

Iraqi diplomats snub Israeli lawmaker

AMMAN, Sept 25: Iraqi diplomats Saturday snubbed an Arab-Israeli lawmaker who wants to visit Baghdad and failed to show up for a scheduled meeting to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace process, reports AP.

The lawmaker, Talab Sanna, told The Associated Press that Iraq's ambassador to Jordan Nouri Elwasey, and other high-ranking diplomats didn't show up at a luncheon banquet as they promised.

"I was informed that the Iraqis were not ready for such an encounter because they regard establishing links with any Israeli as a very sensitive issue," Sanna said.

Iraqi Embassy spokesman Adel Ibrahim denied that Iraqi diplomats 'promised anything to Mr. Sanna or had any contacts with him'.

There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy in the accounts.

Thousands of Haitians dance on the streets in joy

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Sept 25: Haitians by the thousands danced through the capital Saturday, waving green branches for peace in the largest pro-democracy march since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was toppled three years ago, reports AP.

Later, some demonstrators stoned police headquarters, and others were tear-gassed by Haitian police.

The demonstration coincided with a visit by US Defence Secretary William Perry, who came to praise the US soldiers deployed to restore Haiti's elected government.

The march by about 3,000 Aristide supporters through the Cite Soleil slum, which had been terrorised by military-backed gunmen until the arrival of American troops five days ago, showed the swiftly shifting balance of power in this Caribbean nation.

Demonstrators chanted and waved signs reading: 'We Want Aristide.' 'Disarm the Death

Squads,' and 'Army Chief Raoul Cedras Has to Leave.'

Later, away from the American forces, about 100 protesters hurled rocks at the Port-au-Prince police headquarters, a torture site under the military rulers. Protesters dispersed after police with automatic weapons ran out of two-storey building. There were no reports of injuries.

Shortly afterward, about 800 demonstrators yelling 'Cedras must go today!' were tear-gassed by police on a plaza between the Presidential Palace and army headquarters. As the protesters sprinted away, wiping their eyes, blue-uniformed police dragged at least two demonstrators inside the headquarters.

A pregnant woman was kicked in the stomach by a policeman, and plainclothesmen threw rocks at journalists.

US troops are allowed to intervene if they see violence between Haitians, but downtown confrontations were not seen by American forces, a US

military spokesman, Air Force Capt Mike Caldwell, told the Associated Press.

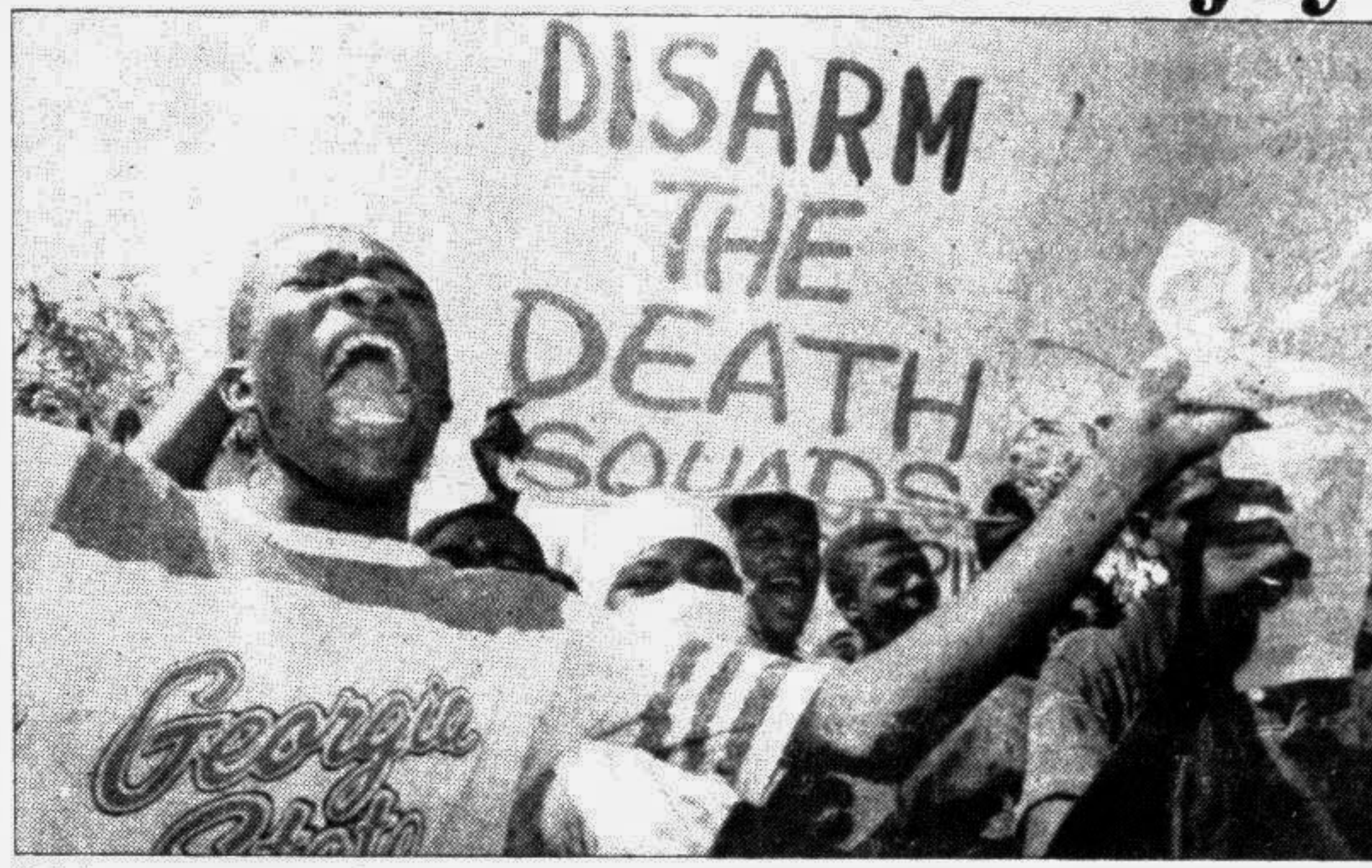
Elsewhere, rallies of joyful Haitians took place in the Bel-Air and downtown areas of the capital.

