating table with the formerly Marxist government in Luanda. Meanwhile, an earlier report says, more than 50 civilians died on Sunday during UNITA rebel shelling of the besieged central Angolan city of Cuito, Angola. Radio said.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of the radio report.

BRIEFLY

Deng's daughter falls ill: Deng Lin, eldest daughter of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, fell ill on Monday with an attack of tonsillitis while visiting the World Expo in the South Korean city of Taejon, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said, report Reuter from Seoul.

Deng Lin, a 52-year-old oriental brush painter, arrived in Seoul on September 12 for a 10-day art exhibition to commemorate the first anniversary of the normalisation of ties between South Korea and China.

Yonhap said she fell ill 20 minutes after starting a tour of the expo site.

"She is now taking a rest after treatment for high fever caused by acute tonsillitis. She will recover soon," Yonhap quoted a doctor at a Taejon hospital as saying.

King Birendra leaves for China: The King and Queen of Nepal left Monday for a week-long state visit to China, one of Nepal's biggest sources of foreign aid, AP reports from Katmandu.

King Birendra, on his seventh visit to China since ascending the throne in 1972, said the visit will allow him to see for himself China's economic progress.

Squeezed between the world's two most populous countries, Nepal carefully balances its foreign policies with India and China.

Jackson performs in Tel Aviv: More than 70,000 screaming young Israelis feted Michael Jackson late Sunday when the pop superstar took to the stage at Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park for his first concert in the holy land, AFP reports from Tel Aviv.

Dressed in black and gold, Jackson gave his fans a night to remember as he breakdanced to hits from his latest album "Dangerous," kicking off with "Jam."

Almost 200 spectators received treatment for bruising or after fainting in the crush.

North Salem minister shot dead: A Methodist minister was finishing his sermon Sunday when a woman shot him to death in front of his horrified congregation and 13-year-old daughter, police said. A woman he once dated was arrested, AP reports from North Salem.

The Rev. Roland Phillips, 36, of North Salem, was concluding the sermon before about 25 people at the United Methodist Church when he was shot three times in the chest, said Lt. Terry Brinker, a Hendricks County Sheriff's spokesman. He died on the way to a hospital.

Eight killed in Kashmir violence: Six Muslim rebels were among eight people killed overnight Saturday in separate acts of violence in the troubled northern state of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, AFP reports from New Delhi.

The news agency quoted officials in the state summer capital Srinagar as saying four activists from an outlawed guerrilla outfit died in a clash with security forces in Baramulla district, bordering Pakistan.

Two militants died in warfare elsewhere, while a body was recovered from a southern district Sunday, PTI said. One of three injured in a gun battle between soldiers and separatists died of injuries late Saturday.

Myanmar troops swoop on anti-govt rally: 27 held

MAESOT (Thailand), Sept 20: Soldiers broke up an anti-government rally in Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, injuring at least seven people and detaining 27, an anti-government activist said today, reports Reuter.

The Mandalay resident said by telephone that about 1,000 protesters, mostly university students, had staged a rally near the city's market on Saturday to mark the fifth anniversary of the military coup that Myanmar under the control of the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

Violence broke out when soldiers stormed the site to disperse the crowd and hit protesters with clubs and gun butts.

The protesters moved their rally to a hospital where the injured were being treated. The rally continued late into

the night.

Myanmar state radio confirmed on Sunday night that people had been injured and detained, but said the crowd had gathered after a car accident. It said the incident had nothing to do with politics.

Two Somalis shot dead

MOGADISHU, Sept 20: Helicopter-borne American soldiers shot and killed two Somali gunmen Monday after a Pakistani peacekeeper was wounded in a militia attack on UN forces, reports AP.

The fighting erupted after a night of sporadic battles, with militiamen firing mortars and UN helicopters replying with rockets and 20mm cannon fire.

The UN troops, almost 27,000 soldiers from 28 countries, were sent to help Somalia recover from famine and civil war.

70 killed in Punjab as bus plunges

MAKATSH, Sept 20: Army divers Monday fished out a bus that plunged into a canal in the northwestern state of Punjab with at least 70 passengers, reports AP.

