Zardari hopes Benazir will

# Israeli, PA negotiators to resume talks today

JERUSALEM, Oct 5: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are to meet Monday to resume longhalted interim talks, but the issue of Jewish settlements hangs over US efforts to bring the peace process back to life, reports AFP.

US peace envoy Dennis Ross will meet Monday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Ramallah before joining negotiators from both sides in face-to-face talks.

Those talks, headed by Arafat's number two Mahmud Abbas and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, will relaunch negotiations which have been on hold since March to hammer out implementation of longoverdue Israeli commitments from the 1995 interim self-rule accords.

Monday's meetings will be followed by talks in Washington on October 13, hosted by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, to work out the terms for a "time out" from settlement building which Albright has

called on Israel to take. Aside from the settlement issue, the Washington talks are to address other broad issues, such as Israeli security demands, in a bid to pave the way

for the launch of final status negotiations. fident his wife will stand by "In a truth, I am not optimistic. But we must take up this test. These meetings are a test of Netanyahu's government in pursuing the peace process" Nabil Shaath, one of the senior Palestinian negotiators, told

AFP. Last week, Netanyahu dealt and early blow to the US efforts by rejecting a halt in the expansion of existing Jewish settlements, saying it was not covered by the "time out" called for by Albright.

Monday's meetings, meanwhile, will bring back together an array of committees to work out commitments left over from the interim accords, particularly Palestinian demands that Israel allow the opening of Palestinian sea-and airports in Gaza, a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank.

### stand by him during ordeal KARACHI, Oct 5: The jailed husband of former Pakistani premier Benazir Bhutto, is con-

him during his current ordeal despite speculation that their marriage is in trouble, reports "She is a loving wife and she is as close to me as she was before my going to prison. We are

both 43 years old and not puppies," Asif Ali Zardari said. Zardari is in prison awaiting trial for conspiring to murder Benazir's estranged brother Mir Murtaza, who was gunned down with seven of his colleagues in a police shootout in

September last year. "We have had a perfect husband-wife relationship during the past 10 years and shared good and bad moments with each other.

She behaves as an eastern wife behaves. Why should she dump me," Zardari told AFP after trial proceedings in the Mur-

taza murder case on Saturday. Benazir Bhutto has already denied recent press reports she intended to seek a divorce. The couple were married in December 1987.

"My wife and I have become used to this kind of gossip. I have been charged with murder and corruption every time another government comes into power," Zardari said.

Zardari, a former investment minister in his wife's cabinet ousted in November last year, is often referred to as 'MR 10 per cent' for allegedly taking commissions and kickbacks on business deals during Benazir's three-year rule.

Some commentators consider that he has become a political liability to his skilled wife's political career.

He spent 28 months in prison on charges of murder and corruption after Benazir was dismissed during her first stint in power from 1988-1990.

He was eventually acquitted of all charges.

Zardari was jailed again last November, soon after President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari sacked the Benazir government for widespread corruption and

misrule. The Pakistan government scored a political victory last month after four Swiss banks froze accounts allegedly held by Zardari, Benazir and her mother Nusrat. Pakistani authorities have

until December 8 to prove that money in those accounts was siphoned off by the erstwhile first couple. Zardari and Benazir have flatly denied all charges of corruption. "Let them prove it. The onus

of the truth lies on the accuser and not the accused," Zardari

Zardari, who affectionately calls his wife "BB" said: When the total budget of the country is nine billion dollars, with debt

servicing at 90 per cent, how could I have stolen three billion

dollars." "All this is just because BB's name sells internationally.

So whenever her name appears, eye start shining. That is why the government is running this campaign against us." "I have always helped her po-

litically and was very active in sorting out the party's political problems," he said, adding that he was being held in jail simply so he could not go out and strengthen the party.

Banazir's Pakistan Peoples Party lost by a huge margin in general elections in February which saw Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sweep into office with an overwhelming major-

"I am given a bad name just like you give a dog a bad name and hang him," Zardari said. "But I don not fear death and trust in God. I am innocent."

# Buyers 'screaming' for Morton's book on Diana

LONDON, Oct 5: London bookshops reported phenomenal demand on Saturday for Andrew Morton's updated biography of Princess Diana - despite uproar over its timing and the possible threat of legal action by her family, reports Reuter.

One central London bookstore said buyers were "screaming" for the new edition of Morton's 1992 best-seller "Diana, Her True Story" which uses the Princess's own words to describe the misery of her failed marriage to heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles.

