

International

Arafat terms deal a 'trick'

Israeli settlers leave Arab neighbourhood

JERUSALEM, Sept 19: The Israeli government agreed Thursday to allow a Jewish settlement in the heart of an Arab neighbourhood in east Jerusalem, in a deal denounced as "a trick" by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, reports AP.

The 11 Jews who sparked the crisis by moving into two buildings in the Ras al-Anud neighbourhood unceremoniously moved out Thursday evening, in line with an agreement reached between the government and their patron, US millionaire Irving Moskowitz.

But several of their many supporters remained at the site, part of the deal that allowed for 10 seminary students to stay on as security guards and workers.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had hoped the deal would satisfy the Palestinians while placating right-wing members of his parliamentary coalition who had threatened to bring down his government if the settlers were forcibly expelled.

Netanyahu promised that deal would not lead to a larger

Jewish enclave, saying in a statement: "This is not the time to settle families in Ras al-Anud, or build a new neighbourhood in the area."

But Palestinians and Israeli peace activists condemned the arrangement as a capitulation that in effect sanctioned a new Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem, the sector claimed by the Palestinians as a future capital.

As the settlers were leaving in vans, scores of Israeli peace activists demonstrated outside the compound, shouting "No deal" and "We don't want war!" Later, several Molotov cocktails were thrown toward the compound, apparently by Arab protesters. No one was hurt.

A previously unknown group calling itself the "National and Islamic forces" was distributing leaflets throughout east Jerusalem late Thursday, saying that "the battle for Jerusalem has started," and calling on Palestinians to "be ready for the fight. All options are open."

Another report adds: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright regards it as good news

that three Jewish families are leaving an Arab neighborhood in east Jerusalem, her spokesman said Thursday.

Albright, just back from the Middle East, had called on Israel during her trip to refrain from moves that provoke Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

The house will be taken over by caretakers, not by a Jewish center, said James P. Rubin, the State Department spokesman.

He credited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with opposing the families' moving in and for a solution that removes them from the neighborhood.

Their staying would have hurt peacemaking efforts and, thereby, Israel, Rubin said.

It also "could have led to a provocative or lightning-rod reaction on the part of the Palestinians," he said.

Netanyahu won the State Department's praise also for easing travel curbs on Palestinians and for agreeing to turn over to the authority some of the taxes withheld from Palestinian workers.

"The secretary regards it as good news that the families are moving out," Rubin said. "That is what is important."

Albright's policy is to try to freeze Israeli housing and construction activity in Jerusalem and on the West Bank, preserving the situation for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

She also aims to build enough trust between the two sides so they will resume stalled peace talks.

Last week, she confirmed her policy was one of land for peace — that Israel should give up territory in exchange for Arab recognition.

"We hope and expect that the status quo will not change," Rubin said.

Arafat intends to establish a Palestinian state on the West Bank with its capital in Jerusalem. Through the Oslo agreements with Labour governments in Israel the authority has gained control of part of the West Bank and Gaza.

Netanyahu has signaled a willingness to withdraw further, but is opposed to a Palestinian state.

Indian troops kill 9 in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Sept 19: Indian security forces searching for separatist militants fired two mortar bombs into a village in Kashmir, killing nine people, police said today.

Paramilitary soldiers from the border security force fired on Thursday evening into Arin village, 75 km (45 miles) north of the capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, Srinagar, local police told Reuters.

Police said the victims included six women "they were all civilians, not militants," said one police officer who asked not to be identified.

The paramilitary unit was searching for suspected militants when it fired the mortar bombs towards a forest next to the village, they said. The rounds fell on homes in the village.

Police and hospital officials say about 20,000 people have died in insurgency-related violence since a separatist rebellion erupted in Jammu and Kashmir state seven years ago.

Separatist leaders and the state's chief minister Farooq Abdullah, estimate that some 50,000 have died.

Unique tribute to pachyderm

CALCUTTA, Sept 19: In a unique tribute, the West Bengal government has decided to erect a memorial for an elephant which died in July this year at the Garumara Reserve Forest in North Bengal, reports PTI.

The state's Forest Minister Jogesh Burman, said that he would unveil a statue of 60-year-old 'Jatraprasad,' at the Barnani point inside the forest on October 20. A watchtower erected in the nearby Garati point would be dedicated to the elephant's memory.