Police officer Teja Singh who jumped off the bus before it fell into the Raja Canal Sunday was the sole survivor, officials said. Singh's 8-year-old son was among the dead.

Singh said the driver lost control of the bus.

The Punjab Roadways bus had come from Jammu in Kashmir state and was 10 kilometers (six miles) from Mukatsar, its destination, 350 kilometers (215 miles) north of New Delhi.

Divers searched for 15 hours before spotting the bus in the murky waters.

ABU DHABI, Sept 20: They may have tight security alliances with the United States, but as the most conservative nations in the Middle East, Gulf states have consistently dismissed western-style democracy as inappropriate for their societies, reports IPS.

This appears to be slowly changing in a process that began with calls for more pluralism following the Gulf War and deployment of some 500,000 US and multinational anti-Iraqi coalition troops in the region three years ago.

The Sheikdoms of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have in recent months taken fledgling steps toward loosening up their rigid political

International

Assad condemns Israeli-PLO peace accord

Rabin pleads Arab states to normalise ties with Israel

ALEXANDRIA (Egypt), Sept 20: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Syria was flouting its peace talks with Israel by supporting guerrillas in Lebanon and Damascus-based groups opposed to an Israeli-PLO accord, reports Reuter.

A senior official travelling with Rabin in Egypt on Sunday said the Israeli leader told Mubarak in an hour-long private meeting Syria must prove it is serious about peace by first changing its policy in Lebanon.

"We have done something. We expect not only to give but

reactionist groups, stopped an operation to deploy the Lebanese army in the south and does not make any move to restrain the Hezbollah. This contradicts negotiations for peace," the official, who asked not to be identified, told reporters.

Rabin appealed to the Arab world to normalise relations with Israel, end an economic boycott and extend large-scale financial and moral support for the PLO.

"I have great hopes that agreements between the neighbouring countries and Israel

also to get in return and not only from those who signed the agreement," said Rabin standing beside Mubarak at a news conference.

Rabin's four-hour visit to the glittery Egyptian presidential place overlooking the harbour in Alexandria was a push to keep the peace momentum alive.

Mubarak was publicly more of optimistic on the Israeli-Syrian peace talks.

"Meanwhile AFP adds: Syrian President Hafez al-Assad condemned the PLO-Israeli autonomy agreement in an interview published here today but said the prospects for peace had improved.