Little of the substance in the. book is new. But Morton revealed for the first time last week that it was Diana herself, rather than just friends. Who used the biography to detail her struggle with bulimia, her suicide attempts and her sense of isolation within the Royal Family.

British Sunday newspapers have now named the go-between who carried Morton's questions to the Princess and took her

replies back on tape as Dr James Colthurst, a friend of the Princess for nearly 20 years.

Morton has attempted to counter criticism that he is profiting from the Princess's death by offering to donate some of the profits from his book to charities supported by

Diana. Charities, including the Red Cross, distanced themselves from Morton. "Hell would freeze over before we accept a penny from him. He is profiting from death," Guy Willoughby of the Halo Trust, which works to clear landmines, told the Sunday Telegraph.

But not the readers. "Everyone is screaming for the book .... this book has created as much interest if not more than the last one five years ago.

"It is the first book in a long time that has had this kind of reaction. The response from customers is phenomenal. We are being inundated with calls," said John Thwaites, manager of Dillons Bookshop.

cabinet reshuffled: Australian Prime Minister John Howard announced a major reshuffle of his ministerial team today after a travel allowances scandal that forced the resignation of three

ministers, Reuter reports from Canberra. The biggest casualty of Sunday's reshuffle was the gaffeprone Amanda Vanstone, replaced as employment and education minister by her former deputy David Kemp. The government's key economic posts, including that of treasurer Peter Costello, remained in the same hands, workplace relations minister Peter Reith was given additional responsibilities for waterfront reform, formerly part of the transport portfolio.

EU to extend ban on Myanmar: A visa ban on Myanmar's military rulers and other European Union sanctions on the South East Asian state will be extended for six months by EU foreign ministers in Brussels today diplomats said, AFP reports from Brussels.

The ministers will however reject calls for the sanctions to be strengthened to include measures that would restrict trade and tourism because of concern about jeopardising broader Europe-Asia relations. Human rights groups have urged the EU to follow the lead of the United States, which banned new investment in Myanmar in April, in order to press the regime into opening a dialogue with the opposition.

Serbians vote for 2nd round of polls: Serbians began voting yesterday in a second round of presidential elections, choosing between Socialist candidate Zoran Lilic and hardline nationalist Vojislay Seseli, AFP reports from Belgrade.

Lilic, the handpicked successor to Serb strongman Slobodan Milosevic, took 35.70 per cent of the vote in the first round on September 21, while Seseli, head of the extreme right Radical Party, was runner-up with 27.28 per cent. Milosevic was unable to stand again, having served two terms as Serbian president, instead, he had himself elected president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which groups Serbia and Montenegro, by the

country's Parliament in July. UK plans to control teenage sex: The British government plans a campaign to control teenage sex, recruiting schools to act as moral watchdogs in a bid to cut a record number of pregnancies, the Express on Sunday

reported, AFP says from London. Teachers who learn for instance that youngsters are planning a party while parents are away should act as informers. "We want schools to do more to ensure that young girls do not make a mess of their lives at a very early age by getting pregnant," Health Minister Tessa Jowel told the paper.

Japan to propose talks with US, China: Japan will propose a joint security dialogue with the United States and China in an effort to stabilise the Asia-Pacific region, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said yesterday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

As a first step, the dialogue will be launched by private scholars before being upgraded to government security talks, the newspaper said. The dialogue is expected to cover regional security and the three countries' defence projects, the daily said. Participants will also discuss other issues, including environment problems and drug smuggling.

Gene causing cancer identified: A team of Portuguese researchers claims to have identified the defective human gene responsible for the appearance and development of uterine cancer, press reports said Saturday. AFP says from Lisbon.

The discovery was announced on Friday to the first seminar of the Portuguese human genetics society and reported by the Jornal de Noticias in Porto. The gene, labelled DEC, was discovered on human chromosome 10 by a team headed by molecular biologist Carolino Monteiro in collaboration with the Santa Cruz Hospital and the Alfredo da Costa Maternity Hospital in Porto.

#### S'pore needs more alien students: Singapore needs more foreign students to help make valuable friends and long-term business contacts, says former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, AP reports from Singapore.

Lee told an alumni gathering of the three prestigious Raffles schools on Saturday that one in five of their students should be a foreigner.

LTIE denies capturing mortar shipment: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerillas yesterday denied they captured a shipment of mortar bombs the Colombo government purchased from Zimbabwe, even as Harare said the weapons fell into the hands of the rebels, AFP reports from Colombo.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) movement, in a statement sent to Colombo from its London office, said it had not taken the shipment, which went missing between the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar and Sri Lanka in July. "The episode has been exploited to tarnish the international image of the LTTE, in particular to try and associate the LTTE with acts of international piracy," the statement said.

