



Cherie Blair, wife of British Prime Minister Tony Blair laughs as children from "Kid's Club Network" present her with a model, made by them, of the "Budget Box" during a surprise visit on Thursday to No 10 Downing Street. Kid's Club Network is a national charity promoting and supporting school age child care and safe play facilities. — AFP/UNB photo

### 6-pts ceasefire accord signed in Bangui

BANGUI, July 3: Mutineers in the strife torn Central African Republic on Wednesday signed a six points ceasefire with an African peacekeeping force, after clashes last week which left more than 100 dead, reports AP.

Officials said the agreement would come into force at 8:00 pm (1900 GMT).

According to the text of the accord both sides "undertake to end from today all hostile military action led or ordered by one or other of the parties in the republic's territory and in Bangui in particular."

The accord brings to an end fighting which erupted on June 20 with the murder of a Senegalese soldier by rebels who tried to steal his vehicle.

In three days of fighting, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Misab troops, led by units from Chad, broke the rebel resistance. The offensive was followed by a four-day "mopping-up" operation.

## Gujral's Janata Dal heads for 'inevitable' split

NEW DELHI, July 3: Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's Janata Dal party was on the verge of a split Thursday after senior leaders failed to patch up differences with the party chief, who is facing corruption charges, reports AP.

Supporters of Laloo Prasad Yadav, the powerful but scandal-tainted president of the party and the Chief Minister of Bihar state, said they will boycott an internal party election for Yadav's post on Thursday. Instead, they will hold a separate convention Saturday.

A divided Janata Dal would weaken the fragile coalition that Gujral leads and could threaten his 10-week-old government.

Of the 45 federal lawmakers from the eastern state of Bihar, at least 16 are likely to join Yadav's breakaway group and become part of the opposition in Parliament, the Pioneer daily said.

The government survives with the support of the powerful Congress Party, which is not part of the coalition. But Congress has indicated it will reconsider its support because of the chaos in the Janata Dal.

Hundreds of Janata Dal delegates to the party's electoral college will cast votes around the country. Results will be known later in the week.

Yadav's supporters from the eastern state of Bihar allege that the list of state delegates has been tampered with to ensure his defeat.

Laloo Prasad Yadav's main rival for the presidency is Sharad Yadav, also a politician from Bihar. The two are not related but come from the same group of low-caste Hindus which has gained supremacy in Bihar's state politics.

Laloo Prasad Yadav, has refused to resign as Bihar's chief minister — the highest elected state office — even though he

has been indicted on charges related to the embezzlement of 4.8 billion rupees (dhs 138 million) from state funds meant for buying fodder for state dairy farms.

Yadav, a popular leader from the lowcaste of dairy farmers, has denied wrongdoing in the case.

Yadav and 55 other politicians and government officials have been charged in the case, popularly called the fodder scam. Police say Yadav and others pocketed government funds in the last 20 years in numerous agricultural support schemes in Bihar. All have denied any wrongdoing.

Earlier AP says, the party heading India's Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's minority coalition government was heading for an inevitable split in New Delhi today, newspapers reported.

The expected break-up of the Janata Dal (People's Party), the

largest group in the multi-party United Front coalition, follows a series of internal rows and is expected to undermine Gujral's standing.

The Pioneer newspaper, meanwhile, said the Congress (I) Party, which keeps the fragile coalition in power with its parliamentary backing, was reconsidering its ties with the United Front.

The cause of the Janata Dal split is centred around its scandal-tainted Janata Dal president Laloo Prasad Yadav, who is expected to lose his position as party head after refusing to stand for re-election today.

The result of the polls is due to be announced on Sunday.

The Pioneer Newspaper said Yadav and his supporters planned to hold their own unofficial leadership election on Friday before breaking away, adding the split was "inevitable."

## Mayors of Hiroshima, Nagasaki blast experiment US conducts test to help determine safety of N-arms

LAS VEGAS, July 3: An experiment to evaluate the safety and reliability of America's nuclear weapons stockpile — the first nuclear-related test since a 1992 moratorium — was conducted at the Nevada Test Site, reports AP.

