

Jordan, Syria agree not to make separate peace with Israel

AMMAN, Nov 23: Jordan and Syria have agreed that neither will sign a separate peace treaty with Israel, Jordanian officials and diplomats said on Monday, reports Reuters.

The pledge, reinforcing previous positions, came during a meeting between Jordan's King Hussein and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in Damascus on Sunday.

"Both agreed on the need for Arabs to back a just and comprehensive settlement because unilateral deals will only weaken Arabs and yield no lasting settlement or stability to the region," one official told Reuters.

Diplomats said the King, who has stepped up contacts with Syria since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation signed a peace deal, went to Damascus primarily to calm Syrian fears of a separate Jordanian peace deal with Israel.

Syria, a powerful player in the two-year-old Middle East peace process, was angered by

reports that Jordan, which first hesitated and then backed the PLO-Israeli accord, was close to signing a similar agreement.

Jordan initiated an agenda with Israel in Washington in September laying the basis for a future deal but has said it could gradually implement elements of the agenda before signing a pact with Israel as part of a wider Arab-Israeli settlement.

King Hussein and Assad also discussed coordination ahead of next month's tour of the region by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to try to unblock the stalled peace talks.

Jordanian newspapers hailed the King's talks in Syria as a key step in strengthening the Arab peace front and said Jordan had long opposed unilateral deals.

"Jordan faced temptations at times and threats at other times to accept a separate settlement," said the Arabic-language daily Sawt Al-Shaab.

Syria strongly criticised the self-rule agreement signed by Israel and the PLO.

BJP may return to power in UP

NEW DELHI, Nov 23: An exit poll published today forecast the opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would return to power in India's most political crucial state with a slightly higher majority, reports Reuters.

The poll, conducted by the centre for media studies and published by the Indian Express newspaper, ran counter to the expectations of most political pundits who said the BJP would fall short of a majority in Uttar Pradesh.

India's most populous state, with 120 million people, has the highest number of seats in the national parliament — 85 out of 545 and has produced most of the country's Prime Ministers.

Uttar Pradesh was long a bastion of the ruling Congress Party until general and state elections in 1989, when it was swept out by the left of centre Janata Dal.

In 1991, the BJP took over power in Uttar Pradesh, widely considered the state from which to launch a bid for national

power, on the back of a campaign to replace a 16th century Mosque with a temple in the Uttar Pradesh town of Ayodhya.

Many Hindus believe the Mosque stood on the birthplace of one of their Gods, Lord Rama, and the temple campaign took the BJP from the political fringe to being the official opposition in parliament.

The BJP won 221 of the 425 seats in the Uttar Pradesh assembly in 1991 and ruled until Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao dismissed the state government over the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque by Hindu zealots last December.

The Indian Express exit poll forecast that the BJP would win between 230-240 seats in state elections completed on Sunday with 33.4 per cent of the vote compared to 31.6 in 1991.

It said Congress would slip yet further to between 25-35 seats compared to 46 in 1991 and 94 in 1989.

Most of the rest would go to the Janata Dal and two of its potential allies it said.

Rao dismissed BJP governments in four states after the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque set off Hindu-Muslim violence across the country. More than 2,000 people died.

All four state-Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are voting this month along with Delhi and Mizoram in the far north east.

Political analysts say the BJP must win all four states where its administrations were dismissed, plus Delhi, to prove its momentum towards national power is intact.

Rao, they say, must win one and probably two to stave off challenges from within Congress, where there is a growing feeling that the party cannot win the next general elections due in 1996 with him at the helm.

Meanwhile PTI adds: West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, launched a frontal attack against the BJP saying that growth of a communal party, like the BJP, would only lead to

the breakup of the country.

Addressing an election rally for the Howrah Municipal polls here yesterday, Basu said the BJP which was propagating religious fanaticism, was out to divide the people on religious lines.

The Chief Minister alleged that the Congress (I) had a tacit understanding with the BJP during the last Panchayat elections in the state and said that the Congress (I) had not fielded candidates in 15,000 seats out of a total of 61,000 seats, "apparently" to help the BJP.

The Congress (I) which calls itself a secular party is objecting to communal forces at all levels—the centre and the state. Despite being a big party, Congress (I) is disorganised and devoid of principles and ideals," he added.

Referring to the BJP's victory in the Howrah Municipal polls, Basu said the Congress (I) had left the field to the BJP to ensure its victory, which he termed as "shameful and disastrous."

Off the Record

For insisting on having daytime sex

MANILA: A 35-year-old woman cut off her drunken husband's penis because he insisted on having daytime sex with her, the government-run Philippines News Agency reported Tuesday, says AP.

The agency said the incident took place Sunday in the central city of Cebu, about 576 kilometers (360 miles) south of Manila.

