

Hasimoto renews pledge to cut US bases in Okinawa

TOKYO, Sept 9: Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto renewed his pledge today to cut US bases in Okinawa, saying he would take the results of Sunday's referendum on the US presence in the island seriously, reports AFP.

Speaking to reporters at the Prime Minister's office in Tokyo Hashimoto said: "As a matter of fact, the government will take the result seriously. It is natural for the people in Okinawa to seek the withdrawal of the bases."

Hashimoto made the remarks a day after an overwhelming majority of voters favoured a reduction of US military presence in the historic referendum.

"All we have to do is continue our efforts to reduce and consolidate the bases," he said.

Hashimoto called on Okinawa Governor Masahide Ito to cooperate with the Japanese and US government in gradually reducing US troops in Okinawa.

"We cannot cut the number of

the bases to zero overnight, Hashimoto said.

"I would like Okinawa to also support the central government's efforts." Okinawa has sought full withdrawal of US troops by 2015.

Hashimoto and Ito are to hold talks in Tokyo on Tuesday.

AP adds: The overwhelming vote by Okinawans to reduce US military bases on their islands could help the national government persuade other areas of Japan to share Okinawa's burden.

In a non-binding referendum Sunday, 89 per cent of the voters said there were too many US troops on their southern island, and that the longstanding agreement giving the foreign soldiers special legal status should be changed.

Some 75 per cent of the land set aside for US forces stationed in Japan as part of a mutual security treaty is concentrated on Okinawa, the main island of the southernmost prefecture, which makes up less than 1 per cent of the country's area.

China condemns US missile attacks on Iraq PUK begins fleeing from its last Iraqi stronghold

BEIRUT, Sept 9: The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) began fleeing its last Iraqi stronghold of Sulaimaniya as fighters of its Baghdad-backed rival were poised to move in, a UN officer said today, reports Reuters.

"The PUK has simply left its offices. The theory is they are on their way to the Iranian border. I think it's a matter of hours before something happens," Mogens Hansen, UN security officer for the region, told Reuters.

In a statement the PUK said Sulaimaniya was in danger of collapse and appealed to Washington to help it against the rival Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) backed by troops of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The US administration speaks of southern Iraq, but the Saddam's tanks, army and se-

cret police are on the move in the north — towards Sulaimaniya, which is in imminent danger of collapse," the PUK said in a statement from Ankara.

"These guys (the KDP) are just waiting for orders to continue to Sulaimaniya," Hansen said. But like Baghdad and the KDP itself, the UN official said there were no signs of Iraqi troops. KDP commanders said they were awaiting orders to head either southeast to Sulaimaniya or north to strategic Dukan Dam.

The KDP seized the international spotlight on August 31 when, aided by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, the militia captured the main northern city of Arbil from the PUK. The United States, leading an anti-

Iraqi alliance, retaliated against Saddam by firing 44 Cruise missile on southern Iraq.

Earlier report says, Iraqi tanks were digging in around the Kurdish town of Koi Sanjaq after Baghdad-backed Kurds seized it in heavy fighting at the weekend, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) faction said today.

Another AFP report from Beijing says, China today condemned the recent US missile attack on Iraq as a gross example of electoral posturing and a bid to safeguard strategic interests in the Middle East.

A strongly worded commentary carried in the English-language China Daily said the attacks had violated Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty, "thus revealing once again US hegemony."

Israeli policy raising tension in ME : GCC

RIYADH, Sept 9: The six Arab countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) voiced fears Sunday that Israeli policies were leading to stalemate in the peace process and increasing tension in the region, reports AFP.

