

Israel, Palestinians ready to resume talks soon

NEW YORK, Sept 29: Israel and the Palestinian Authority appear ready to reopen their negotiations, but whether the talks will get to core issues and succeed is likely to depend on Israel's security concerns, reports AP.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, meeting Sunday night with US mediator Dennis Ross, stressed security is our No. 1 issue.

He and Ross were guardedly optimistic there would be an announcement Monday of a resumption.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was bringing Levy together with Mahmoud Abbas, a senior adviser to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. She also was meeting separately with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, but there apparently was little hope of a breakthrough on that track.

The first order of business for Israel and the Palestinians is an overdue Israeli pullback on the West Bank. Under the 1993 and 1995 Oslo accords, Israel decides how far back to pull its troops and turn administrative control over to Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Palestinian demands for use of an airport and seaport also would be on the table. But Al-

bright hopes to accelerate the pace of peacemaking by getting the two sides to take up the toughest issues.

These include Palestinian desires for a separate state with its capital in Jerusalem.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu already has signaled a willingness to pull back on the West Bank. But last week he announced Jewish settlements there would be expanded.

He also is opposed to yielding control of any part of Jerusalem to Arafat, a view shared by many Israelis across a wide political spectrum.

Albright, for her part, says the negotiations should be guided by the principle of land for peace — that Israel gives up territory won in wars in exchange for Palestinian acceptance of the 49-year-old Jewish state.

The six-month breakoff was marked by deadly attacks by Islamic militants on Israeli civilians and Israeli decisions to expand the Jewish presence in Jerusalem.

Netanyahu said Sunday the Palestinians had made "first, preliminary steps" toward combating terrorism. He also ordered that \$17 million in frozen tax revenues collected from Palestinian workers — about half what Israel owes the Palestinian Authority — be released. Israel cut off tax payments to the Palestinians after two suicide bombings in Jerusalem killed 25 people, including five suicide bombers.

In another conciliatory gesture, Israel announced late Sunday that more Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza who had been barred from Israel would be permitted to enter beginning Monday.

"The main thing is to make it clear to the other side that we want to go forward with the process, but that they must fight terror," Netanyahu told Israel Television. "There is a change in the past few days. I think that finally something has sunk in."

Netanyahu said he expected an agreement on resuming talks to be reached at Albright's meeting with Levy and Abbas.

In New York, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Albright had been working hard in recent days to get Mideast peacemaking back on track.

"She hopes that as a result of recent contact between the United States and the parties,



June 15, 1997 file photo of Asif Ali Zardari, husband of Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister of Pakistan, coming out of Karachi Central Jail. Zardari said that he will remain in jail as long as Sharif's government is in power. Zardari is the man most often blamed for his wife, Benazir Bhutto's fall, not once but twice from power.

Good news for egg lovers

NEW YORK, Sept 29: Here is some good news for egg lovers, reports UNB.

Until recently doctors were advising to ration the use of eggs, saying it was OK to eat the whites of an egg, but not the yolks which is too rich in cholesterol and could be dangerous for the 'faint-hearted.'

The same scientists are now saying that eggs are among the best nutritional foods.

At an international conference on nutrition, held recently in Bethesda, Maryland, scientists concluded that eggs are very good for our health and for the development of our children's brain.

According to Wednesday's New York Times, which reported on the conference's findings, on average each egg carries 80 calories, 6 grams of protein and has more than adequate amount of vitamins A, D, E and K.

Most importantly, it is rich with omega-3, a fatty acid considered essential to brain growth and development.

Scientists at the Bethesda conference asserted that omega-3 can help reduce the risk of heart diseases, high blood pressure, tumour growth and diabetes. Many varieties of fish are also rich with omega-3.

Doctors usually advise people with high blood pressure to avoid the yellow yolks of eggs, which is considered to be high in cholesterol.

Scientists still agree that the yolks are a source of high cholesterol, but they also contend that there is no reason to be scared.

Our body makes its own cholesterol, which is an essential component of cell membranes and a key ingredient in hormone manufacture. If we consume more cholesterol, the body will make less, thus creating a balance.