"Everything went as expected," said US Energy Department spokesman Derek Scammell. "The scientists are very happy. The programme went as planned."

It will be a while before scientists are able to analyse the results of the test, which was monitored above ground, Scammell said Wednesday.

The experiment used 160 pounds (72 kilograms) of chemical explosives to bombard silver dollar-sized pieces of plutonium, a key ingredient in nuclear weapons, to determine how plutonium reacts with age. Many of the 9,800 nuclear weapons in the United States arsenal are 20 years old and scientists have expressed concerns over how the aging process might impact the weapons.

The experiment is the first in a series planned by scientists from America's nuclear weapons laboratories, Los Alamos in New Mexico and Lawrence Livermore in California.

The tests have been opposed by a coalition of anti-nuclear groups who say the experiments are a way of designing new nuclear weapons and skirting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Ten demonstrators who protested at the test site were arrested on trespass charges Wednesday.

The Energy Department contends the tests are consistent with the treaty because no nuclear fission chain reaction occurs, thus producing no nuclear explosion. Scammell said Wednesday's blast could not be felt on the surface.

Scientists say the tests are needed to gauge the safety and reliability of weapons crafted in the heat of the Cold War. Before the test moratorium, weapons would be taken out of stockpile and tested under

ground or in the atmosphere to determine their reliability. Wednesday's experiment was conducted in an alcove off a maze of tunnels carved years ago for such tests.

AFP adds: The mayors of the two atomic-bombed cities of Japan voiced anger at a US underground plutonium experiment despite their repeated opposition.

"The experiment shows the US intention to keep possessing nuclear weapons," Hiroshima Mayor Takashi Hiraoka told Japan Broadcasting Corp (NHK).

"It is very regrettable that they conducted the test despite our repeated requests for dropping the plan," said Hiraoka, one of survivors of the 1945 bombing. An atomic bomb ruined the western Japan city in the final days of World War II.

Ichio Ito, Mayor of Nagasaki, the southern Japan city hit by another atomic bomb after Hiroshima, said: "the test will lead to the development of new nuclear arms."

## Pak bldg collapse 9 rescued, 22 still buried beneath debris

KARACHI, July 3: Rescue workers used their hands Thursday to remove the rubble of a collapsed apartment building listening for any sound that might indicate survivors, reports AP.

Nine construction workers were rescued, five died and an estimated 22 are still buried beneath the debris of a partially constructed apartment building that collapsed on Wednesday as the workers were having their lunch on the second story.

By midday on Thursday rescue workers had recovered another three bodies from the debris, bringing to five the death toll.

The five-story building was almost complete when the earth shuddered and the structure caved in.

Firefighters and rescue workers said the construction material was shoddy and police has arrested the architect and owner of the building, which was part of a multi-housing scheme in this southern port city.

## India expresses concern over reports of Pak missile test

NEW DELHI, July 3: India expressed concern in a statement Thursday over reports that Pakistan has test-fired a medium-range missile which would be able to reach New Delhi, reports AP.

"We have noted with concern reports appearing in Pakistan dailies... about the test firing of a medium range missile by Pakistan," said an External Affairs statement, quoted by the Press Trust of India.

The government of India is assessing the implications of these reports, in particular for our safety.

The nation, an English language newspaper in Pakistan, reported on Wednesday that a new longer-range version of the country's indigenous Hataf missile had been tested, quoting "reliable" sources, it said its range was 800 kilometres (500 miles).

Pakistani military officials did not immediately deny or confirm the report.

This is the second controversy over missiles to threaten the two countries ongoing efforts to improve their relations.

Last month a report in the Washington Post, which appeared just before foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan, said India had deployed its "Prithvi" (earth) surface missiles near the Pakistan border.

The report was vehemently denied by New Delhi.

The Times of India, meanwhile, said today that if the reports were true New Delhi would be within range of attack.