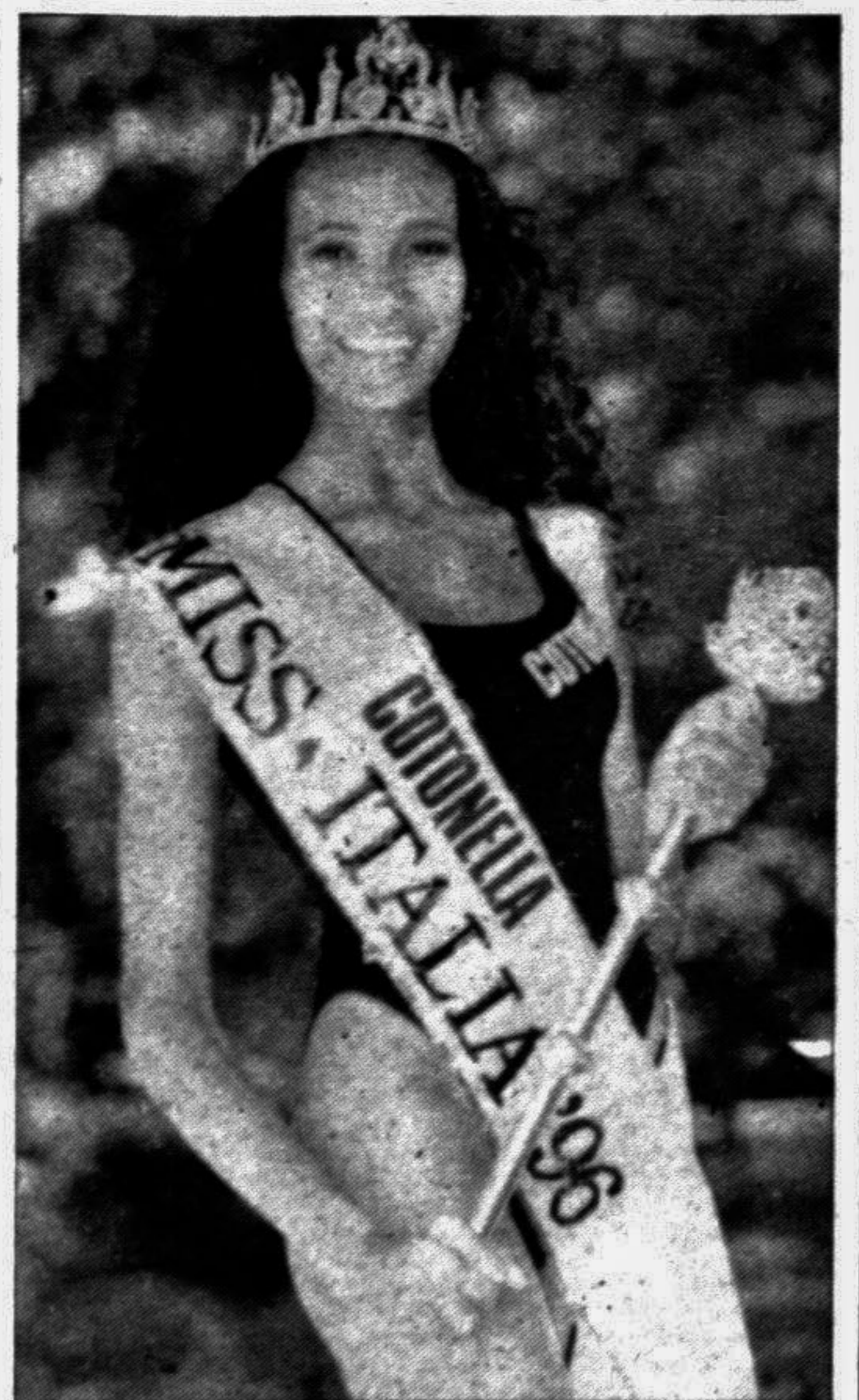
The GCC called in a statement for Israel to "seriously commit itself to implementing the agreements already concluded with the Palestinians."

It also expressed hope that "the recent contacts between the parties concerned will end in a revitalisation of the peace process."

Rightwing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for the first time last week and he is due to meet with Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai next week.

Since taking office in June, Netanyahu has rejected the principle of trading Arab land for peace, ruled out the creation of a Palestinian state and insisted Jerusalem, the eastern part of which is claimed by the Palestinians as the capital of a future state, will remain Israel's undivided capital.

Off the Record



Denny Mendez, an 18-year-old born in the Dominican Republic, who has lived in Italy for five years and was crowned Miss Italy 1996 Saturday, smiles during a press conference in Salsomaggiore. Her election has sparked controversy in Italy.

Di becoming supermodel!

LONDON: Britain's Princess Diana is being wooed by two American companies to front their advertising campaigns, the Sunday business newspaper said, reports Reuter.

The paper, citing industry experts, said the campaigns could earn the recently divorced princess at least two million pounds (three million dollars) and propel her into the supermodel class.

It said the first offer came from Omnipoint Communications which is launching a new mobile telephone network.

Omnipoint President George F Schmitt said the campaign would recall the princess's problems when her phone conversations were picked up by an eavesdropper.

