

International

China votes in favour

UNSC to send troops to Guatemala

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 21: The UN Security Council voted unanimously Monday to send a UN force to oversee Guatemala's moves toward peace, hours after China dropped its opposition to the mission, reports AP.

The resolution dispatches 155 military observers to verify the disarmament and demobilisation of Marxist rebels under the peace pact signed last month.

The mission is "one of the most crucial elements of Guatemala's transition to peace and reconciliation," Secretary-General Kofi Annan said after the vote.

China vetoed the mission Jan. 10 because Guatemala strongly supports Taiwanese membership in the United Nations and invited a Taiwanese delegation to the treaty signing ceremony. China regards Taiwan as a renegade province.

It was not immediately known what concessions each side may have made in reaching agreement early Monday.

The dispute between China and Guatemala underscored the depths of China's feelings about Taiwan, and showed Beijing's willingness to flex its muscle to isolate it.

Guatemalan and Chinese officials, along with representatives from nations that helped broker the peace — the United States, Venezuela, Norway, Colombia, Mexico and Spain — had been meeting for the past week to try to salvage the mission to monitor the Dec. 29 Guatemalan accord ending 36 years of civil war. The Chinese had said they would reconsider their objections to the mission only if Guatemala stopped pushing for a Taiwanese seat at the United Nations and cooled relations with Taiwan.

Addressing the council before the vote, China's ambassador, Qin Huasun, welcomed the "constructive move taken by Guatemala" to resolve the impasse, but gave no details.

Guatemala's UN ambassador, Julio Armando Martini, denied that his country made any concessions to the Chinese but did imply a change in Guatemala's position.

"We recognize that Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations. We will recognise this," he told The Associated Press. "The Chinese recognise that we have the right to follow as close as we decide in our relations with Taiwan. So this will not affect in any sense our relations with Taiwan."

Guatemala receives considerable investment from Taiwan and has maintained diplomatic relations with Taipei for more than 40 years.

India eases visa restrictions on Lankan academics, traders

COLOMBO, Jan 21: India has eased visa restrictions on Sri Lankan academics, intellectuals and businessmen with immediate effect, officials here said today, reports AP.

The announcement was made to coincide with the visit here by India's External Affairs Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, officials said adding that three categories will now qualify for five-year multi-entry visas.

Earlier India adopted strict control over the issue of visas to Sri Lankans and a few categories qualified for six-month multi-entry permits.

Officials said that Gujral had also initiated the formation of an Indo-Sri Lanka foundation to foster informal contacts between the two South Asian neighbours.

The Indian minister is due to

leave Wednesday at the end of a four day visit during which he co-chaired the third session of the joint commission which is aimed at boosting bilateral trade and cultural ties.

India on Monday announced lifting tariff and quota restrictions on 80 commodities exported from Sri Lanka and invited a delegation from Colombo to work out the details before formalising the deal in April.

Reuter adds, the Sri Lankan military spotted unidentified debris in waters of the Jaffna Peninsula while searching for a missing air force surveillance plane a senior air force official said Tuesday.

But the debris could not be retrieved and the navy and air force resumed their joint search for the Chinese-built Y-12 air-

plane, missing off northern Sri Lanka since early Monday, the official said, the twin propeller aircraft had a crew of four.

"They have spied some wreckage, but the light was fast fading at that time (Monday evening) and they were forced to come in. They resumed their search at first light on Tuesday," the officials said.

Air force planes and helicopters joined by navy patrol boats were to continue their search for the plane, last seen about 75 miles (120 km) east of the military's northern Palay Air Base the official added.

The 14-seat aircraft was looking for a suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ship when it lost radio contact with the ground around 5.15 am (2315 GMT) on Monday.

34 die after drinking liquor in Pakistan

KARACHI, Jan 21: At least 34 people have died and many more were in critical condition after drinking home made liquor in the Pakistan city of Hyderabad, officials said today, reports AP.

Dozens of people were rushed to hospitals after consuming the home brew on Monday police said.

They had bought the cheap liquor from a shop but immediately after drinking it started vomiting blood and fainted, surviving victims told reporters.

Fourteen people died within hours of drinking the liquor and another 20 died during the night they said.

The casualties were labourers living in the slum district of the southern city.

Alcohol is banned in Pakistan but is clandestinely sold.

Radio station plays Japanese music for Lima hostages

LIMA, Jan 21: Playing the cheeriest of Japanese pop songs, a Peruvian radio station tried to boost the spirits of hostages held 33 days inside the Japanese ambassador's home, reports AP.