It said Avelina Rule repeatedly fought off her husband Avelino's advances because she felt uncomfortable having sex with children in the house.

However, the husband went into a rage, stripped himself naked and then came back to their room brandishing a 12-inch kitchen knife.

During the scuffle, Mrs Rule grabbed the knife and hacked off his penis, the agency said.

Doctors were unable to reattach the organ, the agency quoted hospital officials as saying.

Police said Rule refused to file charges against his wife.

Confusion on Sultan's stay

SEATTLE: So just where did the Sultan of Brunei stay during his visit here for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation gathering? It depends on who you ask, reports AP.

The Alexis Hotel said Sultan Hassanah Bolkiyah, the world's richest man, chose its accommodations during his visit from Thursday evening until Saturday.

The Four Seasons Olympic Hotel said it had the Sultan listed as an "officially registered guest," although a spokeswoman wouldn't say whether that meant he actually stayed there.

A State Department official Monday said the 37 billion dollars man slept at both establishments.

"He arrived on Thursday and spent the first night at the Four Seasons," said the State Department's Chris Runckel, who ran the APEC Support Office in Seattle. "He was at the Alexis Friday, and out of (Seattle) Saturday."

Not so, said Stan Kott, Alexis' general manager, who said the Sultan stayed only at his hotel during the APEC conference.

"The State Department can state what they want to state. We were there so we pretty much know what was going on," Kott said. "He was here for two nights and both nights he stayed at our hotel. The Sultan made the Alexis his official residence and everyone had a good time."

200 wild elephants to be trained

JAKARTA: The Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) in the southern Lampung region of Sumatra will catch and train more than 200 wild elephants, the Antara news agency said Tuesday reports AP.

Jodi Mochtar, BKSDA head in Lampung, said the agency had been authorised by the forest ministry to catch 215 wild elephants in Lampung forests over the next five years.

He added that the elephants' habitat had been shrinking as a result of clearing for settlements for the government's transmigration resettlement programme.

As their natural habitat has shrunk, the elephants frequently go out of the forest and destroy agricultural fields in the transmigration area," Mochtar said.

He said BKSDA would start catching wild elephants next year and expected to catch a total of 215 elephants in five years.

US takes 'new approach' to Korean N-dispute

WASHINGTON, Nov 23: President Clinton said Monday his administration has developed a "new approach" to resolving a dispute with North Korea over its nuclear programme, reports AP.

Clinton said he would discuss the new strategy on Tuesday in a White House meeting with South Korean President Kim Young Sam, whose country has been locked in a tense standoff with the North since the end of the Korean war 40 years ago.

"Our administration has been working on a new approach to deal with this issue," Clinton said at a White House news conference. He offered no details. He said he intended to announce the new policy after the Kim meeting on Tuesday.

Administration officials speaking on condition of anonymity said Monday the main change in the US approach was to offer to engage North Korea in a broader range of discussions if it, in turn,

agreed to permit outside inspections of its nuclear programme.

North Korea, whose economy is crumbling, is mainly interested in US diplomatic recognition and winning access to Western trade and investment capital. It insists that its nuclear programme is strictly for peaceful purposes.

The United States also apparently will insist, initially, on only a limited inspection of North Korea's nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It eventually would press for a fuller monitoring system.

The administration also apparently will agree to suspend plans for holding the US-South Korean military exercise known as Team Spirit in 1994 if North Korea accepts the limited nuclear inspections and agrees to hold talks with South Korea.

The Team Spirit exercise would be dropped, with the understanding that it could be revived at short notice.



Members of the Kennedy family, including (L-R) Rep/ Joseph Kennedy, his wife Elizabeth Kennedy, Victoria Reggie, wife of Sen. Edward Kennedy and Sen. Edward Kennedy, kneel Monday at the eternal flame marking the grave of the late President John F Kennedy, who was shot to death in Dallas, Texas, 30 years ago. — AFP photo

Israel admits Black September killings

JERUSALEM, Nov 23: Israel has acknowledged for the first time that 10 to 15 leading PLO figures were assassinated in the 1970s on the orders of then-Prime Minister Golda Meir, reports AP.

The members of Black September were assassinated after their group killed 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics at Munich, said Gen. Aharon Yariv, Meir's adviser at that time, in a television interview broadcast Monday.

"The idea was not revenge, although there was revenge, but the idea was to wipe out this thing," Yariv said.

Yariv said the results justified the assassinations.

"A mission was undertaken, consciously, to wipe out, kill the heads of Black September. Then they stopped, in a conscious way, their actions overseas against Jews and Israelis," he said.

Black September, named for the bloody 1970 expulsion of PLO followers from Jordan,

Taiwan urges China to set aside political disputes

TAIPEI (Taiwan), Nov 23: Taiwan appealed to China Tuesday to set aside political disputes and focus on resolving day-to-day problems resulting from their blossoming unofficial ties, reports AP.