Former air chief marshal NC Suri told the paper: "If these reports are correct, then these missiles will bring the capital under direct threat from Islamabad."

But what is even more pertinent is what kind of warhead these missiles will be armed with.

Both countries are "threshold" nuclear powers, believed to have the capability to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Pakistan already has Hataf-I Missiles, with a range of 100 kilometres (63 miles), and Hataf-II, which can hit targets up to 200 kilometres (125 miles) away.

## Abducted ferry crew under LTTE custody Lankan army bring in fresh troops to revive offensive

COLOMBO, July 3: The military brought in fresh troops Thursday to revive an offensive to capture a key northern highway from separatist rebels, officials said, reports AP.

Government troops stooped fighting after they captured about one-quarter of the 88 kilometres (55 miles) highway to the isolated Jaffna Peninsula.

The military's offensive 220 kilometres (135 miles) north of the capital, Colombo, stalled after two furious rebel counterattacks in June killed more than 300 soldiers.

The military says at least 345 soldiers and 917 rebels have been killed since the offensive began on May 13.

About 20,000 troops backed by battle tanks, artillery and warplanes aim to open a land route to the government-held peninsula whose half a million people can now be supplied only by air and sea.

Government forces captured the peninsula, long the main stronghold of the rebels, in May 1996.

Two soldiers were killed in the peninsula on Wednesday,

and another two wounded when guerrilla infiltrators lobbed a grenade at a patrol, the military said.

Rebels are fighting to create a homeland for the minority Tamils, who, they say, are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese community. The Sinhalese control the government and military in the Indian Ocean island.

PTI adds: The abducted crew members of a Sri Lankan ferry are under the custody of Tamil militants in a rebel-controlled island in the northwestern Mannar region, officials said.

Army sources Colombo said security forces have received definite information that the crew members including two Indonesians were alive and kept as hostages at the Viduthalathivu, 20 kms from Mannar.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) unit in Colombo, meanwhile, has appealed to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as they were involved in ferrying refugees.

Also the ship, set on fire by the rebels yesterday, was completely destroyed.

## BRIEFLY

**Russian Justice Minister sacked:** Russian Justice Minister Valentin Kovalev was sacked Wednesday amid a scandal over his alleged appearance in a nightclub sauna frequented by a notorious Mafia group, the Kremlin told AP.

He was replaced by Sergei Stepashin, the former head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor to the Soviet-era KGB, a spokesman said. The decision was taken during a meeting between President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

**Indian cargo plane missing:** A cargo plane belonging to a courier company disappeared over western India early Thursday morning and may have crashed, airport officials said, AP reports from Bombay.

The F-27 Fokker airplane had two crew members, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The plane on a flight from Bombay to the southern city of Bangalore, about 800 kilometres (500 miles) southeast, disappeared from the air traffic controllers radar screens 10 minutes after taking off, the officials said.

**US plane crashes into river, 3 killed:** A small airplane trying to return to the airport because of an open cargo door hit some trees Wednesday and crashed into the Mississippi River, killing the pilot and two passengers, AP reports from St. Paul Park.

Two other passengers survived by swimming about 50 feet (15 metres) to an island, where they were rescued by a tugboat.

**Top Mafia leader held in Italy:** Italian police on Wednesday arrested Gaspare Spatuzza, who allegedly ranks among the Sicilian Mafia's most ruthless killers, a spokesman said, AP reports from Rome.

Spatuzza, who is among Italy's most wanted men, attempted to flee arrest and was shot and wounded in the hand, the spokesman said.

**Noted US actor Jimmy Stewart dies:** Jimmy Stewart, the legendary Hollywood actor who became an international symbol of the idealistic American, died Wednesday, local radio reported. He was 89, AP says from Los Angeles.

The report said Stewart died of heart failure at his California home. His death came a day after that of another Hollywood star from the same period, Robert Mitchum. Born May 20, 1908.

## Thunderstorms kill 7 in US

DETROIT, July 3: Severe thunderstorms tore through several US states on Wednesday night, lifting houses from their foundations, uprooting trees, toppling power lines and killing at least seven people, reports AP.