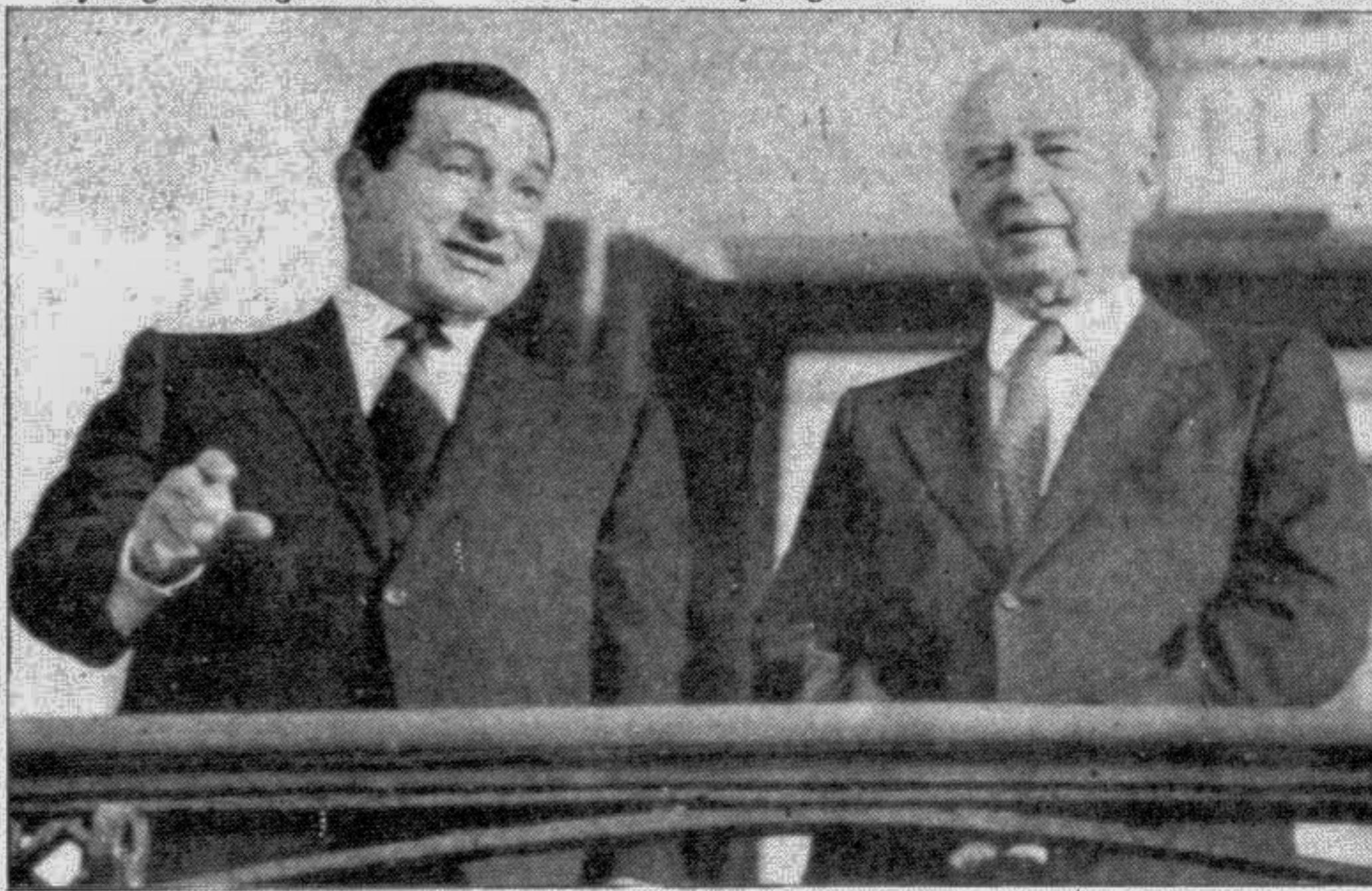
Assad told the Egyptian daily Al-Akhbar that the announcement that Israel and the PLO had reached agreement on self-rule starting in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho was a "painful surprise" for Syria.

It was ultimately "up to the Palestinian people to decide" and that was why Syria had not formally "approved nor rejected" the agreement, he said.

The Syrian leader expressed disappointment that the Palestine Liberation Organisation failed to coordinate with Arab nations before entering into the peace deal.

The Syrian President also reiterated that Israel would have to withdraw from the Golan Heights seized in 1967 if it wanted peace with Syria.

— AFP photo



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (L) talks to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the balcony of the Ras El-Tin palace in Alexandria Sept 19.

— AFP photo

Shevardnadze calls for help to save Abkhazia

TBILISI (Georgia), Sept 20: Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze made a "cry from the heart" Sunday, imploring the world to save his small nation from destruction in a bloody civil war, reports AP.

He warned that heavy fighting in Georgia's Abkhazia region could spread across the Caucasus Mountains into Russia to the north.

"I want the world to realise that Abkhazia is the fuse by means of which not only Shevardnadze's Georgia, but also Yeltsin's Russia, are being blown up," he said, referring to Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Fighting continued Sunday night despite a reported agreement on troop withdrawal from the region by both sides within 24 hours.

The latest flareup began Thursday after Georgia withdrew most of its soldiers from the region under a July 27 peace agreement.

Shevardnadze said Abkhazia's "betrayal" had gone unpunished, despite his requests for help from Yeltsin and UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

"I call again on Boris Yeltsin,

trade terms and financial credits.

Shevardnadze issued his latest plea from the city of Sukhumi, the provincial capital of Abkhazia under siege by Abkhazian separatists. He vowed to stay there despite shelling and gunfire that have killed 47 people and wounded more than 450 in four days, the Defence Ministry said in a written appeal.

