

Jordan for separate deal with Israel

JERUSALEM, July 30: Jordan's Information Minister said in remarks broadcast today that although his country supported comprehensive peace in the Middle East, it would be prepared to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel, reports Reuter.

"If ... the common agenda between Jordan and Israel is finished, yes, I think we'll be ready to sign a peace treaty," minister Jawad al-Anani told Israel army radio.

Israel and Jordan began peace talks on both sides of their border two weeks ago to discuss an agenda for resolving disputes over their border line and water resources.

Jordan's King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed a declaration on Monday in Washington ending

France begins Rwanda pullout

PARIS, July 30: France began pulling its troops out of Rwanda as scheduled Friday despite urgings by the international community to stay. French officials insisted the troops were being replaced by African soldiers, reports AP.

About 300 soldiers of the 2,500-member force were to leave between Friday and Sunday, and "they are being numerically replaced" by other troops under the UN flag, said a French military spokesman.

Between 180 and 200 troops of Operation Turquoise were being withdrawn "several points in Rwanda," said Catherine Colonna, a French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman.

Five hundred other soldiers, part of a 5,500-member UN force slated for Rwanda, have arrived in recent weeks from Senegal, Chad, Congo and Guinea-Bissau, said Ms. Colonna, adding they were "fully operational."

a 46-year-old state of war between their countries.

They also agreed to hold meetings as often as required with the aim of concluding a peace treaty.

An Israeli official confirmed an Israeli radio report that Hussein had asked Rabin on Friday for another meeting soon.

The King said on Thursday he would send a future peace treaty with Israel to the Jordanian parliament for ratification and hold a referendum if needed.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said on Thursday that Jordan, which has been promised US military aid after ending its state of war with Israel, would not get advanced weapons until it signed a full peace treaty.

Another report says: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators said they were close to an accord on the transfer of civilian powers to Palestinians in the West Bank after a third round of talks here on Friday.

But Israeli delegation head General Danny Rotschild warned he saw problems ahead for the Palestinians when it came to financing their new authority.

Rotschild said talks on Thursday were "very good" and the two sides had drawn up "a draft document on the transfer of powers in education and health."

All the document needed was approval from the two sides' leaders, he said.

Top Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath said an "overall document" covering taxation, tourism and social affairs as well as education and health would be examined in talks next week.

Rotschild refused to set a date for the transfer of authority to Palestinians to extend self-rule throughout the West Bank, and said the two sides would try to finalise arrangements as soon as possible.

Indian troops ready to enter Bhutan in pursuit of Bodos

GUWAHATI, India, July 30: Indian troops could enter Bhutan in pursuit of tribal guerrillas who have sought refuge in the Himalayan kingdom after massacring 50 Muslim settlers in the site of Assam, officials said on Friday, reports AFP.

An Indian army spokesman said a brigade-sized strike force was in place in four frontier districts of Assam and the soldiers could move into neighbouring Bhutan if they received the green light from the Indian government.

"We are waiting for clearance from the government to enter Bhutan," he said in the state capital Guwahati.

Indian army troops

Another schoolboy abducted in Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 30: Another young child has been kidnapped in Delhi despite increased police security at schools prompted by a wave of abductions in the Indian capital, newspapers reported today, says Reuter.

They said four-year-old Aman Bhatnagar was kidnapped from outside his nursery school on Friday.

at a refugee camp in Assam's Barpeta district.

A curfew imposed in Barpeta district, amid heightened ethnic tension, was lifted on Friday.

The army spokesman declined to specify the number of soldiers who could be used in pursuit of the Bodo militants, but army sources said the entire brigade, or about 1,100 men, would not cross the border into the tiny kingdom.

The army spokesman said the tribal militants were believed to have sought shelter in the foothills of the isolated Himalayan territory ruled by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk. Since Sunday's massacre, the army's anti-militant crack-

down has led to the arrests of 15 suspected Bodo militants, the army spokesman said.

Brigadier B S Grewal, the commander of the army's anti-rebel operations in Assam, said meanwhile that the number of Bodo guerrillas believed to be hiding in Bhutan is around 200.

Militants from the Bodo tribe are fighting for a separate state to be carved out of oil and mineral rich Assam. Bodo tribesmen killed 22 Muslim settlers in May.

India is Bhutan's main benefactor and Indian architects, engineers and doctors, mostly from the army, are present in large numbers in the country.