"I believe that the forces of death can't win over the forces of light," said organiser Johnson Aristide, a grass-roots leader who is no relation to the exiled president.

Crowds cheered a convoy of American military vehicles and followed them toward the airport. The grinning US soldiers seemed stunned by the outpouring of support.

"It's something I've never seen," said Navy Lt Cmdr Robert Pettit of New York, watching the crowd. "It's Fifth Avenue without the glamour."

Parry and Gen John Shalkashvili, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were saluted by the American commander in Haiti, Lt Gen Hugh Shelton, as they arrived at the US-controlled airport Saturday morning.



Haitians supporting exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide chant slogans while displaying signs calling for the disarmament of the country's secret police squads rally in the Port-au-Prince harbour on Saturday.

Fundamentalist shot dead in Gaza City

GAZA CITY, Sept 25: Israeli soldiers shot dead a Muslim fundamentalist who repeatedly plunged a knife into a Jewish teenager as a 'present' for Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin today, military officials said, reports AFP.

"This is a present for Rabin and Arafat," read a leaflet from the Islamic resistance movement Hamas found on the body of the attacker, the official said.

The attack came as PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat met Rabin at the Erez checkpoint into the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli, aged 17, was helicopter to hospital with several "serious" wounds in the neck and back after the attack at the entrance to Neve Dekalim settlement in the south of the strip.

The dead man was named by Palestinian sources as 18-year-old Mustapha Al-Hela, a Hamas member, from the nearby town of Khan Yunes.

BRIEFLY

Museum on Yeltsin proposed:

Residents of the village where Russian President Boris Yeltsin was born are planning a museum devoted to his life. Itar-Tass news agency reported on Saturday, Reuter says from Moscow.

Tass quoted the local Oblastnaya Gazeta newspaper as saying many visitors already came to the village of Butka in the Ural, east of the city of Yekaterinburg. However, there was nobody to receive them, "except enterprising guides who take US dollars for their excursions."

Hotel to be built in Vatican: A riverboat casino operator and hotelier is giving a 132-room hotel to the Roman Catholic Church to lodge cardinals and other church leaders in Vatican City. AP reports from Pittsburgh.

John E. Connelly has a history of large donations to his church and its causes. "It will be for the cardinals to use when they elect the new pope and for the prelates and others in the church at other times," Connelly said Friday.

American kidnapped: Colombian Marxist guerrillas have kidnapped a US citizen in the southwestern province of Cauca, a police official said Saturday, Reuter reports from Bogota.