Dedicated to all the hostages, the songs Monday were meant most for the Japanese diplomats and business leaders among the 73 men held captive since rebels seized the home during a December 17 party.

It was not known whether the hostages heard the music, but a Red Cross worker who entered the home told them about the daily broadcasts, which began Sunday with the approval of the Japanese and Peruvian governments.

Radio America played the pop song "Sukiyaki" which became popular in the United States in 1963 — as well as an exercise song popular in Japanese schools and broadcast every morning over government radio.

Search continues for missing Canadian sailor

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina, Jan 21: A naval plane and ship scoured South Atlantic waters off Argentina, but a navy spokesman said they found no sign of missing Canadian yachtman Gerry Roufs, reports AP.

There was no contact whatsoever with the lost yachtman, the spokesman, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Monday in a telephone interview.

He said the plane, a Beechcraft B-200 equipped with radar and specialised communications equipment, and the dispatch vessel "Castillo" searched for four hours in an area east of Cape Horn and off Isla de los Estados, northeast of the Horn.

Similar searches were carried out in the same area over the weekend. Roufs, a 43-year-old lawyer from Montreal, was participating in the Vendee Globe round-the-world solo race. He was last heard from January 7, when he was sailing some 2,400 kilometers (1,500 miles) west of Cape Horn.

OIC praises Hebron accord

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 21: The Organisation for Islamic Conference (OIC) Monday praised the Israeli-Palestinian accord on the West Bank town of Hebron as a positive move advancing the Middle East peace process, reports AP.

"The Hebron accord is a positive step on the road to peace chosen by the Palestinian people to recover their inalienable rights and to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital," OIC secretary General Ezzedin Laraki told Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat by telephone.

Laraki offered "support for the Palestinian people's just battle and for the efforts of President Yasser Arafat to recover the Palestinian people's legitimate rights."

The organisation, which has 52 member countries and has its headquarters in Jeddah, aims to promote Islamic solidarity and cooperation.

The accord handing control of Hebron to the Palestinians was signed on Wednesday and the Israeli military withdrew from 80 per cent of the town on Friday.

Off the Record



A model for French designer Emmanuel Ungaro presents this white floral cocktail dress as part of his Spring/Summer 1997 High Fashion collection in Paris Monday. — Reuter/UNB photo

Tabloid offers higher reward in Cosby case

LOS ANGELES: Bill Cosby's encouragement of tabloids to offer rewards in his son's killing led to a bidding war that legal experts say could end up jeopardizing the credibility of anyone who offers a tip, reports AP.

On Monday, the Globe announced a 200,000 dollars reward, topping the National Enquirer's 100,000 dollars offer for information leading to an arrest and conviction in the death of 27-year-old Ennis Cosby, the only son of the popular entertainer.

Already, more than 200 calls have come in to a police hot line following the release of a sketch of a suspect in slaying of Cosby, a Columbia University graduate student gunned down last Thursday as he changed a flat tire.

Police welcomed any help in the case and said the Enquirer had been advised to have anyone with information contact police directly.

Meantime, police were saying little about a key woman witness and her relationship to Cosby, or about circumstances surrounding the killing on an interstate off-ramp.

The New York Daily News reported Monday that Cosby had a blue pack of cigarettes in his hand and may have offered his killer a cigarette, believing the stranger who approached him was a homeless man.

Mother Teresa, pope getting the most fan mail

LOS ANGELES: Pity the mail carriers of Calcutta and the Vatican, reports AP.

Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II, it turns out, get more fan mail than any other celebrity.

Author Micheal Levine conducted a survey for the latest edition of his "The Address Book — How to Reach Anyone Who's Anyone," to find out which who was getting the most fan mail.

Mother Teresa and the pope topped the list, receiving wedding invitations, birth and death announcements and thousands of other mailings. They represent tremendous hope to millions and millions of people throughout the world, Levine said. "I was a bit surprised by the number of people all over the world that invite the pope to their wedding, but the invitations are dead serious."

Zairean forces asked to launch counter-attack

KINSHASA, Jan 21: Zaire's Prime Minister has formally ordered the armed forces to launch a counter-offensive against Tutsi-led rebels in the east and urged the nation to rally behind the push to recapture lost territory there, reports Reuter.

It was not immediately clear what impact Kengo Wa Dondo's comments on Monday night would have on the timing of the counter-thrust, which has been promised for over a month. But preparations have been gathering pace in the eastern town of Kisangani, where Zairean troops, weapons and as many as 300 foreign mercenaries have arrived over the past few weeks.