Off the Record



Issa, a two-day old African elephant is protected by her mother, Shara, as she goes on show to the public at Howletts Wild Animal Park in Britain on Friday. Issa is one of the four African elephants born at Howletts, producing half the elephants born in Europe. — AFP photo

Price for philandering

MANILA: A Philippine seamstress snipped off her husband's penis with a pair of scissors on Saturday and said he deserved it.

"I'm ready to face charges, I'm also ready to fight for my rights," Gona Espina, 21, told Reuters when contacted in a Manila city jail where she was being held. "He deserved what I did to him because he has been abusing me for so long."

Espina said she agreed to stay with her husband, Donald Jacolo, despite learning two years into their marriage that his first marriage had not been annulled.

"But there is a limit to everything. The last straw for me was to catch him philandering with another female worker at the dress shop," Espina claimed.

Early Saturday while her husband slept in a motel where they had checked into discuss their marriage problems, Espina said she snipped off his penis and threw it onto the floor.

Jacolo woke up to find himself bleeding and called security to apprehend his wife. He immediately sought medical help to re-attach his severed penis but the doctors failed.

Jacolo told a local radio station later he would press charges against Espina.

The worst and the best

NEW YORK: This is all you need to know about the worst boss in the United States of America: She "draws childish pictures of people she fires, tapes them to their empty chair and makes fun of them," reports AP.

An entry like this made it easy to select the 1994 winner in Jim Miller's second annual hunt for the country's most despicable boss. Miller, who wrote the management how-to book, "The Corporate Coach," invited American workers to tell him about their bosses.

After sifting through 1,028 entries, he found a winner — from an employee who remains an underling of her cruel leader and is understandably writing anonymously.

"I think she's the worst boss in the world. I really do," said the winner, who is surreptitiously seeking a new job. "I didn't get everything down that I'd like to say — just the most important, about what a rotten person she is."

Some of her boss attributes, which were listed in a Top 21 format when a Top 10 proved insufficient:

- "She has the tongue of a viper, dripping wit venom"
- "Fires people on Christmas Eve."
- "Waits until people are due raises, then fires them."

For enduring her job beneath Ms Scrooge, the winning entrant has earned a trip for two to Hawaii worth 6,000 dollars. "This is the best thing in the world, for me to just laugh with people about her," the winner said by telephone.

Miller also selected the best boss in America from a much smaller pool of entries (the worst-boss folks outnumbered the best-boss bunch 4-1).

The best boss — Arthur Dunn, who works for Motorola in Massachusetts — was described as a patient listener, fair, far-sighted, intelligent... you get the idea.

The employee who nominated him, Jim Limperis of Seekonk, Massachusetts, also collected a two-week Hawaiian vacation.

Lord Owen hints at tougher sanctions against Serbs

LONDON, July 30: European Union Envoy Lord Owen said today that tougher sanctions and firmer military action may be necessary following the Bosnian Serbs' rejection of an international peace plan for former Yugoslavia, reports Reuter.

"The Bosnian Serbs are showing an intransigence which is forcing the international community to face up to the possibility of having to take firmer military action," Owen told British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio.

He added that unless the Serbs changed their position about the peace proposal stronger sanctions would also be necessary.

"I hope these measures will be more closely directed to be more closely directed to the Bosnian Serbs," Owen said.

Owen did not suggest lifting a UN arms embargo against Bosnia's Muslim but he said that issue would have to be faced soon and it could mean withdrawing British, and UN troops.

"I don't think myself you could continue to run a normal peace-keeping operation while we were arming the Bosnian Muslims," he said.

Nigeria denies visas to 4 US Congressmen

WASHINGTON, July 30: Nigeria has denied visas to four members of Congress who had planned to deliver a letter from President Clinton to Nigerian leader General Sani Abacha, the head of the US delegation said on Friday, reports Reuter.

The Nigerian government's action is another indication of repression by the Abacha military dictatorship against their own people," representative Donald Payne, a New Jersey Democrat, said.

He gave no details on what Clinton's letter said.

Payne said Nigeria's ambassador had approved the trip by four members of the Congressional Black Caucus but the Nigerian government denied visas for it.

Payne said he understood from the State Department that Nigeria's foreign minister overruled the ambassador because the Clinton administration has restricted travel to the United States by Nigerian military officials as a result of slow progress toward civilian rule in Nigeria.

The House of Representatives approved a resolution on Monday sponsored by Payne that supported the restriction on travel by Nigerian officials and condemned what it called human rights abuses in Nigeria.