The official said about 15 armed men dressed in military garb kidnapped the American, identified as Thomas Hargrove, at a makeshift roadblock early Friday just outside the town of Puerto Tejada, more than 150 miles (250 km) southwest of Bogota.

Algeria to buy Russian choppers: Russia recently signed a contract with Algeria to sell 47 Mi-8 helicopters to the north African country, the Interfax news agency reported yesterday. Xinhua says from Moscow.

According to the agreement, all 47 helicopters will be delivered to Algeria within nine months. The Ulan-Ude corporation of Russia produces the Mi-8 military aircraft.

12 executed in China: Twelve people have been executed in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong for murder and economic crimes, newspapers said yesterday, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The Yangcheng Evening News said at least three were executed on Saturday in Guangzhou. One of the men killed a sleeping prostitute with axe blows to the head and chest after discovering he did not have the money to pay her, it said.

Swiss go to referendum: The Swiss cast their final votes yesterday in a referendum on whether to approve a government plan to outlaw racial discrimination, racist propaganda and denial of the Nazi holocaust, Reuter reports from Zurich.

The outcome was hard to predict as the last opinion poll, published in the newspaper Sonntagszeitung on August 28, showed 41 per cent were undecided, 51 per cent were in favour, and eight per cent were against.

State polls begin in Bavaria: State elections began in Bavaria yesterday the last test of public opinion before national polls on October 16 when Chancellor Helmut Kohl's centre-right coalition is standing for a fourth term, Reuter reports from Munich, Germany.

Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) will be watching Bavaria closely to see whether their troubled coalition partners, the Liberal Free Democrats (FDP), continue a year-old series of six state and European election losses.

4 shot dead in S Africa: Four people were killed and six wounded when gunmen fired at random on people waiting at a communal taxi rank in the black township of Soweto, southwest of Johannesburg, police said Saturday, AFP reports from Johannesburg.

A police spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Herman Oosthuizen, said two gunmen, one armed with an AK-47 assault rifle and the other with a 9-millimeter pistol "went past and just started shooting" at people at the taxi rank in the huge township's Baragwanath section.

Fire raze French fish centre: Fire destroyed late Saturday a 30 million franc (six million dollar) fish distribution centre in the channel port, Boulogne, one of the most modern in Europe, fire services said, AFP reports from France.

There were no casualties, the centre having closed for the weekend and few hours beforehand.

8 drug traffickers killed: Eight drug traffickers were killed and 250 kg (550 lb) of opium seized in an armed clash with police in southeastern Iran on Saturday, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported, Reuter says from Nicosia.

It quoted the commander of special anti-drug security forces, Hussein Mahmoudi, as saying the eight were killed in the mountainous Kerman province and that the police seized rocket propelled grenades, a rifle and 10,000 bullets.

4 die in Indonesian air crash: The death toll from the crash of an Indonesian transport airplane rose to four Sunday as divers recovered another body from the wreckage in Hong Kong harbour, the government reported, AP reports from Hong Kong.

A statement said the latest victim, whose name was not disclosed, was found in the wrecked fuselage of the L100-30 Hercules, which crashed into the sea Friday shortly after taking off for Jakarta.

Floods claim 24 in Vietnam: Floods have killed 24 people in the southern Vietnamese province of An Giang, the official Evening News daily reported yesterday taking the nationwide death toll in recent flooding to more than 50, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

About 1,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes because of rising river waters in An Giang, west of Ho Chi Minh city on the border with Cambodia.

Serbs harass peacekeepers

UN forces in Bosnia put on alert

SARAJEVO, Sept 25: Serbs harassed UN peacekeepers throughout Bosnia on Saturday, and UN forces throughout Bosnia were put on increased alert following warning of a Serb attack, reports AP.

Bosnian Serbs delayed aid convoys, grounded helicopter flights and shut down the air-borne lifeline to Sarajevo.

The Serbs' moves appeared to be in response to the NATO air strike on a Serb tank near Sarajevo on Thursday, in retaliation for attacks on French peacekeepers. Bosnian Serb leaders had warned the NATO strike would not go unanswered.

On Saturday, Lt. Gen. Ratko

Mladic, the Bosnian Serb commander, threatened to strike a UN target after 8 pm (1800 GMT), said Maj. Koos Sol, a UN military spokesman. He acknowledged the Serbs had issued a kind of ultimatum.

UN forces remained on special alert beyond the deadline, which passed with no immediate attack.

In Sarajevo, flights were suspended after the Bosnian Serbs warned they could not guarantee their safety. Bosnian Serb pot-shots taken at two aircraft Friday — the planes were not hit — seemed to underline that threat.