The New York Times also quotes two recent studies done at New York's Columbia University. Both studies found that students who ate three to four eggs a day for weeks on end had virtually no change in their blood cholesterol levels.

Yolks-generated cholesterol should not, however, be confused with saturated fat which is another source of cholesterol.

The Times quotes Dr Alice Lichtenstein of Tufts University as saying that the major determinant of plasma cholesterol — which causes all kinds of heart problem — is saturated fat. Red meat is the prime source of this dangerous cholesterol.

How many eggs should one eat? Dr Scott Grundy of the University of Texas says not more than three to four yolks-eggs a week. Dr David Kritchevsky of Wistar Institute, on the other hand, says eat as many as you want. "Eggs are good for you," he told the Times.

BRIEFLY

Indonesian quake death toll now 17: The death toll in a strong earthquake that rocked Indonesia's south Sulawesi on Sunday has risen to at least 17 with 331 injured, the official Antara news agency reported yesterday. Reuter says from Jakarta.

Rescue teams and military personnel were sent to the affected areas to evacuate the dead and injured, many hurt in falling buildings. The quake struck around 9.38 am on Sunday and was centred about 20 km (12 miles) north of the town of Parepare, an official of the Jakarta office of the Meteorological and Geophysical Agency said. He said the quake measured 6.0 on the open-ended Richter scale.



Dora Shkurovich, 85, cries as she remembers her 16 relatives killed by the Nazis in 1941 at during a ceremony at the Babi Yar monument in Kiev Sunday. Hundreds of people gathered to mark 56th anniversary of the Nazi massacre of Jews at Babi Yar. An estimated 150,000 people were machine-gunned at the ravine, mostly Jews. In the background is a 10-foot (3 meter) high menorah, erected by Jewish organisations in 1991.

China carries missiles' tests: China has carried out a series of exercises with new missiles in the northwestern Gobi Deserts, it was reported yesterday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

The drills, carried out recently at an air base, proved the abilities of new surface-to-air missiles, the Beijing-backed Chinese-language Wen Wei Po reported without stating the range of the missiles nor giving the date of the exercises.

China's military hierarchy had "commented favourably" on the drills conducted by the missile-armed unit of the People's Liberation Army, saying "the capability of aerial defence has improved further," it said.

Mishap claims 15 in India: The death toll in Sunday's bus mishap at Ranipur in Nadia district yesterday rose to fifteen while 27 others remain seriously injured, according to the DIG (headquarters), Prasun Mukherjee, PTI reports from Calcutta.

The accident occurred when an overcrowded private bus rumbled into a lamp-post, overturned and fell into a ditch at Ranipur under Chupra police station killing eight persons on the spot, he said.

The injured were admitted to the Krishnanagar Hospital where seven of them succumbed to their injuries.

Typhoon Fritz claims 25 in Vietnam: Authorities in Vietnam's central Quang Nam province were searching Monday for dozens of gold prospectors buried in landslides triggered by flash flooding, AP reports from Hanoi.

The flooding came in the wake of Typhoon Fritz, which late last week swept past the country's coast near the central city of Danang, the Communist Party newspaper, The People, reported. At least 25 people were killed and dozens more were still missing Monday after a weekend of strong winds and torrential rains. Most of the victims were prospectors illegally mining for gold, the newspaper reported. Hundreds of people from neighbouring provinces have moved the Quang Nam in the hope of tapping into that region's mini gold rush.

Huge cocaine seized in Spain: Spanish police seized 3.8 tonnes of cocaine overnight yesterday, the largest haul of cocaine ever netted in Spain, AFP reports from Tapia de Casariego.

Police said the drugs were spotted at the foot of a steep cliff on the Tapia de Casariego Coast in the northern province of Asturias.

There were no immediate details on the street value of the haul.

Emergency withdrawn from Sarawak Rains, easterly winds help reduce smog in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29: Torrential rains and easterly winds late on Sunday have helped reduce the smog covering much of peninsular Malaysia, reports Reuter.