Jatraprasad, the Forest Department's best 'Kunkri' (trained) elephant, had worked in the Garumara area since 1972. The hard-working pachyderm was very popular among Forest Department staff and had a particular affection for children.

Early this year, the Forest Department had decided to 'superannuate' Jatraprasad and there were talks of putting him on pension. But while a decision on these matters were pending the animal died in harness, leaving many of its human colleagues in tears.

NATO may continue presence in Bosnia after June '98

WASHINGTON, Sept 19: Even when the current peace-keeping mission in Bosnia ends next summer, NATO may continue to have a presence in the region, the alliance's top diplomat is hinting, reports AP.

In remarks to reporters Thursday, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana said the focus for now should be on completing the work of the 36,000-strong Stabilisation Force, known as SFOR, whose NATO mandate is due to expire next June.

"SFOR as such will not be continued — as such" beyond June, Solana said, putting emphasis on the term "as such" to suggest that an intervention force under some other name and form could replace SFOR in Bosnia and continue the work of maintaining peace.

Clinton will meet Gujral, Sharif in NY on Monday

WASHINGTON, Sept 19: President Bill Clinton will meet the prime minister of India and Pakistan next Monday in New York when he attends the UN General Assembly session, the White House announced today, reports Xinhua.

Clinton is likely to express his support for the two countries' discussions on the divided region of Kashmir when he meets Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, a White House spokesman said.

But the spokesman stressed that the United States would not seek to take a role in those talks.

"We do not wish in any way to insert ourselves into the dialogue on Kashmir, nor to be a mediator, but we are very supportive of the fact that both sides appear to be pursuing progress through dialogue and we want to see that continue," the spokesman said.

South Korea grounds F-16 jets again

SEOUL, Sept 19: South Korea suspended training flights of 50 F-16 fighter jets Friday for safety checks following two crashes of the plane in less than two months, reports AP.

Those jets were bought or assembled by South Korea under its 5.2 billion dollars deal with Lockheed Martin of the United States.

The decision came one day after a F-16 crashed during a routine training mission Thursday. A similar suspension was imposed until early this month following the crash of another F-16 in early August.

The latest suspension did not affect non-training missions such as reconnaissance and patrol duty, ministry officials said.

Meanwhile, a special com-

mittee headed by a deputy assistant defense minister will "conduct a review of all aspects" of its F-16 programme, from part supply to assembly and maintenance, the ministry said.

Ministry officials blamed Thursday's crash on a "flame-out" — a sudden failure of combustion in the engine — but they were still investigating what caused the malfunction.

Last week, investigators said the August crash also was due to an engine failure caused by a malfunction in the plane's fuel injection system.

So far, it has bought 12 F-16s and assembled 40 more under a license agreement with Lockheed Martin. It also has F-16s deployed before its began the buildup.

Gujral to launch aid package for girls in October

NEW DELHI, Sept 19: Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral will launch an aid package next month for more than two million girls born to the poorest families, The Times of India newspaper reported today, says AP.

Gujral will start the schemes on October 2, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi — India's independence hero and a champion of women's rights, it said.

The newspaper said Gujral would launch the drive by paying 500 rupees (14 dollars) to the family of each girl born after August 15 if the family's annual incomes were less than 11,000 rupees (314 dollars).

Gujral had pledged to bring about gender equality in a speech on August 15, India's independence day, saying girls should no longer be regarded as a curse or a burden.

"Nearly 2.2 million girls born every year among the poorest of the poor will benefit," the daily said adding the scheme could help prevent "infanticide and selling of girls in poverty-stricken states where the birth of a girl is regarded as a curse."

The government would however, limit the one-time grant of 500 rupees to two girls for every family.



Camelia Anwar Sadat, daughter of the late Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat, speaks at a news conference before giving a speech, "Making Peace a Reality," at Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield, Mass, Thursday. Speaking on the bus attack in Egypt, Camelia said she felt "that it was an internal affair which would not affect the peace process in the Middle East." — AP/UNB photo

Panel's recommendation

UN should help reduce excessive accumulation of guns world over

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 19: The United Nations should help reduce the "excessive accumulation" of guns in the world and convene a global conference to fight small-arms trafficking, a UN panel recommends, reports AP.

Such a conference could prepare a treaty controlling the international trade.

The US National Rifle Association quickly criticized the report, saying it was not a "proper subject area" for the world organization. But one panel member described it as only a first step.