"Someone may say this is a cry of despair. Not if it is a cry at all, then it is a cry from my heart and the heart of my people, and I want it to be heard."

Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said Saturday in Moscow that Shevardnadze wanted Russian troops to fight on Georgia's side.

Grachev rejected that request, but said he had offered to send two Russian divisions and one brigade — a total of several thousand men — to separate the combatants and disarm both sides.

Shevardnadze said Georgia was counting on support from all other former Soviet republics.

— AFP photo



President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (R) welcomes Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport Monday. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati is seen in the center.

— AFP photo

TEHRAN, Sept 20: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao arrived here today on a groundbreaking three-day visit aimed at boosting bilateral ties and trade between the two countries, reports AFP.

Rao, the first Indian Premier to visit Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution, was greeted at the airport by his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The Prime Minister is accompanied by a high-level delegation which includes the Minister of State for External Affairs R L Bhatia and Foreign Secretary J N Dixit.

He is to meet Rafsanjani later today and visit the shrine of Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Rao is also expected during his three-day visit to seek Tehran's support for its military operation against separatist Muslim insurgents in the northern state of Kashmir.

— AFP photo

SHARJAH: The Islamic Court of Appeals on Sunday ordered the deportation of an unmarried British couple who had appealed a one-year jail sentence for adultery, reports AP.

The court reduced Peter and Yvonne Wade's sentence to three months and then commuted it to deportation, the couple's lawyer said.

The Wades, who were jailed briefly in August after a lower court convicted them of adultery, emerged smiling from the closed court session.

"I am very happy the court decided only to order our deportation," said Peter Wade, a 41-year-old helicopter pilot.

Yvonne, 28, said she would appeal the deportation order. The Wades' lawyer, Hafez Tahboub, said they have a month to file an appeal with the central appeals court in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Off the Record



CALIFORNIA: Actor Tom Skerritt (L) and actress Kathy Baker pose with the Emmy Awards they won for Best Actor and Actress in a Drama Series for their roles in "Picket Fences" Sept 19. The show also won as Outstanding Drama Series.

— AFP photo

Singapore male hot commodity for Asian women

SINGAPORE: The Singapore male has become a hot commodity for husband-seeking Asian women from Indonesia to Japan, a local newspaper said Sunday, reports AFP.

The English language Sunday Times said that five major matchmaking agencies it contacted reported a boom in the number of foreign women, especially Asians, signing up for Singapore husbands.

And, according to official figures, the number of Singapore men marrying foreign women shot up from 1988 in 1987 to 4,462 last year.

Officials of matchmaking agencies said they expect such marriages to rise further because hundreds of foreign women have registered to marry Singaporeans.

"Cultural similarities, looks, money and education are the main attractions aside from a more pragmatic lure — passports for women keen on migrating to Singapore," the paper said.

The paper said many Singapore men with low educational qualifications were keen on marrying foreigners because they did not want to wed locals with higher qualifications than themselves.

Tham Kwami Fong, who runs a matchmaking agency, said foreign women made up almost 40 per cent of women on her register.

"Most of them prefer Singaporeans because they think they are better looking, better educated and have more money. Many girls also see it as their chance to migrate to Singapore," she said.

UAE orders British couple to leave for adultery

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Law invalidating marriages of AIDS patients voided

SALT LAKE CITY: A Utah law that invalidated the marriages of people with AIDS was voided by a federal judge at the request of two families and the state itself, reports AP.

US District Judge Aldon J Anderson ruled Friday that the 1987 law violated the federal Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The disabilities act says a public entity may not discriminate against a person with a physical or mental impairment limiting major life activities.

Attorney Brian Barnard sued in July on behalf of two married couples and their children who would be considered illegitimate if the parents' unions were voided. The women had contracted the virus before their marriages.

Gov Mike Leavitt and Attorney General Jan Graham agreed the law was probably invalid, but they didn't want to make the admission in court. They did agree to block enforcement of the law until the next legislative session, but Barnard said that wasn't