In the state of Ohio, a tornado destroyed some mobile homes and knocked out power in southwest and central parts of the state. Tornadoes touched down in Indiana, but no injuries were reported.

Three children and two adults who sought shelter under a gazebo in the Detroit suburb of Grosse Pointe Farms were killed when the gazebo was blown into Lake St. Clair.

Eight others were rescued from the water, said sheriff's spokeswoman Nancy Mouradian.

## Nigeria to hold presidential polls on Aug '98

ABUJA, July 3: Nigeria will hold presidential elections on August 1 next year, the head of the national committee in charge of the country's transition to civilian rule announced Wednesday, AP says from Abuja.

The military junta will hand over power to a democratically elected president in October 1998 under the phased transition plan announced by strongman General Sani Abacha in October 1995, judge Mamman Nasir said.



An Albanian presidential guard holds up his gun Thursday as he shouts at a woman during a pro-monarchy demonstration in the centre of Tirana. The presidential guards arrived to protect the demonstrators from police. The country voted last Sunday in early parliamentary elections and in a referendum to decide between a monarchy or republic.

— AFP/UNB photo.

## India's missile programme isn't entirely indigenous: CIA

Aziz Haniffa writes from Washington

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has cast doubt on India's contention that its ballistic missile programme is wholly indigenous, saying New Delhi has sought assistance from outside.

A report submitted by the agency to the U.S. Congress also accused India and China of supplying Iran with equipment to help it develop chemical weapons.

The report titled, "The Acquisition of Technology: Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Advanced Conventional Munitions," said, "India sought some items for its ballistic missile programme during the reporting period from a variety of sources."

It claimed that between July and December 1996 India had "also sought nuclear-related items, some of which may have been intended for its nuclear weapons programme."

Russia and China, according to the report, were the key suppliers of the most destructive weapons and technology during the latter half of 1996 and assisted countries including India, Pakistan and Iran in developing ballistic missiles, chemical weapons, or capability to develop nuclear weapons.

The unclassified report noted that during the latter half of 1996 "China was the most significant supplier of WMD-related goods and technology to foreign countries."

It said Beijing "provided a

tremendous variety of assistance to both Iran's and Pakistan's ballistic missile programmes." China, the report said, was "Also the primary source of nuclear-related equipment and technology to Pakistan and a key supplier to Iran during this reporting period."

The report, which noted that "Iran continues to be one of the most active countries seeking to acquire all types of WMD technology and advanced conventional weapons," said China and Russia had been the "Primary sources for missile-related goods."

But in terms of acquiring equipment and technology for manufacture of poison gas, the CIA report said "Iran obtained the bulk of its chemical weapon equipment from China and India."

On May 22 this year only Chinese firms were slapped with sanctions by the U.S. for knowingly selling equipment to Iran and providing Tehran with the wherewithal to manufacture poison gas.

The report, completed last month by the agency's Nonproliferation Centre, also alleged that "Russia supplied a variety of ballistic missile-related goods to foreign countries, especially to Iran."

It also said that Moscow was an "important source for nuclear programmes in Iran and, to a lesser extent, India and

Pakistan." The report, which claimed that its contents reflected a consensus among government nonproliferation experts in the various U.S. agencies besides the CIA, said, "Pakistan was very aggressive in seeking out equipment, material and technology for its nuclear weapons programme, with China as its principal supplier."

It said Islamabad "also sought a wide variety of nuclear-related goods from many Western nations, including the United States."

The report, reinforced earlier reports that "China also was a major supplier to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, providing technology and assistance." It acknowledged that "Pakistan has made strong efforts to acquire an indigenous capability in missile production technologies."

The report acknowledged that for all of Washington's efforts, "countries of concern continued last year to acquire substantial amounts of WMD-related equipment, materials and technology, as well as modern conventional weapons."

Since China and Russia remained the major suppliers, the report said, Beijing and Moscow "are key to any future efforts to stem the flow of dual-use goods and modern weapons to countries of concern."