Colombian soldiers guard the eleven bodies killed in the countryside 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Bogota on Saturday. At least 21 police, soldiers and prosecutors were killed in two separate attacks blamed on leftist rebels and paramilitary gunmen, authorities said Saturday. - AP/UNB photo

### About 12 countries offered assistance

# Suharto orders armed forces to do more to fight wildfires

JAKARTA, Oct 5: Indonesian President Suharto on Sunday apologised for a second time for wildfires that have choked Southeast Asian skies with smoke haze, and he ordered the armed forces to do more to douse the flames, reports AP.

The president also admitted that Indonesians need "more time" to beat the disaster.

"This thick smoke has brought losses not only to our people, but also to people in neighbouring countries." Suharto said in a speech to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of Indonesia's armed

forces. "For that, Indonesia once again apologises sincerely to those countries. Hundreds of fires, set by for-

est companies, plantations owners and farmers to clear land cheaply, have been burning out of control across Indonesia for two months. A thick smog cloud has

drifted over neighbouring Malaysia, southern Thailand and parts of the Philippines, as well as Singapore and Brunei. causing choking pollution that threatens the health of millions of people

Last month, Suharto, Asia's

longest-serving leader, made and unprecedented apology to Southeast Asian environmental leaders for the smog, known as "The haze."

On Sunday, Suharto said that Indonesians are trying hard to fight the fires, but that "we are fully aware that more time is needed to overcome this problem.

About a dozen countries have offered assistance, including Malaysia, which has deployed more than 1,000 firefighters to work alongside Indonesian personnel.



From left, John McCarter, Dr Peter Crane and Richard Gray pose with the fossilised skull from the largest Tyrannosaurus Rex remains ever found, after it was sold at Sotheby's in New York, Saturday. McCarter, president of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, Ilinois, and Dr Crane, the museum's curator, made the winning bid of \$8,362,500 - AP/UNB photo · tion. million to Gray, President of the Art Dealers Association of America.

### 7 killed in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR, India, Oct 5: Seven people, including five Indian army soldiers, were killed and 12 others seriously injured in separatist-linked violence in Kashmir on Saturday, the police said here, reports AFP.

Four Indian soldiers were killed in a gunbattle with Muslim separatist when a guerilla hideout was surrounded by troops in central Kashmir's Badgam district early Saturday, a police spokesman said.

A civilian and a Muslim militant also died, they said, adding that four more soldiers were injured in the gunfight in Badgam's Nasoo village: The soldiers fired mortar

shells and destroyed the hide-

out, he said.

### Mahathir rules out speculation about

his resignation KUALA LUMPUR. Oct 5: Malaysian Prime Minister Ma-

hathir Mohamad has dismissed speculations that he will resign over the country's economic crisis, local newspapers reported today, reports Reuter. Mahathir, in Argentina on

an official visit, told a news conference that although the western press blamed him for Malaysia's woes, the nations' top businessmen had given him their undivided support to remain as premier.

"I can confirm I am not (going to resign)" Mahathir was quoted as saying in Buenos Aires by Malaysia's Sunday Star newspaper to a question.

The new Sunday Times said Mahathir had also denied knowledge of a national television address he was allegedly due to make October 11 after his return to Kuala Lumpur.

The National Bernama agency reported on Friday that it understood from a source at the state-run radio television Malaysia that Mahathir was supposed to make an address on information technology.

### 30 anti-nuclear activists held in Florida

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida Oct 5: About 30 anti-nuclear activists were arrested on Saturday at the Cape Canaveral air station during a protests against NASA's plan to launch a spacecraft to Saturn carrying radioactive fuel, reports Reuter.

Police said up to 1,200 protesters took part in the peaceful demonstration outside the gates of the air force base where a Titan IV rocket will launch the Cassini space probe on an 11-year mission to Saturn and its moons, the White House approved the planned October 13 faunch on Friday.