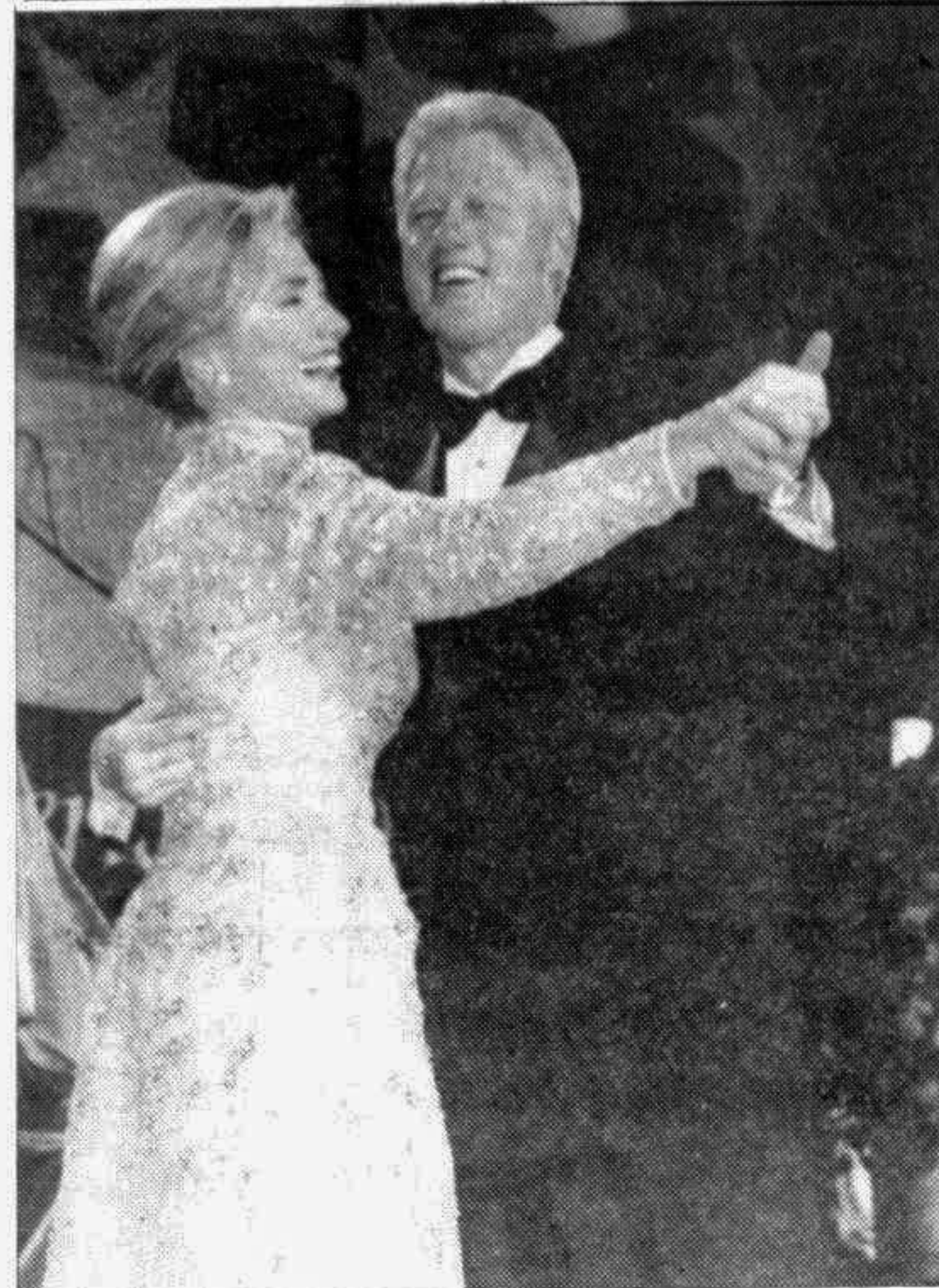
In the name of the government and in agreement with the president of the republic, I have today ordered our armed forces

to conduct the war and recover regions currently under occupation and restore the authority of the state," Kengo told the nation on state television. Kengo, whose comments were broadcast before the main evening news, urged the Zairean people to "be in communion" with the armed forces and asked that television and radio programmes reflect this national commitment.

"The sacred duty of every Zairean man and woman is to defend and maintain the nation's territorial integrity," he said.

The rebels who launched their offensive last October, hold towns and territory along the borders with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda after routing the Zairean army in the east.