Office-worker holds up traffic in New Delhi on Saturday as he gropes for his briefcase under swirling water on a main city street. A heavy monsoon downpour caused flight delays, disrupted rail and road traffic in the Indian capital. — AFP photo

Benazir asks police to disarm ethnic groups in Karachi

KARACHI, July 30: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto spent this week getting reacquainted with her troubled hometown of Karachi, a city where few people have electricity but most own guns, reports AP.

A week of feuding between militant Shiite and Sunni Muslim groups has given rise to sectarian hit squads. At least six well-known Shiite or Sunni activists have been gunned down.

Profit-driven crime is also soaring.

On Thursday, heavily-armed bandits pinned down dozens of police in a three-hour gunbattle. One police officer was killed and several others were wounded, but all the criminals escaped, according to police officials.

"The city is collapsing" said Iqbal Ahmed, an academic and political analyst. "Nothing works."

Benazir was appalled when she quietly visited some of the city's poorest areas, state-run media reported.

She stormed back to her fortress-style home in Karachi's posh Clifton area and called meeting of city administrators and Sindh provincial politicians demanding to know how things got so bad.

Ms Bhutto called for a police sweep of the city to try to disarm its warring ethnic and religious groups and deport troublesome illegal immigrants.

An estimated 1.5 million illegal immigrants, mostly from Bangladesh, Iran and India, have flooded into this city of 9 million searching for jobs. Many have brought their old rivalries with them.

But police say the job is difficult because the criminals are better armed than they are.

The criminals have rocket-propelled grenade launchers and weapons equipped with sophisticated infrared night sights, according to police officers who refused to be further identified.

Bhutto, ordered municipal workers to clean up the streets, build highways that bypass the city centre and replace archaic electrical systems.

She warned that Pakistan's economic survival depended on Karachi, the industrial and manufacturing heart of this

impoverished nation of 120 million people.

"Karachi is the key to Pakistan's economic life," said Habib Charinia, a member of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "When Karachi comes to a standstill the entire country suffers."

One of the largest port cities on the Indian subcontinent, Karachi brings in 80 per cent of Pakistan's tax revenue.

Razia Bhatti, an editor of the monthly English language magazine, Newsline, painted a bleak picture of the city's future.

7 killed as Kashmiris, Indian troops clash

SRINAGAR, July 30: An indefinite strike ordered by Muslim militants to protest the arrest of their top leaders paralysed normal life today in Kashmir, witnesses and officials said, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, seven people died and 20 houses were gutted today during a fierce gun battle between Muslim rebels and Indian troops in the Kashmiri town of Sopore, 55 kilometers (33 miles) north from Srinagar, police sources said.

Police said the blaze engulfed 20 houses during the battle which erupted after Muslim militants opened fire on a security patrol in Sopore.

Further details of the incident were not immediately available.

In Srinagar, government offices, banks, shops and schools shut down on Friday in line with the strike called jointly by

the outlawed Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and the Islamic Students League (ISL).

Private vehicles went off the streets and residents stayed indoors as the general strike took hold in Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital and urban hub of an anti-Indian rebellion raging in the Himalayan region.

The JKLF and the ISL separatist groups have warned that the indefinite strike would last until the release of their leaders. They have also demanded the withdrawal of Indian troops from a sacred Muslim shrine in Srinagar.

JKLF leader Yasin Malik, Shakeel Ahmad Bakshi, leader of the banned ISL, and 11 other Muslim separatist leaders were arrested late Thursday during a protest at Kashmir's holiest Islamic shrine, the Hazratbal Mosque.

BRIEFLY

King Hussein in London: King Hussein of Jordan arrived in London on Friday for talks on the Middle East peace agreement, an informed source said, AFP reports from London.

Hussein is expected to meet British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd to discuss the agreement signed in Washington this week with Israel.

King Hussein, accompanied by his wife Queen Noor, arrived in his private jet. He is expected to return to Jordan early next week.

Drugs seized in Argentina, 2 held: A man and a woman were arrested and more than 52 kilograms of cocaine seized during a routine inspection on Friday in the Monte Grande City of the Buenos Aires Province, police said, Xinhua reports from Buenos Aires.

The drug was hidden inside a truck adapted to transport glass panels. The truck had a breakdown and was parked on a street, said the Lomas de Zamora Court judge Alberto Santa Marina.

Police spokesmen estimated the cocaine weight at approximately 52 kilograms, though the Justice Department official said the figure could be revised after the substance is weighed correctly.

5 hanged in Singapore: A Nigerian was among two people hanged for drug trafficking at Changi Prison at dawn on Friday, a prisons spokesman said yesterday, AFP reports from Singapore.