The station is several miles (km) from Cape Canaveral's Kennedy Space Centre, where the Space Shuttle Atlantis was due to land today after a mission to Russia's Mir space sta-

## 105 more massacred in Algeria guns and sharp-edged weapons

ALGIERS, Algeria, Oct 5: In a 48-hour spree of massacres and bombings, assailants killed 105 people, targeting schools. apartment buildings and a wedding, with dozens of children among the victims, reports AP. Four days after the Islamic

Salvation Army declared a ceasefire, attacks characteristic of the rival Armed Islamic Group Saturday illustrated that Algeria's bloody insurgency is far from over. Many residents of Blida, a

garrison town 30 miles (50 kilometres) south of Algiers. fled their homes Friday night after assailants attacked with homemade rockets and bombs. killing 10 people and injuring 20, hospital sources and witnesses said. Security forces there staged a

counter-attack with helicopters, but it was not immediately known if there were any casualties.

Groups of men armed with

killed 75 others - including 34 children - in two massacres early Friday morning, and a third group slaughtered 20 members of a wedding party Thursday night, witnesses said. As usual, there was no im-

mediate government confirmation of the killings and no immediate claim of responsibility. but suspicion fell on the Islamic militants whose 5 and half year insurgency has left more than 75,000 people dead. The assailants in Blida cut

electrical power to the neighbourhoods they targetted before launching their assault, said witnesses interviewed at a train station in Algiers Saturday morning. Most spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of reprisal

Just after the attack, army helicopters bombarded the neighbourhood for 20 minutes, said Farida Slimani, a 22-yearold medical student.

# Jordan says Israel will free more Hamas leaders soon

AMMAN, Jordan, Oct 5: Israel will soon release dozens of Palestinian prisoners, including several leaders of the militant Hamas movement, Jordanian officials said Saturday, reports AP.

The prisoners will be freed in the West Bank and Gaza and will not be deported to Jordan. said Samir Mutawe, a state minister for information.

"We have information to believe that some Palestinian prisoners in Israel will be released soon," Mutawe said.

Other Jordan officials, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said that dozens of prisoners would be released and that the bulk of them

No other information was immediately available. Officials in Israel were observing the Jewish Sabbath and were not immediately available for comment. Hamas has called for the de-

would be senior Hamas leaders.

struction of Israel and has claimed responsibility for two recent suicide bombings that killed 21 civilians.

Israel released Hamas' spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, on Wednesday, hours after an appeal from King Hussein. Yassin, a 61-year-old quadriplegic, served eight years of a life sentence for ordering the killing of Palestinians collaborating with Israel.

# Focus now on polls to save democracy in Cambodia

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5: With the world unwilling to reverse the results of the July coup in Cambodia, international diplomacy is focusing on next May's general election as the last best hope for building democracy in the troubled country, reports AP. Indonesian Foreign Minis-

ter Ali Alatas told reporters that this was why the Association of Southeast Asian Nations was so anxious to arrange for the return of opposition politicians who fled the country after Cambodian leader Hun Sen ousted his rival co-premier, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. ASEAN believes the exiled

politicians should return as soon as possible so they can participate in the preparation of laws on elections and political parties, Alatas said. Although Alatas did not say

so, the implication was that Hun Sen's followers could enact a system which would prevent the opposition from mounting a credible campaign.

"The election is most important," Alatas said. "From now on, we should have a dialogue going on to prepare for the elections, both physically and politically.' A free, fair and credible elec-

tion is really the last option.

The United Nations, despite the

massive undertaking in the early 1990s to bring stability to Cambodia, cannot even decide which Cambodian delegation to seat at the General Assembly one loyal to Ranariddh and another to Hun Sen. The Security Council even chose not to describe Ranariddh's ouster as a coup, bowing to the wishes of China and Japan,

both of which were anxious to avoid clashing with the country's most powerful politician -Hun Sen. Alatas told reporters last Friday that Hun Sen had agree

to allow opposition politicians to return and resume their seats in parliament.

# 100 days of Chinese rule in HK-a mix of change, continuity

HONG KONG, Oct 5: The first 100 days of Chinese rule in Hong Kong have been like riding a rollercoaster for construction supervisor John Wong, reports AP.

"Sometimes it's fine, sometimes it's frightening," the 42year-old Wong said last week while relaxing with his family at home during the territory's newest holiday, Chinese National Day.

When Hong Kong became part of China on July 1 after 156 years as a British colony. suspicion marred the reunion. Would authoritarian China

respect Hong Kong's freedoms? Would it tolerate its irreverent news media, its cosmopolitan culture, its thriving civic groups and all else that made Hong Kong distinctive? As the community prepares

to count off its 100th day as part of China on Wednesday, Wong and others note with relief that most aspects of daily life are unchanged and the economy is still growing strongly. But like a rollercoaster, confidence has experienced dips as some democratic reforms have

been reversed. Life under Britain, with its emphasis on the rule of law. meant "you knew where you would be in the future," said Wong. "The Chinese way of life is more hidden. You don't know what will happen."