The air in Kuala Lumpur, although still at unhealthy levels, was visibly clearer on Monday morning after the torrential downpour.

Malaysia's Department of Environment said the air pollution index (API) for the capital was "unhealthy" at 114 at 8 am (0000 GMT) on Monday, after hovering above the 200 mark last week.

The smoke pollution smothering Malaysia and several other Southeast Asian countries has come from numerous bush and forest fires in Indonesia. Nearly 10,000 fire-fighters are battling the blazes.

One city resident was sceptical that Sunday night's rain would do any lasting good. "There are thousands of kilometres of smog coming in from Indonesia," said a taxi driver as he plied through the capital city. "It's like an army marching in."

In the eastern Malaysian state of Sarawak on Borneo Island, whose 10-day state of emergency was lifted on Sunday night by Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, the API reading on Monday at 8 am (0000 GMT) was "good" at 32, the department said.

An API reading of 200 to 300 is considered "very unhealthy," with 301-500 considered "hazardous". Kuching's pollution readings went over 800 last week, and the state of emergency was declared on September 19 after the API topped 500.

Experts say exposure to a level between 200 and 300 for a day is roughly equivalent to smoking 20 cigarettes.

AP adds: All schools, offices, factories, farms and other enterprises reopened Monday in Malaysia's Borneo island state after a state of emergency due to hazardous haze imposed there was lifted Sunday.

"Everything is back to normal. The streets are busy once again. I feel great to be breathing fresh air once again," said Zarina Jahan, a marketing executive in Kuching, Sarawak's capital.

Australia's Labour Party vows to bring down Howard

CANBERRA, Sept 29: Australia's Labour opposition vowed today to bring down Prime Minister John Howard over the travel allowance scandal, saying he was either incompetent or involved in some sort of cover-up, reports Reuter.

"Clearly, we're going after the prime minister," Labour's Simon Crean, who has led the attack over wrong travel claims, told Australian Broadcasting Corp radio.

The office of the prime minister is clearly implicated in a cover-up. The issue now is what role did the prime minister play in that."

Howard has denied any knowledge of the affair, which last week led to the resignation of three ministers and the sacking of two of Howard's staff, including his most senior adviser.

But Crean said revelations that two of Howard's sacking in May about wrongly claimed travel allowances and secret repayments implicated the prime minister himself.

"When the cover-up involves the highest office in the land, when you've got three ministerial scapels and two ministerial advisers gone. There's something rotten there," Crean said.

"It's either incompetence or it's gross cover-up. Either way it's terrible for this country."

Crean confirmed that Labour held a party room meeting late on Sunday night in which they planned the attack on Howard, which would be launched in today's question time at 0400 GMT (two pm).

Labour also had information that implicated several other government politicians in the affair including other ministers, but Crean declined to say how many were involved.

"It's going to be very difficult for the prime minister to address his reshuffle in the context of clouds still hanging over some of those that are suggested of being reshuffled."

Howard is expected to announce a sweeping reshuffle of his ministry later this week to fill vacancies left by last week's events.

Crean also denied that Labour had obtained its information illegally, despite admitting in a Sunday television interview that government department information had been down loaded to the opposition from the Internet.

Mass funeral for Indonesian jet crash victims held

MEDAN, Sept 29: Weeping relatives threw flower petals and bouquets into a mass grave and called out the names of their dead as 48 unidentified bodies, mutilated beyond recognition in Indonesia's worst air disaster, were buried Monday, reports AP.

The other 186 people killed Friday when a Garuda Airbus A300B-4 crashed on approach to haze-shrouded Medan airport were identified, officials said.

Most were turned over to their families on Sunday for private burial, after the harrowing process of identification. Heartbroken relatives roamed among coffins and tarpaulin-covered remains in an open-air morgue, clothes pressed against their faces to fight the stench as they tried to identify their loved ones from scraps of clothing or parts of bodies.

Among the dead were about 20 foreigners, including four Americans, two Britons, four Germans, and six each from Taiwan and Japan.

