

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 Elwayes, 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

PORTE-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."

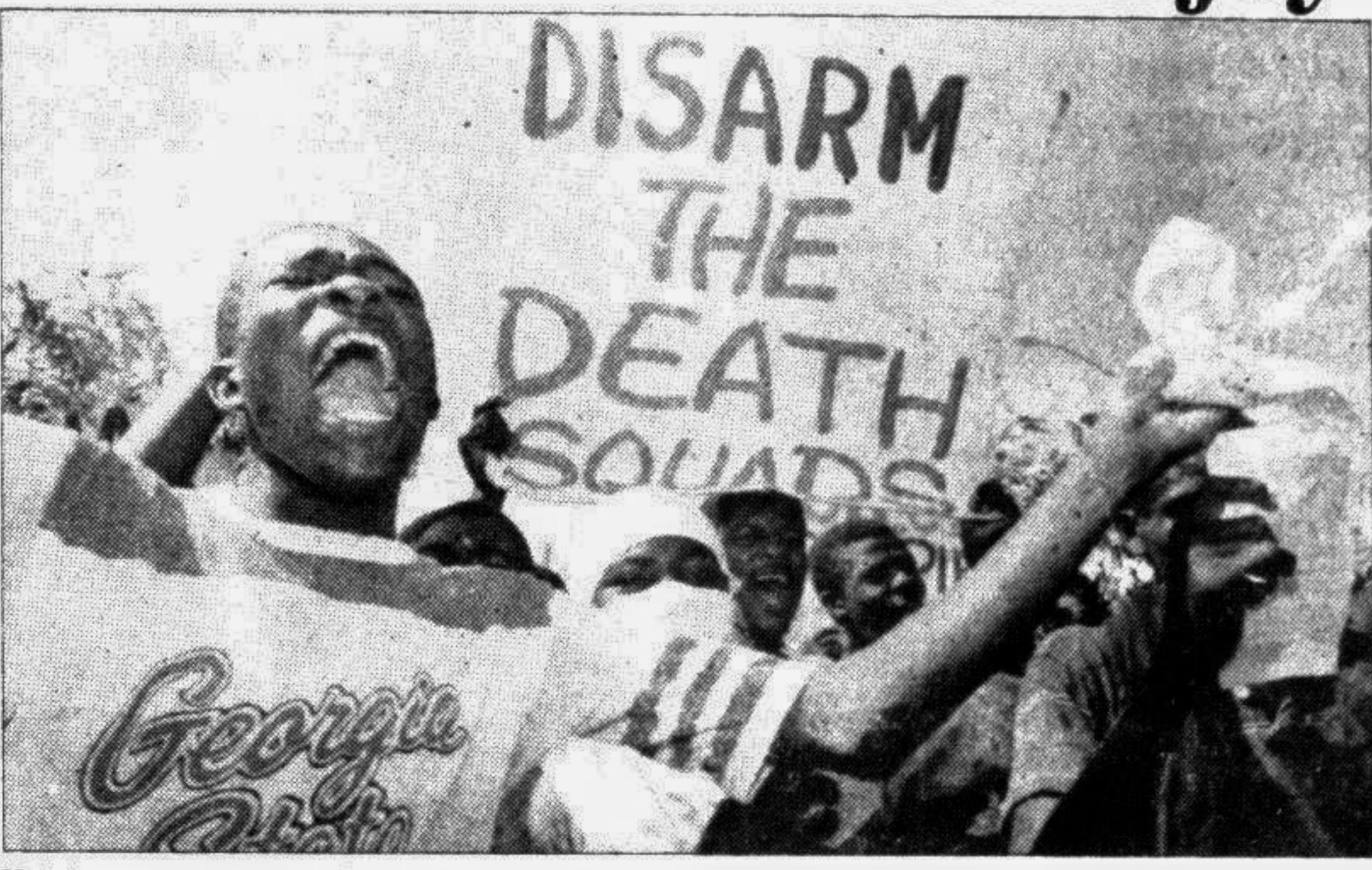
Later, away from the American forces, about 100 protesters hurled rocks at the Port-au-Prince police headquarters, a torture site under the military rulers. Protesters dispersed after police with automatic weapons ran out of two-storey building. There were no reports of injuries.

"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 Shalikashvili, 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.

— AFP photo

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 officials 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 Yunis.

BRIEFLY

Museum on Yeltsin proposed:

Residents of the village where Russian President Boris Yeltsin was born are planning a museum devoted to his life, 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 Urals, 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. AP reports from Johannesburg.

A police spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Herman Oosthuysen, 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 of Baragwanath section.

Fire razes 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 from 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 airborne 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 peace keepers. 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.

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."



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

— AFP photo

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 Jamaat Islamiya group, the Al Gumhuria 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 Yassin 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.

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.

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.

The statement said US

"threats" would leave North

Korea no choice "but to rescind the step of temporary

funding of our nuclear activities."

North Korea has suspended

its nuclear programme while

negotiating for a supply of

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don't produce material for

atomic weapons.

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.

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