

## Arafat rejects summit with Netanyahu

JERUSALEM, Mar 18: Palestinian National Authority (PNA) President Yasser Arafat apparently nixed a summit Monday night with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, despite an appeal by Jordanian Crown Prince Hassan and efforts by the United States, reports Xinhua.

According to Israeli radio this morning, Hassan met with Arafat in Gaza Monday to deliver a message from his brother King Hussein that Netanyahu is ready for talks. Hassan then phoned Netanyahu and briefed him about the meeting.

Later in the evening, Netanyahu phoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and told him of efforts to hold a meeting with Arafat, but he said no date for a meeting had been set.

There will be no meeting unless Netanyahu agrees to freeze

## International

# Stop unfair trial of 59 Shiite militants, AI urges Bahrain

CAIRO, Mar 18:

The human rights group Amnesty International called on Bahrain Monday to stop what it called unfair trial of 59 Shiite Muslim militants accused of trying to topple the ruling Al Khalifa family, reports AP.

A total of 81 men are accused in the plot. Fifty-nine of them have gone on trial at the State Security Court and another 22 are at large and will be tried in absentia.

These trials have been grossly unfair at all stages, and none of the defendants will have the right to appeal before a higher court, said an Amnesty statement faxed to the Associated Press in Cairo.

The Bahraini authorities should act now to stop the unfair trials, Amnesty said.

Six of the Shiite Muslim

suspects, who the government says intended to overthrow Bahrain's rulers and install Iranian-style Islamic rule, were shown on state television confessing in near-identical statements. They said they received arms and military training in Iran and had links to Bahraini opposition groups in exile.

Iran has denied the allegations.

The sister of one of the defendants and ex wife of another were allegedly brought before them in prison and threatened with rape if the defendants refused to participate in the televised confession, the Amnesty statement said.

Bahrain did not immediately comment on the report. The government traditionally rejects any criticism of its human rights record.

The government has accused the suspects of being members of the military wing of Hezbollah-Bahrain. The government said the group was founded in Iran in 1993 and is backed by intelligence department of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

Amnesty said all the defendants have been held incommunicado since their arrest and were denied access to relatives and defense lawyers. We fear that their confessions may have been extracted under torture, the Amnesty statement added.

It said the justice minister summoned about 20 lawyers involved in the trial after they were interviewed by foreign media. They were warned that dissemination of any information about the trials would not be tolerated and that they would face consequences if they failed to comply with his directive, according to the Amnesty statement.

One of the lawyers said last month that charges against the men include spying, joining an illegal group and encouraging others to join the group. Conviction for espionage can carry the death penalty.

Amnesty International called on the Bahraini government to provide the organization with copies of all relevant records concerning the trials.

It said most of the session of the trials, which began at the beginning of this month, have been held at the Coast Guard's base in al-Muharraq. The defendants have been divided into eight groups and are being tried separately rather than as one group.

## Off the Record

### Yanni's caution for Taj

NEW DELHI: Greek-born Yanni will be required to control the sound level at his concerts this week to avoid any damage to the Taj Mahal, the Supreme Court said Monday, reports AP.

The court refused to ban or shift Yanni's concerts planned for 300 yards (meters) from the Taj Mahal on Thursday through Saturday. But Judges Saghir Ahmed and K. Ramaswamy said the sound level should not exceed 40 decibels at the monument.

The court rejected claims by environmentalists that the lights, sound, construction and traffic would damage the Taj Mahal, about 180 kilometres (110 miles) south of New Delhi in Agra.

The court order will not affect Yanni's performance. In any case, the speakers will not be facing the Taj Mahal, Yanni spokesman Bhuvan Lal said.

Yanni, a movie-score composer who performs a blend of New Age and soft jazz, said his concerts would be part of India's 50th anniversary of independence celebrations.

### Charles, Parker Bowles planning honeymoon!

LONDON: Britain's Prince Charles and his long-time mistress Camilla Parker Bowles were planning their first holiday abroad together, The Daily Mail reported Monday, says AFP.

The tabloid, quoting a friend of the couple's, said the plan was still in the "idea" stage and that the couple were wavering among Turkey, Tuscany, a French chateau or a cruise of the Greek islands.

Although Charles and Camilla have been an on-and-off couple since before either of them was married, they have been discreet in public.

Charles and Princess Diana were divorced last summer. Parker Bowles and her husband, some two years ago.

Polls show the British are not ready to accept a Queen Camilla, should she and Charles marry, when he succeeds his mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

A semi-public holiday together was seen as one way of getting the public more used to Parker Bowles, 49-year-old mother of two grown children.

### Revenge indeed

ISLAMABAD: An enraged woman whose husband sold her to a policeman for sex shot dead her spouse and the officer in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar, it was reported here Tuesday, says AFP.

A court heard an insulted Hidayat Bibi, described as a faithful wife and loving mother, fired at the policeman her husband brought home Sunday to have sex with her, the news reported.