The still-unpublished document, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press,

transfer of small arms and light weapons.

Among other things, the report recommends that the United Nations:

Support, possibly through peacekeeping troops, the destruction of small arms left over once conflicts are settled.

Study the feasibility of high-tech "marking" of weapons from the time of manufacture, so they can be more easily traced.

Study the possibility of restricting production and trade of small arms to manufacturers and dealers authorized by states, and establishing a global database of licenses.

Progress in N-aid cut to Iran, Pakistan

US may clear way for N-power sales to China: State Deptt

WASHINGTON, Sept 19: China has made "substantial" progress in curbing nuclear assistance to Iran and Pakistan which may allow President Bill Clinton to clear the way for US nuclear power sales to Beijing soon, the US State Department said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

General Electric, Westinghouse and ABB Combustion have lobbied intensively for the certification.

Asked if the administration was ready for the step, Rubin said: "I think that we haven't made that kind of determination nor to my knowledge have we signaled that we intend to make that kind of determination."

"However, we have been working on this problem very hard and we have seen some signs of substantial progress... that would be our hope," he said. "If indeed we are able to make additional progress in

that (non-proliferation) area... (the PNC) would be a substantial component of the summit," he added.

Washington is looking for "clear and unequivocal assurances" that China is not assisting non-nuclear weapons states to become nuclear weapons states, he said. Iran and Pakistan have been the primary concerns.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin is to meet Clinton in Washington in late October or early November — a specific date has not been announced — for what is expected to be the most important Sino-American summit in years.

NASA urged to reconsider sending Americans to Mir

WASHINGTON, Sept 19: Russia's aging, leaky Mir space station poses an unacceptable risk and NASA should not send any more Americans, leaders of the House Science Committee said Thursday after a hearing on Mir safety reports AP.

Astronaut David Wolf is scheduled to be launched on space shuttle Atlantis next week to the Mir. He is to become the sixth astronaut to live on Mir, replacing Michael Foale, who has been on the Russian space station since May.

"There has been sufficient evidence put before this hearing to raise doubts about the safety of continued American long-term presence on the Mir," said Rep. F James Sensenbrenner, chairman of the committee.

"There is enough evidence," he said, "to force NASA to re-evaluate whether to send David Wolf up on the shuttle next week."

Sensenbrenner said the National Aeronautics and Space Administration should stop putting astronauts on Mir, but the agency could continue to supply the Russian space station with space shuttle flights. If Wolf goes on board, he said, NASA Administrator Daniel

Goldin will have "some explaining to do and I will give him the opportunity."

"The administrator has been forewarned that he makes that decision at his own risk," said Rep. George E. Brown Jr., a committee member who said he shared the chairman's concern.

Peggy Wilhide, a NASA spokeswoman, said Goldin was told of the congressmen's statements, but that space shuttle plans are unchanged. She said Goldin believes the safety of Mir has been thoroughly evaluated by an experienced NASA flight operations team and that there was "no technical rational to believe the Mir is unsafe."

As a final safeguard, she said, NASA is awaiting a safety report from Thomas Stafford, a former astronaut, who has been in Russia talking with space officials.

"We are confident in our people and our process," said Wilhide.

In the hearing, Russian space expert Marcia S Smith said that in view of a series of dangerous problems aboard the Mir, "justifying two more flights of NASA astronauts on Mir may be difficult."



President Bill Clinton and Mrs. Clinton, along with daughter Chelsea, wave from the steps of Air Force One Thursday at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., enroute to Stanford University in California. In a time-honored ritual, Chelsea Clinton began her journey into young adulthood on Thursday, one last trip with mom and dad for the poignant passage into her college years. — AP/UNB photo

Abacha was sick, admits Nigeria

LAGOS, Nigeria, Sept 19: Nigeria's government gave its first official statement Thursday on the state of the military ruler's health, admitting he had been ill but saying he was now fine, reports AP.

"Like any other person, the head of state was temporarily indisposed. But I can tell you today that he has sound health," David Attah, the spokesman for Gen. Sani Abacha, told reporters Thursday night.

The statement was in reaction to media reports in the past two weeks that said Abacha, who seized power in a military coup four years ago, was suffering cirrhosis of the liver. Editors of the news magazines that carried the reports have been sought by security agents who have raided their offices and homes.

Congress okays Jiang's plan to revamp debt-ridden industries

BEIJING, Sept 19: Chinese leader Jiang Zemin, seeking to cement his position atop the Communist Party, took charge Friday of a new leadership team strong on allies but moderated by members of rival groups, reports AP.

The Central Committee's selection of a new Politburo and its 7-member standing committee, the apex of power, marks the climax of China's political calendar. Barring factional fallout, Jiang and the other Politburo power-brokers will rule China for five years.

On Thursday a pivotal party congress strengthened Jiang's hand by endorsing his plan to revamp debt-ridden state industries and choosing the new policy-setting Central Committee. Gone from the committee was a potent rival, Qiao Shi, the par-

ty's No. 3 and head of the national legislature.

Qiao, however, kept his influence in the new standing committee, headed by Jiang. The inclusion of one Qiao associate, Wei Jianxing, head of the party's internal watchdog agency, ensured the liberal law-and-order faction would be represented.

Li Lianqiang, a former foreign trade minister highly regarded as an effective technocrat, was the only other new member and is said to be on good terms with Jiang.

The committee contains five holdovers from the last group: Jiang, Premier Li Peng and Vice Premier Zhu Rongji, both Jiang allies; Li Ruihuan, a protégé of late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping and head of a top government advisory body, and Hu

Jintao, in charge of organization and ideology for the party.

Contrary to speculation, several Jiang proteges were not included, signaling that while Jiang may be first among equals in the collective leadership he must still strike compromises.

Leadership changes are especially important in China. Lacking strong institutions, the one-party state relies on personalities to manage party and state affairs smoothly.

Jiang appeared confident, standing alongside the new leadership team in front of Chinese and foreign media in the Great Hall of the People Friday morning.

Five years ago at the last party congress, Jiang's patron, Deng, already shaky from the Parkinson's disease that ultimately debilitated him, was brought out to show he backed Jiang. Deng died in February, leaving Jiang alone this year to prove his mettle to party stalwarts.

Qiao's removal, and that of elderly Gen. Liu Huaqing, from the Central Committee on Thursday should have allowed Jiang to maneuver more supporters into top posts. Qiao, a standing committee member for 10 years, has tried to turn the legislature into a check on excessive party and government power.

On Thursday, Qiao looked dejected, sitting with his head bowed during the 15-minute congress closing ceremony in the Great Hall of the People. At one point, he waved to the television cameras as if saying goodbye. Premier Li, No. 2 in

the party, beamed.

Without a party post, Qiao will likely have to relinquish leadership of the legislature. Li, whose term as premier ends in March, is said to be interested in the job.

Qiao is believed to be in bad health, often a euphemism for political problems. Although ostensibly retired because of his age, Qiao, at 72, is only one year older than Jiang. It was unclear whether Qiao would get another state job.

"It was a unified congress. It was a victorious congress," Jiang, 71, said at the closing ceremony, speaking in front of a gold hammer and sickle, the communist symbol.

Jiang, picked from relative obscurity in 1989 to lead a divided party after the Tiananmen Square crackdown, used

the congress to stake a claim to Deng's leadership mantle.

The congress amended the party constitution to make "Deng Xiaoping Theory" its "guiding ideology," according to Xinhua.

The amendment is more than cosmetic. By enshrining Deng's pragmatic approach to economic development in the constitution, Jiang hopes to protect unorthodox reforms from criticism.

His solutions for restructuring the state sector have already drawn fire from conservative central planners and radical communists who regard plans to issue shares in companies as a threat to state control.

"Deng Xiaoping Theory" also means the party will concentrate on economic, not political, reforms.

Japan may sign treaty to ban landmines

TOKYO, Sept 19: Japanese Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi said today Tokyo may sign a global treaty to ban landmines at an official convention in December, reports Reuters.

"It would be contradictory for Japan on one hand to contribute to the removal of landmines in Cambodia and not accept the treaty on the other hand," Obuchi said.

"It does not make sense to reject the treaty," he told a news conference.

More than 100 countries and organisations ended a conference in Oslo on Thursday by adopting a draft of the Anti-personnel Landmine Treaty which outlaws the use, production, sale and stocking of anti-personnel landmines.



Three unidentified fans of the U2 rock band are all smiles as they await the start of the U2's first ever concert in Italy, Thursday. The night happening will be attended by an estimated 120,000 gathering at Rome's Urbe Airport, where the concert takes place. — AP/UNB photo