— India Abroad News Service

## Hong Kongers seem normal after reunited with communist China

HONG KONG, July 3: Everything had changed but nothing had changed as work resumed after the world's first handover of a booming capitalist territory to a communist power, reports Reuter.

Hong Kongers trooped off to the office and their commuter trains and buses were as punctual as always.

There were no troops on the streets and the police presence was as unobtrusive as ever, despite China's reputation for obsessive security and the trumpeted arrival of 4,000 mainland soldiers with armoured cars a couple of days before.

Police were most noticeable around landlides unleashed by days of torrential rain, a common occurrence at this time.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook had apologised to Hong Kong's new leader, Tung Chee-hwa, for bringing the rain from his soggy Isle, Hong Kongers saw nothing unusual in that.

"Everything is as usual. So calm, people are worried about the rain — whether they can get

to work on time," said office administrator Pamela Cheung, back at her desk after the five-day handover holiday.

There were no reports of revenge-taking on the former imperialists by the new masters of the colony-become-special administrative region.

British expatriates taking their early walks on the drenched pathways of the peak and Chinese doing their dawn tai chi exercises under their umbrellas exchanged cheerful good morning "jo-sans" as before.

Chinese taxi drivers, many from the mainland, were as surely as ever and still had difficulty finding second gear.

Thailand's financial crisis dominated the front pages of most newspapers, sweeping aside transition fireworks as Hong Kongers refocused on their customary pursuit of money. The rollercoaster Hang Seng Index fairly typically opened at a record high and equally routinely fell again.

On the other hand, the political scene was much altered. Gone was colonial governor

Chris Patten's feisty — some said quixotic — jousting on democracy and human rights.

In came Chief Executive Tung, every inch the corporate CEO, making clear that business and sound administration, not politics and certainly not battles with Beijing, will be his theme.

Handpicked by Beijing for the job, Tung said Hong Kong and China needed to get to know each other better. Moving easily back and forth from Chinese to English, Unlike English-only Patten, he sidestepped tough questions that sought to draw him into the kind of political fray his predecessor relished.

In the same convention centre where Tung met the press for the first time as boss, China's leaders had stamped their authority in a fundamentally different style from the British.

President Jiang Zemin and party colleagues presided at the swearing-in of a new Beijing-appointed legislature in a ceremony that proceeded with all the stilted formality of Chinese communist events.

The troops they had sent in

to garrison the territory were stiff, stand-offish and extremely formal in sharp contrast to the modern service industry-oriented British Army.

The red flag fluttered above government house, and there were no flags on the cenotaph, Britain's memorial to the dead of two world wars, as the departing forces had taken theirs and no one had got round to replacing them.

Behind the scenes, the new government was studying every law and amendment pushed through the colonial legislature in its dying days by the democratic party with a view, said Tung, to do "what is necessary to protect this community."

"He made clear he was uncomfortable with politically active Hong Kongers' habit of taking to the streets in noisy protest whenever upset."

"Hong Kong has been separated from the motherland for some years," Tung said.

"I don't think the people of Hong Kong know the motherland very well."