"My idea is that Diana will be holding a digital phone and declare 'if I had one of these, I could have been queen.'"

The paper said the other offer came from American airlines which would seek to use one of the world's most recognisable women in a series of discreet promotions and personal appearance.

It said the airline would begin by making a goodwill contribution of 250,000 pounds (390,000 dollars) to London AIDS charities supported by the princess, who has now finalised her divorce from Britain heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles.

Mothers not doing enough

GENEVA: Mothers in dozens of countries are not doing enough to stop the genital mutilation of their daughters, a UN investigator said Friday, reports AP.

"They think they have to do what has been done for centuries. They think this is the only way they can survive," Halima Embarek Warzazi said.

Tradition in non-Western cultures often requires women to make sure that their daughters are circumcised so they will be accepted in society and can be married, said Warzazi, of Morocco.

She has been working for 13 years to gather a comprehensive picture of traditional practices affecting the health of women and children for the UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

It took more than a decade to come up with the report, Warzazi, said because governments were so reluctant to cooperate.

Talking about genital mutilation was taboo for many years because it was seen as an attempt to impose Western values on other cultures, Warzazi said.

Governments and UN organisations ignored the issue for years because it was considered such a sensitive issue, she said.

"As soon as it was dealt with as a matter of health — reproductive health and mental health — it was much better accepted," she said.

Also, as governments become more aware that it was considered a serious human rights violation, it has become less acceptable, she said.

UK for greater security ties with Asia after HK handover

CANBERRA, Sept 9: Britain wants stronger security ties with Asia after it relinquishes control of Hong Kong to China next year, its visiting defence secretary said Monday, reports AP.

Michael Portillo said Britain's interests in Asia will remain important and it will continue to press for membership of the region's main security forum.

"Although we shall be handing over sovereignty of Hong Kong on June 30, 1997, that will not be the end of our interests in the area," he told a news conference.

"Although we are a European country we have a global outlook. We are a major global trader. We are a major global investor and we are globally conscious."

Britain will maintain a garrison of troops in Brunei on the island of Borneo.

"It will continue to support its Five-Power Defence Arrangement with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, which will stage a major defence exercise next

year, he said.

Moreover, it will continue to lobby for membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations main security grouping, the 21-member ASEAN Regional Forum, he said.

The United States, Russia and China are already members of the group.

Portillo, who is on a brief visit to Australia, said Britain and France, like the other three are permanent members of the UN Security Council should also be allowed in.

"Our interests in the Asia-Pacific region are to promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts," he said. "We have an interest in taking a seat on the ASEAN Regional Forum, which we believe is an important body to promoting security in region."

Australia has supported Britain's membership campaign.

He identified proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Asia as a major issue confronting the forum.



A woman clad in an Iranian-style black chador casts her vote Sunday in the Shiite-dominated region of Nabatiyeh, a stronghold of the Iran-backed Hezbollah, during the fourth round of legislative elections held in southern Lebanon. — AFP/UNB photo

Taliban capture Hisarak dist

ISLAMABAD, Sept 9: Afghanistan's rebel Taliban Islamic militia said today it had captured the Hisarak district in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

Qari Jalaluddin, a Taliban spokesman in Peshawar, northwest Pakistan, told Reuters by telephone that Taliban forces took the district on Sunday night and were now fighting for the nearby Tehzin area. He said 15 Hisarak defenders were killed, while only one Taliban fighter was killed and two were wounded.

But sources in the council ruling Nangarhar rejected the Taliban report and said there was no fighting in the area.

Haji Qadeer, the provincial governor, said in a statement in Jalalabad on Sunday that his council had remained neutral in the four-year-old fighting between President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government in Kabul and its opponents.

But if either the government or its opponents attack the council-ruled areas, the council's forces will join the other side, he said.

IUML urges Muslim leaders to give up secessionist campaign

NEW DELHI, Sept 9: India's oldest Muslim party today asked Kashmiri Muslim leaders to give up their secessionist campaign and begin peace talks with New Delhi, reports AFP.

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) said the All Party Freedom Conference, an umbrella group of Kashmiri separatist groups, should campaign for autonomy within India.

"I told the Conference Chairman not to expect any support from Muslims in India over their agenda of secession," IUML Secretary E. Ahmed, an Indian MP, said in Srinagar.

"We favour granting autonomy to Kashmir," the Press Trust of India quoted him as saying during a two-day trip to the state. "But it should be within the parameters of the Indian constitution."

Ahmed also criticised the 30-member Conference for boycotting this month's elections to the Kashmir assembly, the first to be held in a decade, saying bullets would never solve their grievances.

Benazir rules out early polls, asks opposition to hold talks

ISLAMABAD, Sept 9: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has ruled out early elections, telling the opposition to end its hostile campaign and hold talks with her, reports AFP.

"God willing, I will announce the next elections in the parliament but in 1998," when her five-year term expires, Benazir told the national assembly late Sunday.

Benazir, replying to a hard-hitting speech by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, dismissed any threat to her government from the opposition drive to ouster her.

She shrugged off rumours of interference by President Farooq Ahmed Leghari or the

military, saying "there are no fortune seekers in the presidency or in Rawalpindi," the army headquarters.

All organs of the state are working strictly in accordance with the constitution," she added.

Pakistan's constitution gives the President the power to dissolve the national assembly and order fresh elections within three months in case of a constitutional crisis.

The provision was used in 1990 to dismiss Benazir's first government and again in 1993 when Sharif was in power.

Benazir invited Sharif to talks on constitutional reforms and devising a joint strategy to recover unpaid bank loans

worth billions of rupees from influential people.

Sharif had demanded a high-powered independent judicial commission to probe allegations of corruption against Benazir and her husband Asif Ali Zardari.

"She accuses me of being a loan defaulter while I charge the ruling couple with dishonesty and embezzlement of state funds," Sharif said.

"Whoever is found guilty should be banned from politics and his or her assets be confiscated," he said.

Sharif, who leads the opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML), rejected talks with Benazir until she publicly accepted fresh elections.

Iran opposes Turkish plan to set up security zone in N Iraq

TEHRAN, Sept 9: Iran today intensified its opposition to Turkish plans to set up a "security" zone in northern Iraq, saying the measure was unacceptable and would heighten tension in the region, reports AFP.

The move by Turkey is contrary to good intentions of a neighbouring nation, in violation of international codes of behaviour and a measure not acceptable to the Islamic Republic," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmud Mohammad.

He said the move would be "a violation of Iraqi territorial integrity" and would "be the cause for the escalation of tension in the region."

Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller has said preparations to set up the zone along Turkey's 330-kilometre (206-mile) mountainous border with Iraq were complete.

Ankara wants to create the temporary zone to prevent infiltration into southern Turkey by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which it fears may take advantage of the current crisis in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq to launch new attacks.

Hodjatoleslam Hassan Rowhani, president of the Iranian Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Commission and Secretary of the Supreme Security Council, described the Turkish plan as "incorrect."

"It is meaningless for any country to set up buffer zones on the pretext of security considerations. What Turkey is doing is wrong," Rowhani told the English-language daily Iran News.

He said that Iran, Syria and Turkey, which all have Kurdish minorities, "should work hand in hand to restore Iraqi Kurdistan's peace and calm."

Syria summoned Turkey's ambassador on Sunday to voice its strong opposition to the zone. Ugru Ziyal was told by the Syrian Foreign Affairs Ministry that Damascus was totally against the Turkish plan, "regardless of the reason."

Binni Bai, 70, said in the central city of Jabalpur that the money came from her profits from selling vegetables over several decades. She also sold a plot of land to raise the money.

Great hearted vendor

NEW DELHI, Sept 9: A vegetable vendor in India has donated her entire savings of one million rupees (28,500 US dollars) to a hospital to build a hostel for poor patients, the Indian Express said today, reports AFP.

BRIEFLY

Netanyahu to meet Clinton: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu left Israel on Sunday for a three-day visit to the United States where he will meet President Bill Clinton, AFP reports from Tel Aviv.

Jerusalem mayor faces trial: Jerusalem's mayor a close ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, will be charged with fraud for misdeeds he allegedly committed as Likud Party treasurer, Israel's attorney-general announced Sunday, AP reports from Jerusalem.

Indonesia closes refugee camp: Indonesia has closed a camp that housed 120,000 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees over the past two decades, AP reports from Jakarta.