BRIEFLY



US President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton (R) dance at the inaugural ball at the Old Post Office Pavilion Monday in Washington, DC. Earlier, US President Bill Clinton was sworn in for a second term as president. — AFP/UNB photo

Yeltsin congratulates Clinton

Russian President Boris Yeltsin congratulated US President on Monday and called for a deeper, equal partnership between Washington and Moscow, Reuter reports from Moscow.

Over the past four years Russia and the United States have done a lot to strengthen stability and safety in the world," Yeltsin's press secretary Sergei Yastrzhembsky told reporters reading from a telegram sent by the Kremlin leader.

Cabinet reshuffled in Tunisia

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali ordered a Cabinet shuffle Monday, leaving the prime minister in place but making changes in the foreign affairs, interior, defense and justice ministries, AP reports from Tunis.

Three ministers lost their posts in the shuffle which was announced without comment. Observers described the changes as "technical" saying the shuffle carried no discernible political significance. Interior Minister Mohamed Jegham, named director of the presidential cabinet, was replaced by Mohamed Ben Rejab, who had served as agriculture minister.

Japan decides to give aid to Iraq

The Japanese government decided Tuesday to give \$1.45 million in emergency humanitarian aid to Iraq, the Foreign Ministry said. AP reports from Tokyo.

The money will be used to purchase food and medicine for the Middle Eastern country, beset by economic problems resulting from six-year-old UN economic sanctions, the ministry said. At least 4 million people suffer from malnutrition caused by worsened hygiene conditions across Iraq, including pregnant women and children, according to the United Nations.

Twin quakes kill 6 in China

Twin earthquakes measuring 6.4 and 6.3 on the Richter Scale hit the far northwestern Chinese region of Xinjiang one after another Tuesday morning, killing at least six people, seismology officials said, AP reports from Beijing.

The 6.4 quake struck at 9:47 am (01:47 GMT) near the city of Jiashi in western Xinjiang, just 60 kilometres (38 miles) east of Kashgar, and was followed one minute later by the second tremor, a spokesman for the Xinjiang Seismology Bureau told AFP by telephone. "So far we have confirmed six deaths and four people have been seriously injured," the spokesman said.

3 Taiwanese killed in Philippines

Police killed three Taiwanese men suspected of drug dealing following a car chase in the financial district of Makati before dawn Tuesday, AP reports from Manila.

Police said narcotics agents recovered 25 plastic bags containing methamphetamine, hydrochloride known locally as "shabu," or the poor man's cocaine, and worth 10 million pesos (US\$384,615). One of the Taiwanese was identified through his driver's license as Chang King Man, 43. No other details were immediately available.

Chirac appointing panel to study judicial reforms

PARIS, Jan 21: Under fire by critics contending scandals are being swept under the rug, President Jacques Chirac on Monday announced in a nationwide broadcast that he was appointing a panel to study judicial reform, reports AP.

The time has come to focus on a great ambition for the justice system: reform the principles on which it lies, modernize its means and adapt it to our time," Chirac said.

Chirac spoke the day before putting into operation a "Reflection commission on justice," led by the head of a top appeals court, Pierre Truche. The panel will include four judges, five professors, four lawyers, two journalists and two high-level bureaucrats.

They will work "in complete freedom," said Chirac, who called on the commission to

come up with its conclusions before July 15, after which the government would propose reform to the parliament.

Chirac said the Truche commission's first objective would be to examine the link between the courts and the Justice Ministry. Chirac said the panel should consider if the judges' independence "would not be increased by modifying, even eliminating, the hierarchical link."

Chirac first announced the idea in an interview with French television last month, with some dissension within his governing conservative majority opposing an independent judiciary.

But even Chirac, whose Rally for the Republic party or its members have faced probes over questionable fund-raising or other alleged wrongdoing,

said Tadahiko Takiguchi, a Mazda executive in charge of product development. The computer systems at Mazda and Ford are different now, but they eventually plan to make it the same system, said Wallace, the former head of Ford's Venezuelan operation who became Mazda president last June.

Mazda Digital Innovation, which will start for all models this spring, can simulate layouts of cars, as well as create a virtual plant that can test out quality maintenance and job arrangements.

It will allow Mazda to speed up its development of new cars from the current 18 months to 15 months.

Inaugural speech: Clinton makes heart-felt appeal for nat'l unity

WASHINGTON, Jan 21: President Bill Clinton made a heartfelt appeal for national unity Monday in an inaugural address delivered minutes after he took the oath of office for a second time, reports AP.