Bosnian Serbs on Saturday held up clearances for all UN convoys going through territory they control and suspended flight clearances of UN helicopters throughout Bosnia.

It was not clear whether a three-day standoff between peacekeepers and Serbs at Rogatica had been resolved Saturday. Beginning Thursday, Serbs refused to allow a UN convoy to leave for the nearby Muslim enclave of Gorazde after its British commander refused a Serb demand to search private mail.

The suspension of the humanitarian airlift, along with the blockage of relief normally coming to Muslim-dominated

regions by road, demonstrated the control Bosnian Serbs exercise even in the one-third of the republic they do not hold.

With Sarajevans left without natural gas, electricity and running water for the 10th day Saturday — Serbs control utilities into the city — the suspension of the airlift added to the psychological pressure on residents.

"They (Serbs) started creating problems," said Maj. Herve Gourmelon, another UN military spokesman, of the obstacles encountered by the United Nations. "It is not a good situation today. I hope tomorrow will be better."

Egypt charges 1220 extremists for 50 attacks

CAIRO, Sept 25: Egyptian authorities have charged a total of 1,220 suspected Islamic militants in connection with 50 attacks committed by the fundamentalist Jamaa Islamiya group, the Al Gumburiya daily reported today, says AFP.

The arrests were made following the shooting by the police here five months ago of the head of the organisation's military wing, Talaat Yasmin Hammam and the discovery of intelligence concerning its membership.

7 gunned down in Goma

GOMA, Zaire, Sept 25: Seven people were killed in shootings in this town crowded with Rwandan refugees after Zairian soldiers started robbing local residents, the United Nations said Sunday, reports AP.

The shootings Saturday night did not appear to involve the 1.2 million Rwandans who fled across the border into this Zairian town on the banks of Lake Kivu, said Lyndall Sachs, spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

It wasn't clear whether the shooting victims were soldiers or civilians. Sachs said "a couple of girls were involved."

Burundi fears ethnic hatreds

BUJUMBURA, Burundi, Sept 25: Burundi is threatened by the same ethnic hatreds that brought the bloodbath in Rwanda. But because its northern neighbour exploded so violently, Burundi may not, reports AP.

While an estimated 500,000 Rwandans were slaughtered after a suspicious plane crash killed both countries' presidents in April, Burundians confined most of their hostilities to endless arguments over jobs.

Adams starts tour to build US support

BOSTON, Sept 25: Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has begun a two-week US tour aimed at building American support for a peace settlement in Northern Ireland palatable to Irish republicans, reports AP.

Adams said Sinn Fein, the Irish Republican Army's political organisation, would consider a coalition government with the British, who currently rule Northern Ireland as a province.

But the Irish "have the intelligence and the wit and the right to govern ourselves, whatever we decide," he said.

US Senator Edward M. Kennedy joined Adams at a news conference when he arrived Saturday in Boston, which has one of the largest populations of Irish Americans in the United States.



The newly crowned Miss South Africa Basetsane Makgalelele celebrates her victory, flanked by her 1st princess Sonia Kempff (R) and 2nd princess Helen Macleod at Sun City on Saturday, after the final results of the contest.

DPRK threatens to unfreeze nuclear programme

SEOUL, Sept 25: Accusing the United States of treating it like Haiti, North Korea threatened Sunday to unfreeze its disputed nuclear programme if Washington applies military pressure, reports AP.

"If the United States acts recklessly, slighting (North Korea) as it does a small island in the Caribbean, it will have to pay dearly for this," said a Foreign Ministry statement carried by North Korea's official news agency.

It claimed "US military hard-line conservatives" were trying to put military pressure on North Korea through naval maneuvers off the Korean coast. US authorities say the exercises that began last week are routine.

The statement said the so-called conservatives, "puffed

up with conceit over the Haiti situation, are now trying to obstruct" US-North Korean talks on the nuclear issue.

"This is really a 'polish act,'" it said. The statement said US "threats" would leave North Korea no choice "but to rescind the step of temporary freezing of our nuclear activities."

North Korea has suspended its nuclear programme while negotiating for a supply of nuclear power sources that don't produce material for atomic weapons.

The statement was issued shortly after the latest round of talks ended in Geneva Saturday. On Sunday, the official news agency carried a fresh version with changes of style but not of content.

Progress appeared to have slowed at Saturday's talks, and a US official said North Korea retreated from previously agreed positions.

North Korea insists its nuclear programme is peaceful, but some US analysts believe it has produced at least one atomic weapon.

South Korea is willing to fund most of the cost of a new, safer nuclear reactor, provided it gets to supply it. But North Korea is refusing to accept a reactor from its rival.

Yonhap, the South Korean news agency, quoted a government official as saying Sunday his government would pay US three billion dollars 70 to 80 per cent of the total expense, over a 10-year period to build the reactor.



Gerry Adams (L), president of Sinn Fein, and US Senator Ted Kennedy speak to reporters at a press conference at Boston's Logan International Airport on Saturday.

S Arabia denies reports of arrests, disorder

DUBAI, Sept 25: Saudi Arabia said opposition reports of arrests and disorder in the Kingdom were "lies and misleading information," reports Reuter.

The official Saudi press agency quoted Prince Ahmad Bin Abdul-Aziz, Deputy Interior Minister, as saying on Saturday when asked about the reports: "Saudi citizens are familiar with what is going on and this is enough as far as we are concerned."

As for the outside world there are many lies and misleading information by one quarter or the other who have their own goals, and those have become boring and incredible," he said.

"This is an open country,

its citizens know what is going on the reality is known by those who are rational and genuine," he said. "This country will remain released as long as its citizens follow the holy book and their wise leadership which is acting in accordance with public interest."

Saudi interior minister, Prince Nayef Bin Abdul-Aziz, said on Wednesday there was "complete security" in the Kingdom.

Diplomats in the Kingdom said recent reports of disturbances and mass arrests in Saudi Arabia were exaggerated and there was no danger to foreigners, although the British and US embassies advised their nations to be cautious.

Off the Record

Hillary christens Columbia

GROTON: On the third swing of a bottle of sparkling water, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton christened the nuclear-attack submarine Columbia on Saturday and sent it gliding into the Thames River, reports AP.

The Columbia made its voyage down a ramp greased with a mix of paraffin and beeswax — the last launching by a method called sliding, which has been made obsolete by new construction methods.

Hillary, addressing 22,000 thousand dignitaries, military officers and workers at the Electric Boat Shipyard, said the type of teamwork required to build the sub is what her husband hopes will inspire all Americans.

"Every one of you knows your work cannot be sloppy," Hillary Clinton said. "You gave us important lessons."

The sub will remain in the river, with occasional jaunts out to sea, for about a year for tests.

Schoolgirls gangraped

JOHANNESBURG: A gang of youths that forced 12 girls to get off a school bus in a black township raped six of them, the girls told police. The other six were missing, reports AP.

The attack occurred after midnight Friday in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg, when the bus was returning the girls aged 15 to 18 from a school outing, said police Lt. Col. Herman Oosthuizen.

About 30 youths, some armed with handguns, stopped the bus and took the 12 girls off, he said.

The driver notified police, and a search of the area found six of the girls who said they had been raped. Oosthuizen said the whereabouts of the other six girls were unknown, and that three youths had been arrested.

Also Saturday, police said two attackers opened fire with an automatic rifle and a pistol at a busy taxi stand in Soweto, the black township, southwest of Johannesburg, killing four people and wounding six.

"They went past and just started shooting," Oosthuizen said, adding police believed the attack was part of a turf war between rival taxi operators.

Algeria toughens stand against FIS leaders

ALGIERS, Sept 25: Government and Muslim fundamentalist officials offered conciliatory words to restart talks on ending a bloody insurgency. But authorities toughened their stand against militant leaders Saturday by offering a bounty for their capture, reports AP.

Authorities announced a reward of 3 million dinars (85,000 dollar) for the capture of Said Makhlouf, one of the two chiefs of the Islamic Salvation Army, the armed wing of the Salvation Front, said an official source speaking on condition of anonymity Saturday.

The capture of Salvation Army's No. 2 man, Abdelkader Chebouh had a bounty of 2 million dinars (55,000 dollar), the

source said. The government was offering 2.5 million dinars (70,000 dollar) for the capture of Charif Gousmi, head of the Armed Islamic Group, or his assistant, Kamel Zitouni.

The president's spokesman was on TV Friday, referring to the still-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and calling for elections. A government newspaper Saturday reported daily meetings by Front leaders released from prison, and a Front spokesman soberly called for a "solution to the crisis."

The gestures came after a fourth round of talks between the military-backed government and five legal opposition parties ended Tuesday without a final communique or another meeting date.