The unidentified were placed in coffins and buried in a half-hour ceremony under clear skies Monday at the Mamborano Monument. The cemetery is just outside the perimeter fence of Medan's Polonia Airport, and already contains 57 victims of a 1979 Garuda commuter plane crash. A stone statue of a Fokker aircraft, the type involved in the 1979 crash, marks the monument.

President Suharto has asked Transportation Minister Haryanto Dhanutirto to move the airport, and in the meantime, to review all operations connected with flights, pilots and safety. The official Antara news agency quoted State Secretary Minister Murdiono as saying the relocation and safety check are being planned "because there have been accidents involving flights to Medan."

Investigators searched Monday in the mud and jungle growth of the crash site for the flight-data and cockpit-voice recorders that could help explain why the 15-year-old twin-engine jetliner crashed on approach to the Sumatra island airport, killing all aboard.

'Di was main source for book exposing her failed marriage'

LONDON, Sept 29: Princess Diana was the main source for the book which first exposed the myth of her idyllic marriage to Prince Charles, The Times reported Monday, says AP.

The newspaper quoted author Andrew Morton as saying that Diana held six lengthy but undisclosed interviews with him in 1991, the year before Morton's best-selling book, "Diana: Her True Story," was published.

"To all intents and purposes it was her autobiography, the personal testament of a woman who saw herself at the time as voiceless and powerless," Morton said in the foreword to a revised edition of the book published this week, a month after Diana died aged 36 in a Paris car crash on August 31.

During her lifetime, Diana denied that she had cooperated with Morton on the book, which made him a multi-millionaire.

In fact, said Morton, Diana read every page of manuscript, made detailed changes and even supplied photographs from family albums. She also chose the cover picture.

The Sun newspaper said Monday that Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, was planning to build a museum in memory of his sister.

The newspaper did not name a source, but quoted an anonymous Buckingham Palace aide saying the museum could be built near Diana's burial site at Althorp, 50 miles northwest of London, as a "Shrine commemorating the life of the princess."

The museum would contain a selection of the condolence cards, toys and letters left by mourners in their thousands outside Diana's Kensington Palace home in west London and at other sites throughout Britain and the world.

A collection of her clothing and jewelry would also be included, The Sun said, as well as photographs telling the story of her life from childhood to adulthood.

Author Morton said the latest version of his book included 18,000 words of direct quotes from Diana.

Morton said Diana had wanted a favorable book about her life published, adding that she would be portrayed as an unfit mother to sons William, 15, and Harry, 13, when her marriage to her to the throne Prince Charles broke down.

Amnesty offered to defenders of Mazar-i-Sharif Taliban orders expulsion of 3 foreign UN workers

ISLAMABAD, Sept 29: The Taliban religious army ordered three United Nations workers to leave the country after they walked out of a meeting where a female colleague of theirs was told to speak from behind a curtain, UN officials said Monday, reports AP.

The Taliban army has strict laws about women that forbid them from working, going to school or fraternizing with any males other than relatives.

The problem began last week when Satu Suikkari, a native of Finland and lawyer working on behalf of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, appeared before the Taliban high command at their headquarters in southern Kandahar.

She was there to ask the Taliban to investigate complaints that minority Afghans, who had been living in exile in Iran and Pakistan, were being persecuted by Afghanistan's Taliban rulers upon their return to their homeland.

Most members of the Taliban army are Pashtuns, the country's majority ethnic group.

When the UN delegation entered the room, a curtain was strung across and Suikkari was told she would have to sit behind the curtain to give her speech.

She didn't mind. She told The Association Press she just wanted to get her message across even if that meant sitting behind a curtain.

But her male colleagues objected and walked out.

The Taliban militia, which rules two-thirds of Afghanistan, was insulted.

"She and everybody else agreed to the arrangement," the English-language daily newspaper, The News, quoted a Taliban official as saying.

"We were astonished when these three men walked out to protest the arrangement," Wakil Ahmed was quoted as saying. "Their conduct was unacceptable as UN officials as the customs and traditions of the host country ought to be respected by all foreigners working there."