## 'Israel hampering ME peace purposefully'

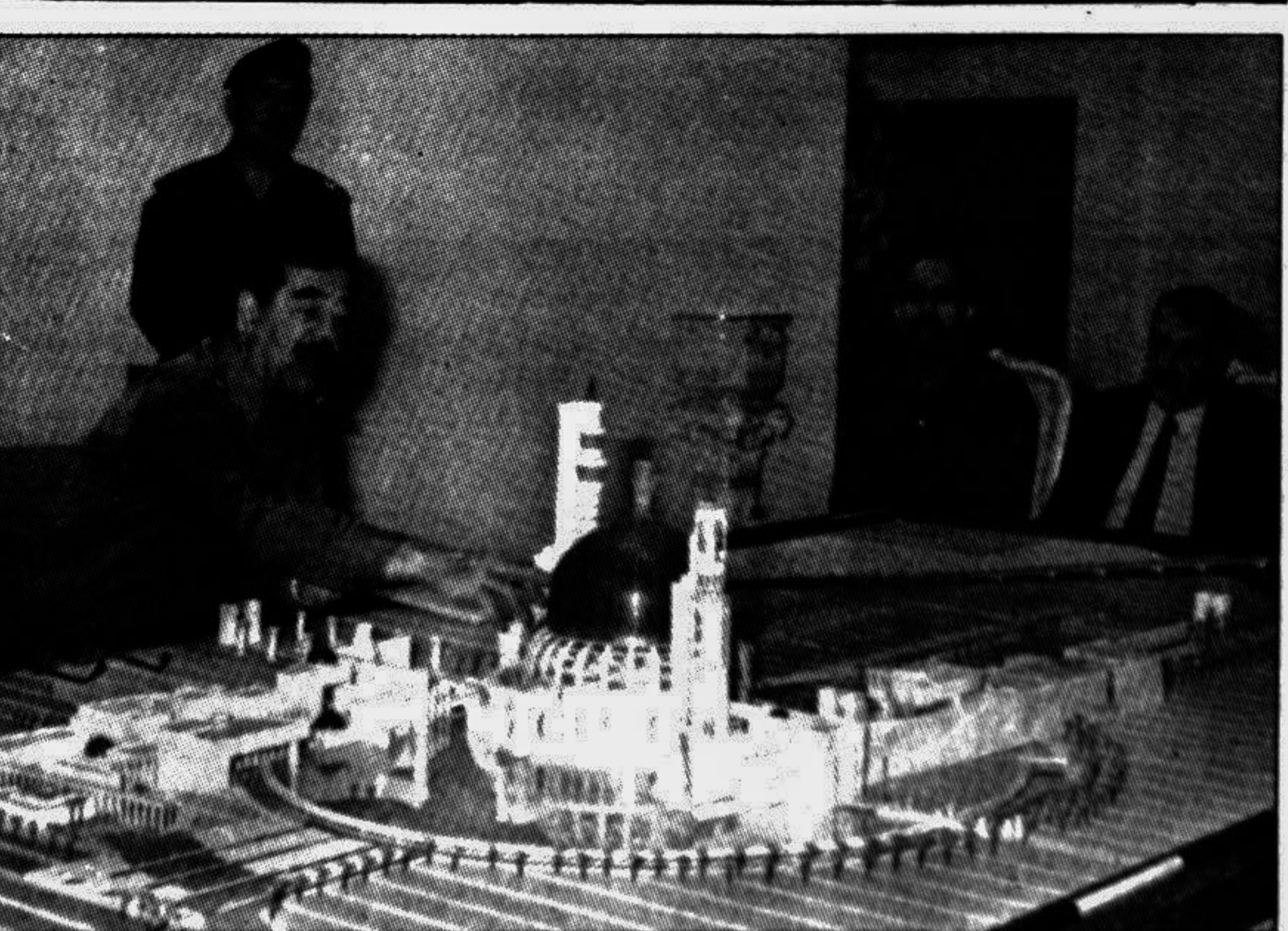
CAIRO, Egypt, July 3: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived Wednesday for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and complained that Israel was purposefully hampering the Middle East peace process, reports AP.

There are 34 points which we agreed upon and which the Israelis intentionally are not implementing," Arafat said on arrival at Cairo International Airport.

"This is happening while they continue to confiscate Palestinian land, Judaize Jerusalem and establish settlements," he said.

Arafat was to meet with Mubarak on Thursday morning, Egypt, the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, has been trying to get the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks back on track.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations broke down in March after Israel began construction of a new Jewish neighbourhood in east Jerusalem, where the Palestinians want to make their future capital.



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein examines late on Tuesday designs of the Grand Saddam Mosque which will be built in Baghdad. The Mosque will be the biggest in the world, and built despite the harsh conditions of the embargo imposed following the Gulf War.

— AFP/UNB photo