On the positive side, China is seen as generally keeping its promise of a high degree of autonomy for the territory. Hong Kong's hard-working, hardplaying lifestyle goes on, with its stock market defying a regional downturn. Racetracks and nightclubs

still pack in crowds. Books banned elsewhere in China remain on sale. Churches are full and free. Activists still march with banners demanding that Beijing end one-party Communist rule and free political pris-

access to officials at formal Hong Kong still shows a good

time to sailors from the US Pacific fleet arriving for regular shore leaves, and they don't need to buy new maps: Colonial place names like Victoria Peak and Prince of Wales army barracks are unchanged.

It is in the political sphere that most change has taken place, beginning with the July installation of a temporary, unelected legislature that excludes Hong Kong's most popular party, the Democrats.

An election law has been passed that sharply reduces the number of people who can vote for half of the seats in a new legislature to be chosen next May The Democrats say the law will hurt their chances for a strong comeback. Some critics say the new government is less open. Cer-

tainly. Chief Executive Tung

Chee-hwa is much more cir-

cumspect with reporters than

the last British governor, Chris

Patten, and reporters have less

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists recently warned that many local media routinely censor themselves, even though the most critical newspapers still publish without reprisal. And demonstrators com-

herd them into fenced-off areas out of sight of the officials they want to address. Freedom is decreasing. said Elaine Chan, a political science professor at City Uni versity. "If you look at all the opinion polls, people really care about freedom and human rights. They really feared that

plain that police now try to

we would lose them, and that's exactly what is happening. Chan said many people are alienated and depressed by the disbanding of the last elected legislature on China's orders. China objected to the more democratic rules under which it was chosen.

Lau Siu-kai, also a political science professor, disagreed. He

said the legislature doesn't really matter to ordinary people because they know new elections are coming. "People are very relived that

handover have not been realized," he said. Wong spends his free time helping care for 2-year-old twin daughters rather than participating in politics, but he supported the democratic reforms

the fears they had before the

fatalistic about the changes. With 1997 now here, you have to bend yourself a bit," he

that are now being undone. He's

"I would say more people are concerned with how to make a decent living than to see who is governing or what has been done to improve democracy." In his daily life, changes "are moving in silently," he said. The main one is that more Hong

Kong people are taking posi-tions of authority at his workplace, replacing expatriates. His wife, Shirely, said this is

#### also happening at the university where she is a secretary. part of a localization policy that began several years ago but has picked up pace.

Whatever else has changed,

hearts and minds have been the slowest to adapt. When the territory cele-

brated Chinese National Day for the first time on Oct. 1, the said they felt little emotion. They said they regard themselves as citizens of Hong Kong rather than of China, and opinion polls indicate more than a third of the territory's people feel the same.

Only a few hundred people attended a Chinese flag-raising on National Day, compared with about 260,000 who gathered for a similar ceremony in

"I would expect the Chinese way of life to come in five, 10 years from now, when the British are long gone," said Wong. "Now, they are still re-

# Muslim rebels to resume truce talks with Manila

MANILA, Oct 5: The Philippines has withdrawn its troops from a captured Muslim rebel camp, prompting the guerillas to agree to discuss a ceasefire agreement they had signed with the government, a rebel leader said Sunday, reports AP.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front signed the accord in July, but it has not been enforced because of a lack of guidelines. The ceasefire was to open the way for formal peace talks with the MILF, the larger of two Muslim rebel groups still battling the government's forces.

The rebels had refused to discuss the guidelines with the government until it fulfilled a promise to withdraw its troops from the major MILF camp it had captured last June in the southern Philippines. On Sunday, Al Haj Murad,

MILF. The fighting displaced thousands of villagers in and the MILF's vice chairman for military affairs, said about 300

ted by the rebels demand government recognition of rebel areas and a promise to give notice before the military operates in MILF-controlled areas, Mu-Rajamuda in North Cotabato province on Friday. The camp

Ceasefire proposals submit-

is the rebels' second biggest stronghold The military confirmed the withdrawal, saying police remain in the area to enforce laws

and help displaced villagers return home. Government soldiers and helicopter gunships overran Rajamuda while pursuing kidnappers they said belonged to the

near the camp. Murad said the guerillas will discuss the ceasefire guidelines army soldiers finally polled out of villages surrounding Camp

in a meeting with government negotiators scheduled for November 11-12 in the southern city of Marawi.