The three UN officials who have been expelled are: Samaneh Tamrat of Ethiopia, a UNICEF project officer, American Gary Helseth, a UN Drug Control Programme officer, and Australian Dave Edwards, who heads the UN's demining programme in southern Afghanistan.

All three workers were based permanently in Kandahar.

Reuter adds: Afghanistan's Taliban Islamic militia Sunday offered an amnesty to the defenders of the main northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, which it says it has besieged for several days.

If the opponents lay down arms voluntarily their heads and property will be safe and the fate of those captured in fighting be decided in court, Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar said in a statement quoted by a Pakistan-based Afghan news service.

Exiled govt hails SLORC's decision not to crack down on NLD conference

BANGKOK, Sept 29: Myanmar's exiled government today hailed as a "positive" step the Yangon military junta's decision not to crack down on an anniversary meeting of opposition chief Aung San Suu Kyi's party, reports AFP.

But the exiled Cabinet said in a statement here that the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) would pursue its peaceful battle against the State Law and Order Restoration Council's (SLORC) dictatorship.

"We regard as a positive development the permission by SLORC authorities, unlike in previous years, for the NLD anniversary conference to take place on some conditions and without intimidation, blockade or arrest," it said.

The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) statement came after Aung San Suu Kyi's party received the unprecedented blessing of the junta to hold a congress to mark its Ninth anniversary.

The NLD ended its first successful congress in years Sunday with a renewed call for the ruling junta to enter a political dialogue with its leaders.

There is no other means to solve the nation's problems other than a meaningful dialogue," the party announced in a resolution read at the end of the two-day meeting and adopted unanimously by more than 700 delegates.

At earlier congresses scheduled for the Yangon home of Nobel peace prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, hundreds of party supporters and activists have been detained as they attempted to travel to the capital.

But, despite Yangon's apparent shift in stance, the latest congress, the NCGUB — made up in part of NLD members who fled Myanmar after a brutal junta crackdown in 1988 — said the struggle for democracy would continue.

"We believe that the league, keeping General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi as its main pillar, will unitedly and resolutely face up to the SLORC military dictatorship," the NCGUB said.

Police recover 21 detonators from Gujral's routes in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, Sept 29: Police recovered 21 detonators in New Delhi's military zone shortly before Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral was to pass by the area, the Times of India newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Police said they recovered the detonators, each the size of a pen, on Saturday night after two children found them and injured themselves while trying to set one of them on fire.

The Times said the police had "taken a very serious view" since Gujral was scheduled to pass the base containing military offices and quarters near New Delhi's airport, later on Sunday.

An army spokesman, however, said the devices were found almost 500 metres (1,650 feet) from the prime minister's routes and stressed that detonators "do not pose any threat to life as they can only initiate an explosion."

Since January, abandoned explosives or ancillary devices have been found four times in the Indian capital.

India launches satellite

NEW DELHI, Sept 29: India for the first time Monday used its own rocket to launch a major satellite, marking a milestone in the country's space programme, reports AP.

The 44.4 metre (49 yard) tall vehicle blasted off perfectly on a clear morning from Sriharikota, a town in southern state of Andhra Pradesh, and put the 1,200 kilogram (2,686 pounds) remote sensing satellite into orbit. The launch was televised live across the nation.

"It was a textbook kind of launch," said K Kasturirangan, chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, who witnessed the take off, said the scientists have done the country proud as India celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence from British rulers.

Monday's launch site, Sriharikota, is 2,100 kilometres (1,300 miles) southeast of New Delhi.

The satellite will circle the earth at a height of more than 800 kilometres (500 miles). It will send pictures of the landscape that can be used, among things, in crop management and town planning.

In the past, India has used its own rockets to launch much smaller satellites.



Garuda Airlines flight attendants stand in silence during the mass funeral for unidentified victims of the Garuda Airlines crash in Medan, northern Sumatra, 1,400 kilometres (870 miles) northwest of Jakarta, Monday. Forty eight coffins for unidentified crash victims were buried in a mass grave at a memorial site near Medan's airport. Two hundred and thirty-four people were killed in the crash, which may have been caused by hazy conditions.