"Since we cannot reach a consensus," on who represents China, "the best way is to set aside our disputes for now," said Huang Kun-hwei, chairman of the government Mainland Affairs Council that handles relations with China.

"We should instead concentrate on resolving problems ... to help guide our relations to a good outcome," Huang said in a statement.

The appeal came after the long-running rivalry between the two Chinas was highlighted anew at President Clinton's Asian summit in Seattle.

China considers Taiwan a renegade province, while both claim to be the sole legitimate ruler of all China.

At the one-week forum in Seattle that ended Saturday, Taiwan was represented by Vincent Siew, a Cabinet-level economic official, Beijing having objected to the attendance of Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui.

In line with Taiwan's ban on political contacts with China, Siew did not speak to Chinese President Jiang Zemin when they shook hands.

Jiang sparked uproar in Taiwan by declaring at a Seattle news conference that "Taiwan is a part of the People's Republic of China." This appeared to depart from standard Beijing policy of simply calling it "a part of China," which Taiwan takes to

connote historical China, not necessarily the communist era.

Taiwan's economic minister, Chiang Pin-kun, compounded the furor by retorting that Taiwan and China "are two sovereign states and neither is subordinate to the other."

Some saw this as a departure from the official line agreed by Taipei and Beijing — that regardless of who is the legitimate government, there is only one China.

The Foreign Ministry, apparently anxious to cool tempers on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, issued a statement Monday reaffirming the "one-China policy."

Returning to Taiwan, Siew said the "two-China" statement was merely a riposte to Jiang and did not mean Taiwan was abandoning the quest for reunification with the mainland.

Last April, Taiwan and China held unofficial talks for the first time to resolve problems arising from trade and other civilian exchanges, which have flourished under the pragmatic leadership of President Lee.

The last round of talks bogged down earlier this month over extradition of mainland hijackers and other disputes, but China has proposed to continue the talks next month in China.

The issue of Taiwan's status tests the political wisdom of leaders of both sides," the China Times editorialised.

The Seattle gathering "opened a new era," it said. "If the decision-makers cannot come up with new ways of thinking in addressing the issue, they will lose the chance to write a new chapter in history."

BRIEFLY

Palestinian dies in WB: A Palestinian blew himself to pieces yesterday trying to build a bomb in a house on the occupied West Bank, Palestinian sources said, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Abdel Abed Al-Razaq Shihada died in the explosion which brought down part of the building near the Trans-Judaean highway west of Hebron.

Serbs kill 4 children: A Serb shelling attack killed three children who were sledding in the snow in Sarajevo on Monday, Bosnian state radio reported, Reuter says from Sarajevo.

The three children were playing in the city centre on a slope near the French United Nations military base when a shell landed, the radio report said. Two other children were also injured in the attack, one seriously.

The shelling came from a Bosnian Serb position at about 5 pm.

4 Muslims held in Indonesia: An Indonesian court has jailed four surviving members of a Muslim sect, three of them women, four months after police and troops stormed their hide away in west Java, Reuter reports from Jakarta.

Five members of the reclusive sect, known as Haur Kuning or Yellow Damboos, were killed after the raid in July. A sect member had earlier killed a police officer who visited the headquarters of the 20-strong group.

The women, two of them aged 15 and 18, were jailed for four months for resisting arrest while the man was jailed for seven months for assaulting security officers, a Majalengka court official said yesterday.

Maoists kill 4 cops in India: Maoist guerrillas blasted a police vehicle with a landmine and opened up with guns in a western Indian village, killing four policemen, the Press Trust of India said yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

The ambush took place in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra state when the six-member police team was travelling through a forest area, the news agency said.

An officer and three constables were killed in the attack blamed on Naxalite guerrillas, who carried away the police weapons. Two constables survived.

Dallas pays eternal tribute to the memory of Kennedy

DALLAS, Nov 23: With an assassin's nest as a bleak backdrop, Dallas unveiled a simple but eternal tribute to the memory of slain President John F Kennedy, reports AP.

Twin fighter jets thundered low above Dealey Plaza and a flock of white doves fluttered skyward Monday—at the exact moment of the assassination 30 years ago on November 22, 1963.

In 1963, a lock atop the Texas School Book Depository recorded the time as a sniper on the sixth floor opened fire on the motorcade, killing Kennedy and wounding Gov John Connally.

In 1993, Connally's widow, Nellie, slipped a black drape from a plaque marking the sloping, sunwept plaza as a National Historic Landmark.

"Thirty years ago, fate brought me here as an unwilling player in the most unforgettable tragic drama of our time," Mrs Connally told thousands of spectators and dignitaries.

Some choked back tears: Others wept openly.

"Now," she continued, "Three decades later, we are gathered not to look back with grief, but to look forward with hope."

"Many of us share our own indelible memories of that awful hour, but today we recognise the lasting place this site will forever have in our nation's history."

Sen Edward Kennedy and other family members and friends marked the day with visits to JFK's grave at Arlington National Cemetery in

5 ex-guards file lawsuit against Jackson

LOS ANGELES, Nov 23: Five former security guards for Michael Jackson have sued the entertainer, claiming they were fired for "firsthand personal knowledge" of the superstar's alleged "nighttime visits with young boys," reports AP.

Reached after the suit was filed late Monday, Jackson's publicist Lee Solters said only, "I have no comment to make about that."

Jackson's civil attorney Bertram Fields said he hadn't seen the latest lawsuit, but added, "You can be sure that the lawsuit will be defended."

"Nobody was ever fired by Jackson for knowing too much about anything. If they were laid off, it was for an entirely different reason," he said.

Jackson is under criminal investigation following allegations he molested a 13-year-old boy. Jackson has not been charged with any criminal wrongdoing. The boy filed a civil suit.

Benazir to reinstate sacked state workers

ISLAMABAD, Nov 23: The cabinet of Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto decided on Monday to reinstate thousands of state workers summarily sacked three years ago, a government spokesman said, reports Reuters.

He said they were dismissed from government departments and state-run corporations after then President Ghulam Ishaq Khan sacked Bhutto as Prime Minister in August 1990 on disputed charges of misuse.

An interim government set up later said the employees were given jobs by Bhutto's government for political considerations rather than merit.

Pak army taking a back-seat to let civilians rule

KARACHI, Nov 23: Pakistan's men in khaki have ruled the country for most of its 45 years of independence, now they appear to be willing to take a back-seat and let civilians run the show, reports IPS.

To many in Pakistan, the October elections for national and provincial assemblies was proof that the generals, while still exerting behind the stage influence over the political process, do not for the moment crave over power.

After decades of dividing and ruling politicians and ethnic groups, the military seems to have finally come of age and is committed (at least publicly) to a stable civilian democracy.

"From 1947 till today, the army has always dominated politics. It has always been

there. But there is a change now, they have realised juntas and martial laws are not fashionable any more," says Imran Aslam, the editor of The News in Karachi.

Even for its very survival, the military now needs a stable civilian political structure committed to economic growth.

But deep suspicions of the army's motives still run deep. Some Pakistanis think the generals have only got more sophisticated in the way they intervene in government.

"The army has always been seen to be a necessary evil in Pakistan. But I don't think it is necessary at all," says vocal human rights campaigner, Asma Jehangir. "The world on the street is that all politicians are dirty. What is not said is

they have been corrupted by the army."

Shireen Rahman of the Karachi weekly magazine Herald agrees: "The army has not settled down, it still exerts considerable power and will continue to call the shots. The generals want everyone to

the cold war when its Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) became the conduit for transfer of billions of dollars worth of western military support for the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviet army.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the

try spends US 3 billion dollars a year on defence — nearly 30 per cent of its budget and the highest per capita in the region.

For the moment, the once-powerful ISI has been revamped and the army should be satisfied if it gets money to pay soldier's salaries. And that can only come with economic growth for which political stability is essential.

The army has recoiled from its past policy of intervention in government. They are more subtle, and the generals know it is better to be king-maker than to be king," says veteran journalist Khalid Ahmed of the Frontier Post newspaper in Lahore.

The recent polls were an outcome of the third army-influenced dismissal of an elected

civilian government by the president and was the result of a bitter political tussle between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

The army finally managed to get Ishaq Khan and Sharif to resign together in June, installed a neutral caretaker government headed by ex-World Bank vice president Moen Qureshi and called for elections — Pakistan's third in five years.

Qureshi took his job seriously, and backed by the military immediately set out to institute the king of economic and political reforms that no civilian government would have dared undertake: Taxing powerful landowners, busting drug barons and hounding loan defaulters.

Kim appeals to DPRK to end Cold War

WASHINGTON, Nov 23: South Korean President Kim Young-Sam on Friday appealed to North Korea to abandon its go-it-alone nuclear policy and "remove the last remnant of Cold War confrontation," reports AP.

The "suspected development of nuclear arms by the North along with other weapons of mass destruction poses a grave threat not only to Northeast Asia but to the peace and safety of the entire world," the president said in a prepared speech at American University.

Clinton said he will discuss the matter Tuesday with Kim during his visit to the White House.

News Analysis

know that if elected officials make a mess, they will always be around to come in to clean it up."

But compared to the limited powers of past military dictators, the role of the military in Pakistani politics is much eroded.

The Pakistani military's importance was magnified during