

Israel may dismantle one settlement in Golan

JERUSALEM. May 27: In an apparent nod to Syria, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Friday that Israel may dismantle one settlement in the Golan Heights during the first stage of a peace treaty, reports AP.

It was the first time Rabin answered a Syrian demand that Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights immediately after the two sides sign a treaty.

The possibility that Israel would set a precedent by withdrawing from a single settlement in the first stage has been raised in past negotiations between the sides, but Israel has never publicly agreed to this.

"At the most one settlement," Rabin said, speaking on national television's top rated news programme.

Israel has been insistent on its demand that once the two sides negotiate a treaty, which would entail a significant Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in exchange for peace, there would be a test period of normalised relations before the evacuation takes place.

BRIEFLY

Blast in Heathrow Airport: The Emir of Kuwait was caught in a security scare when an explosion shook the royal lounge at London's Heathrow Airport on Friday. Reuter reports from London.

"There was a huge bang and you could feel the ground shake. It was just like a bomb going off. Everyone immediately thought there had been some sort of terrorist attack," said one airport worker.

2 LTTE rebels killed: Two Tamil rebels were killed in northern Sri Lanka as clashes continued between the guerrillas and government troops, a military spokesman said Saturday, AP reports from Colombo.

Troops on patrol clashed with the rebels on Friday near the Poonery army camp, 280 kilometers (175 miles) north of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, a military spokesman said.

Also Friday, the guerrillas attacked a fishing village of Sinhalese and Muslim people in northeastern Sri Lanka and killed at least 42 of them.

US senators meet Ramiro: Two US senators met with President Ramiro de Leon Carpio on Friday to discuss the deaths of an American innkeeper and a Guatemalan rebel who was the husband of an American lawyer. AP reports from Guatemala City.

Sen Arlen Specter, chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, and Sen Michael DeWine were investigating the deaths of American innkeeper Michael Devine and Estrada Bamac, a guerrilla and husband of American lawyer Jennifer Harbury.

Peres arrives in Rabat: Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres arrived in Morocco Friday for surprise weekend talks with PLO chief Yasser Arafat. AP reports from Rabat.

There were no immediate details about the agenda of the meeting, which comes less than one week after Israel froze plans to confiscate an additional 53 hectares (140 acres) of mostly Arab land in Jerusalem.

Nepalese minister resigns: A Nepalese minister resigned after he failed to get elected to Parliament, officials said Saturday. AP reports from Kathmandu.

Hari Prasad Pandey was included in Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari's cabinet as the minister of state for water resources and industry. Under the constitution, a non-elected member is required to become a lawmaker within six months. Pandey was left with no choice as he failed to do so.

Ramos' allies leading in polls: Special congressional and local elections were held in two predominantly Muslim provinces in the southern Philippines yesterday as allies of President Fidel Ramos maintain their lead in the slow count of senatorial votes. AFP reports from Manila.

Spokesmen of the commission on elections said special polls were being held in Sulu and Maguindanao after the elections there on May 8 were declared void due to cheating and fighting between rival political factions.

Canadian official to visit Lanka: The Canadian secretary of state will visit Colombo next week and try to end Sri Lanka's escalating civil war, the Canadian high commission said Saturday. AP reports from Colombo.

Raymond Chan will hold discussions with Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and Deputy Foreign Minister D P Wickramasinghe during his three-day visit.

Explosions rock Aden: Huge explosions rocked the southern Yemeni city of Aden yesterday and witnesses said several people were injured. Reuter reports from Yemen.

They said explosions started with a blast apparently from Jabal Hadeed (steel mountain), known to be the site of ammunition dumps, in central Aden on the coast and continued for about 30 minutes.

Delay in Kashmir polls likely: India's chief election commissioner indicated Saturday that it may not be possible in July to hold the first legislative election in strife-torn Kashmir in eight years. AP reports from Srinagar.

Many Kashmiri politicians and state government officials feel that conditions are not right for a ballot, said T N Seshan who travelled to Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, from New Delhi to assess the situation.

Rwanda stops genocide arrests

NAIROBI, Kenya, May 27: Rwanda says it has stopped arresting all but the most serious suspects in ethnic massacres last year, blaming prisons so overcrowded that prisoners are suffocating, reports AP.

Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga, in a Rwandan radio broadcast monitored in Kenya Saturday, didn't say how many prisoners had died.

Rwanda's prisons were built to accommodate a total of 5,000 inmates, but the population has swelled to 35,000 since last July. In March, 74 inmates were crowded into one small cell in a Kigali jail.

Shiite Muslim protesters lay down to block a main road, but

police dragged them away, clubbing them with riot sticks. At least two were arrested.

Shops were closed and traffic was thin in other Pakistani cities in response to the strike called by the National Solidarity Council, an alliance of 13 religious groups.

In Karachi, gunfire wounded a milkman and a 15-year-old boy and youngsters burned tyres in several districts, witnesses said. University examinations were cancelled in Lahore, capital of Punjab province, where most markets were shut.

Muslim conservatives have

been angered by government plans to alter a blasphemy law under which two Christians were sentenced to death and then acquitted earlier this year.

Pakistani Muslims have conveyed to the West the message that they accept nothing less than a death sentence on those who blaspheme the Prophet Mohammed. Maulana Shah Ahmed Noorani, Chairman of the National Solidarity Council, told Reuters.

Every Pakistani Muslim is a fundamentalist. Foreign powers which ask the Pakistani government to amend the

blasphemy law should consider this chapter closed now. Pakistani Muslims have shown them how to defend their faith.

Pakistan came under fire in the West earlier this year when two Christians, one of them a 12-year-old boy, were sentenced to death for blasphemy. They were acquitted on appeal and took refuge in Germany after death threats from Muslim militants.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said at the time she would change the law to make it less open to abuse, but religious parties have described

what they see as attempts to dilute it.

German President Roman Herzog urged the government to rewrite the law when he visited in April and this week visiting Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said he had raised the issue with Benazir.

Deputy Law Minister Raza Rabbani said in an interview with Reuters on Wednesday that the issue had been exaggerated.

The very concept of blasphemy law within the country and outside the country has been blown out of context," he said.

Rabbani said the government wanted to change the way the law was implemented rather than alter its basic thrust. This would involve procedural changes aimed at making it hard to register cases without concrete evidence or a preliminary inquiry.

"We are trying to reach consensus with religious parties," he said.

Many religious leaders oppose any tampering with the law and accuse western countries of focusing on the blasphemy issue rather than on the fate of Muslims in Bosnia and Kashmir.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.

Private and public transport were off the roads across Srinagar, the urban hub of a bloody Muslim separatist campaign. Similar strikes were also reported elsewhere in the picturesque Kashmir valley.