Chief Hycient Ihejirika, 59, from Lagos, was convicted of trafficking 2.7 kilograms (5.9 pounds) of heroin on June 6, 1991. He was arrested by narcotics officers who trailed him from the airport to a hotel.

The other person hanged for a drug offence was a local, Samsuri Mohamed Yus, 42, a taxi driver, convicted for possession of 2.99 kilograms (6.6 pounds) of cannabis. He was sentenced to death in May last year and lost his appeal in November this year. Three murders, all locals, were also hanged on Friday morning.

12 die in Vietnamese ferry capsizes: Twelve people, including eight children, were killed in a collision between a barge and a ferry this week in the northern Vietnamese province of Quang Ninh, a press report said yesterday, AFP reports from Hanoi.

Twenty other passengers survived after they managed to swim ashore after their ferry, the "Cuu Long 09," sank in Wednesday's accident on the Nam Trieu River, the Communist Party Daily Nhan Dan said.

Authorities have launched an inquiry to determine the cause of the tragedy. The day before the incident, a similar collision had left six dead and 20 missing in the Red River near Hanoi.

UN asks Burundian parties to reach settlement

UNITED NATIONS, July 30: The Security Council warned of a potentially explosive situation in Burundi, urging all parties in the African country "to reach rapidly a settlement based on democratic principles," reports AFP.

In a statement adopted on consensus, the Council condemned "those extremist elements who continue to reject the ongoing negotiations and seek to block progress towards a peaceful settlement."

It voiced support for the current political dialogue aimed at reaching an agreement on presidential succession. The president was killed in the suspicious April 6 plane crash in Kigali that also killed Rwanda's leader.

The Council added that it was "alarmed by the recent violence in Bujumbura" and "demands that all parties cease immediately any incitement to violence or ethnic hatred."

Clinton orders troops to provide security at Kigali airport

WASHINGTON, July 30: President Clinton ordered 200 US troops to Rwanda's capital Friday to provide airport security for relief flights as part of a broadening US effort to help Rwandan refugees, reports AP.

Mobilising what he called the most difficult rescue mission in decades, Clinton also asked Congress Friday for \$320 million to help Rwandan refugees.

Deputy US Defense Secretary John Deutch said nearly half of the 200 troops will provide security for the other half working to reopen Kigali's airport so that large US cargo planes can land there.

If the Kigali airport operation works successfully, the administration will consider sending additional forces inside Rwanda in the coming weeks, Deutch said.

He declined to say if the military operation in Rwanda could eventually be as large as

the 2,000 soldiers that reportedly have been designated for the new mission.

Deutch said the US forces inside Rwanda will perform only a humanitarian role and would not be involved in the nation's internal strife.

"This is not a slippery slope," he said. "There is no intention whatsoever of making this a peacekeeping mission."

US Secretary of Defense William Perry, who is scheduled to depart Saturday for a weekend inspection of US relief efforts in Rwanda and neighbouring Uganda, said US troops would not be involved in escorting refugees back to their homes and farms.

"The oversight of that operation, the protection and the safety of those people is a function of the UN peacekeeping operation... and that's not part of our mission," Perry said in a taped television interview.

Lawmakers, however, re-

acted cautiously to Clinton's appeal. House and Senate negotiators agreed Friday on a \$50 million package of foreign relief aid for Rwanda.

But the Senate Appropriations Committee voted unanimously to approve only \$170 million of Clinton's request for \$270 million in military spending on the effort, and they specified that none of it was to be used for "security, peace-enforcing, nation-building or any other substantive role."

Committee Chairman Robert C Byrd said Clinton could come to Congress before the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30 to seek the additional \$100 million. He said his committee withheld the money because Clinton had labeled it as a contingency fund for possible later use.

Byrd was a leading critic of the US military role in Somalia last year.



US President Bill Clinton addresses reporters in the White House Briefing Room on Friday about the situation in Rwanda. — AFP photo

Amnesty blasts DPRK for human rights abuses

SEOUL, July 30: Amnesty International rapped North Korea on Saturday for arbitrarily imprisoning tens of thousands of people during the past three decades, reports AP.

North Korea regularly tortures its prisoners, said Herve Berger, vice secretary general of Amnesty International. Many of the prisoners have not been charged or convicted, he said.

Berger also criticized South Korea for the imprisonment of some 300 political prisoners and demanded the government repeal its strict national security law, which bans sympathy toward rival North Korea.

Human rights abuses also continue to exist in Indonesia, East Timor, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Pakistan, India, China, Myanmar, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Japan, he said.