"I fired at him when he grabbed me and tore away my shirt," she was quoted as saying.

"Then I came out of the room and killed my husband."

"I did the right thing. I'm not worried about my future or the punishment but what scares me is what people will think of me."

The report added that while many police officials expressed sympathy for her, they were baffled as to how a meek woman fired perfectly-aimed killing shots to the men's foreheads.

The woman, who appeared in court today, confessed to the killing and has been remanded in custody pending further investigation.



South African President Nelson Mandela (L) and Princess Diana speak with the press after meeting in the Mandela's home, Genadendal, in Cape Town, South Africa Monday. It is Diana's first public appearance since her arrival in South Africa last week to visit her brother Charles Spencer.

## Rumours, panick grip Zairean capital Residents flee Kinshasa as rebels vow to continue march

KINSHASA, Zaire, Mar 18: The government has suspended 22 customs officials at two airports following the arrest of many Pakistani travellers in Saudi Arabia on heroin smuggling charges it was reported today, says AFP.

Two officers of Pakistan's airport security force have also been suspended, the news daily said.

Prime Minister Navaz Sharif ordered the suspension of the officials on the grounds of "negligence" because of the large amount of heroin taken from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia.

Department proceedings will be initiated against the officials who worked at the Karachi and Islamabad international airports, it added.

Saudi authorities recently provided Islamabad with a list of more than 30 Pakistanis who had been arrested on heroin charges on arrival in the kingdom over the past two months.

A total of more than 1,000 kilogrammes of heroin was recovered, the report said.

take over the government.

Government spokesman Jean-Claude Bibie Ekalabu called on Kinshasa to remain calm and disregard "fantastical rumours."

He said Mobutu would return home this week. Mobutu's son, Nganza, also said his father would soon return to "continue the process of containment" of the protecting the country."

Ferries from Kinshasa across the Zaire River to Brazzaville, the capital of neighbouring Congo, have been full for days and international flights are booked as fearful residents flee. Some foreign shop owners have boarded up their stores and sent their families out of the city.

There is great concern in the capital that if Mobutu dies or the army attempts a coup, riots would break out among soldiers and civilians.

not to back down. His promise to go ahead with Har Homa enabled him to quell a rebellion in his ranks and survive an opposition no-confidence motion in parliament by a 54-46 vote.

On Monday, after a meeting with Israeli officials, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said the Palestinians were trying to solve the dispute peacefully.

Palestinian officials have suggested that they might not be able to contain their people's anger should construction begin — but there is widespread belief in Israel that violence will only occur if Arafat gives his tacit approval.

In Gaza, Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan visited Arafat

Press conference from hard-line allies

## Election-related violence in Nigeria: Two killed

LAGOS, Nigeria, Mar 18: Two people were killed during election-related violence over the weekend, newspapers reported.

Abacha has been accused of corruption and human rights abuses since he grabbed power in a 1993 coup. He had promised a civilian government by the end of 1996, but he said in 1995 that it would be necessary for him to remain in power another three years to ensure a smooth transition to democracy.

Voters across the country on Saturday chose politicians to run municipal governments in 774 towns and cities. Presidential elections are scheduled for next year, two years later than Abacha had promised.

## Israel to begin work on Jewish settlement despite warnings

JERUSALEM, Mar 18: Despite warnings that the West Bank could explode in violence, Israeli surveyors are to begin work on a new Jewish neighbourhood in disputed east Jerusalem, reports AP.

David Bar-Ilan, a top adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said surveyors would begin measurements at Har Homa, a hilltop area called Jebel Abu Ghneim some time.

"Bulldozers and tractors will probably come a day later," he said.

Heightening tension, Faisal Husseini, the top PLO official in Jerusalem, until 7 am (0500 GMT) Tuesday to remove two tents that he set up Monday at the site, his aide Mohammed

Jadallah said.

Husseini had said he and a dozen others would remain at the site all night and "the moment the Israeli bulldozers go to work, we will confront them, using peaceful means." He said the atmosphere was similar to the days leading up to the 1987-1989 Palestinian uprising.

The 6,500-home Har Homa project has become a test of both sides' resolve regarding Jerusalem, the most explosive issue on their agenda. Israel captured and annexed east Jerusalem in 1967, and says the entire city is its capital. The Palestinians want the eastern sector, location of Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites as well as a large Arab population, as the capital of a future state.

Israeli intelligence has reportedly warned Netanyahu that the construction could spark riots similar to those that killed 80 people in September after Israel opened an archaeological tunnel near Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

Throughout the West Bank, hospitals have begun discharging patients to free beds in anticipation of unrest.

But Netanyahu said Monday he is determined to go ahead with the project this week.

"When it comes to Jerusalem, we are ready to confront anyone to assert our sovereignty," he said.

"If we do not stand up to threats over Jerusalem, we will not stand up to threats over anything."

Pressured by the United