A fighter plane takes off from the aircraft carrier the USS Carl Vinson Saturday in the Persian Gulf to enforce the no-fly zone south of Baghdad. Iraq Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz warned Sunday that the crisis with the US was not over and Iraq was determined to shoot down Allied planes patrolling no-fly zones over its territory. — AFP/UNB photo

Corruption scams contributing to downfall of govts worldwide

UNDATED, Sept 9: In Brazil, 700,000 people rallied in heavy rain calling for the resignation of a president accused of taking kickbacks. In South Korea, protesters banging gongs and drums took over a 10-lane avenue demanding an end to corruption. In Italy, demonstrators at candlelight vigils begged the nation's top anti-corruption prosecutor not to resign, reports AP.

Once it was socialism vs. capitalism, East vs. West that inflamed political passions. But in the post-Cold War world it is increasingly corruption that incites public outrage, inspires protests and topples governments.

Corruption has brought down long-governing parties such as India's Congress Party and Italy's Christian Democrat and Socialist parties. Two former South Korean presidents are in jail.

Presidents of Brazil and Venezuela were forced to resign and a former Peruvian president is a fugitive. Corruption scandals contributed to the downfall of Prime Ministers Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh and Felipe Gonzalez of Spain, discredited Turkey's former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller and forced Willy Claes of Belgium to resign as NATO's chief.

Whether corruption is actually on the rise is unknown. Bribes are as furtive as secret romances and neither the giver nor the taker wants the relationship exposed. For every payoff splashed in a headline, countless more stay secret forever.

What is clear is that as the world has changed, so has corruption and how corruption is perceived. There are new opportunities to pay bribes, but also new freedoms to expose crooked politicians and demand the

downfall of corrupt governments.

"Democracy and free markets are the enemies of corruption in the long run, but in the short run they can open up some opportunities that weren't there before," said Robert Klitgaard, a professor of economics at the University of Natal in South Africa.

The rapid dismantling of state-controlled economies in much of the world is drawing investment cash to countries where there are few safeguards against bribing government officials.

"With every new market, every new emerging opportunity, you have another set of public officials that have to be paid off," said Christopher Whalen, chief financial officer of Legal Research Inc., a Washington-based trade advisory firm.

Bribery, kickbacks and other forms of corruption were

rampant in closed societies like those of the former Soviet bloc. And they are rampant in the successor states today. But it's not the same.

When the state controlled much of the economy especially in the Soviet bloc — bribes were paid to government officials for favours.

"Before, you had a system that was too controlled, that was too rigid," said economist Susan Rose-Ackerman, a Yale University professor and visiting research fellow at the World Bank. "People would pay to get to the head of the queue."

Now, Rose-Ackerman said, there is an "institutional vacuum" — it's not clear who is in control or what the rules are. So businesses pay bribes to officials who can guide them through the system.

The move toward privatisation also means the bribes have gotten bigger. Where a business

owner may have once paid a bribe to get hooked up to a water line, now some businesses deliver piles of cash to rig the sale of a water company. Such was the case of Alain Carignon, mayor of Grenoble, France, who was convicted of receiving \$4 million in bribes, including \$1.8 million from the sale of the city water system in 1989.

Billions of dollars in business may be at stake. That makes it more tempting for an official to demand a hefty payoff — and for a company to pay it.

A German businessman, Wolfgang Greiner, paid \$3.75 million in bribes to the head of an agency overseeing the privatisation of former East German state enterprises so he could buy companies and real estate at bargain rates. He was sentenced to five years in prison. The head of the agency, Wilfried Glock, was sentenced

Thai govt takes \$160m plan to help solve sex trade

BANGKOK, Sept 9: The Thai government has set aside more than four billion bath (160 million US dollars) for a five-year action plan to help solve the problems of women and child sex workers in the country, local daily The Bangkok Post reported today, reports Xinhua.

The report quoted Minister of the Prime Minister's Office Chatchai Eia-Sakul as saying that emphasis will be placed on basic education and vocational training to enable these vulnerable groups to strengthen their skills and earn their living without resorting to prostitution.

"It's like there's a certain honor of thieves. People who bribe are being fed up about being extorted," said Maria Ionta, a special assistant at the US State Department's bureau of economic and business affairs.

Officials who tolerated officials who pocketed a little cash are shocked when they find out how much money is changing hands.



Actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus from the hit television series "Seinfeld" kisses her Emmy Award at the 48th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards in Pasadena, California, Sunday. Louis-Dreyfus won Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy series for her role as Elaine Benes on "Seinfeld." — AFP/UNB photo.