Here are some of the key points of his address:

The role of government: "As times change, so government must change. We need a new government for a new century, a government humble enough not to try to solve all our problems for us, but strong enough to give us the tools to solve our problems for ourselves. A government that is smaller, lives within its means, and does more with less. Yet where it can stand up for our values and interests in the world, and where it can give Americans the power

to make a real difference in their everyday lives, government should do more, not less."

National unity: "Our greatest responsibility is to embrace a new spirit of community for a new century. For any one of us to succeed, we must succeed as one America. The challenge of our past remains the challenge of our future: will we be one nation, one people, with one common destiny — or not? will we all come together or come apart?"

Race and ethnic hatred: The divide of race has been America's constant curse. Each new wave of immigrants gives new targets to old persecutions. Prejudice and contempt, cloaked in the pretense of religious or political conviction, are no different. They have

nearly destroyed us in the past. They plague us still. They fuel the fanaticism of terror.

US leadership: "We will stand mighty for peace and freedom, and maintain a strong defence against the dark force of terror and destruction. Our children will sleep free from the threat of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Ports and airports, farms and factories will thrive with trade and innovation and ideas. And the world's greatest democracy will lead a whole world of democracies."

Government spending: "Our land of new promise will be a nation that meets its obligations: A nation that balances its budget and never loses balance of its values."

Jewish settlers protest Hebron pullout, PA promises safe city

HEBRON, West Bank, Jan 21: Jewish settlers and their supporters are lamenting Israel's troop withdrawal from Hebron, unconvinced by Palestinian leaders' promises to make the city safe for everyone, reports AP.

More than 1,000 people, some ripping their shirts in the traditional expression of grief, rallied Monday outside Tomb of the Patriarchs, a Hebron shrine holy to Jews and Muslims.

Judaism sees abandoning territory of the Land of Israel as the destruction of the Land of Israel," said Rabbi Dov Lior of the nearby settlement Kiryat Arba.

Israel withdrew from 80 per cent of Hebron on Friday, leaving soldiers in the downtown to protect the 500 Jewish settlers

living among the city's 130,000 Palestinians. The pact that led to the pull-out also included an Israeli promise of three more withdrawals in the West Bank by Mid-1998.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's security chief in the West Bank, Jibril Rajoub, said Monday that he would make Hebron safe for everyone, including settlers — as long as they do not try to provoke or attack Palestinians.

Many of the settlers are vehemently opposed to Palestinian autonomy, and Palestinians have complained of harassment by them. Israel radio reported that Israeli police detained three Jewish militants suspected of distributing inflammatory material at the

rally. Rajoub had come under fire for a speech he delivered in Hebron on Saturday in which he described the settlers as stones around the Palestinians' neck that should be discarded.

On Monday, he made clear that he would deal harshly with anyone trying to disrupt life in Hebron, Israeli or Palestinian.

"I'm 100 per cent sure that on the Palestinian side, we will be in control, and security in Hebron will be even better than in Tel Aviv," he said.

Islamic leaders have told Arafat that "they will respect the Palestinian Authority and its law and order," Rajoub said. Jawad Jaber, a leader of the Hamas military wing, said he is not willing to rule out violence as an option. However, he

seemed careful not to provoke Arafat, who is riding on a new wave of popularity as the liberator of Hebron.

"The Palestinian Authority, after redeployment, is a fact. We have to build a relationship based on that," Jaber, a 30-year-old student at Hebron's Islamic University told The Associated Press.

In front of the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where the crowd listened to a rabbi recite from the Book of Psalms, Jerusalem resident David Landau said he feared Jewish settlers eventually would be forced to leave the city.

"I have seen the rebirth of Jewish life here in Hebron... and now I see return of Hebron to our enemies." Jews lived in Hebron during

the Byzantine, Arab, Mameluke and Ottoman periods until 1929, when Arab riots left 67 Jews dead and hundreds fled.

In April 1968, some Jewish activists registered at a local hotel and announced they had come to re-establish the Jewish presence in the city. The first apartments in Kiryat Arba were completed in 1972, and the Jewish presence within the city of Hebron was reestablished seven years later.

In other events Monday: — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said West Bank settlement would continue, and Israel approved construction of 60 new homes in the Maaleh Ephraim settlement.

Israeli authorities said they would revive a plan for a huge

stone quarry near the West Bank town of Tulikarem. A consortium of seven Israeli companies wants to quarry stone there for the Israeli construction industry.

Palestinian legislator Bishara Daoud said the settlement expansion and quarry plans violate Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements.

Israeli police said they arrested a 27-year-old Palestinian from the Ramallah area who is suspected of killing eight Arabs several years ago for collaborating with Israel.

During the 1987-93 uprising against Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian militants killed hundreds of Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel.