

Israel, PA talks begin in Washington

JERUSALEM, Nov 3: Israel and the Palestinians head back to the negotiating table Monday in Washington, with Israel saying "practical progress" can be made and the Palestinians gloomy that Israel is evading any real issues, reports AP.

"We will take part in the talks, despite the fact that they have no chance," Yasser Arafat was quoted Sunday as saying in the Israeli newspaper Maariv.

The talks will be convened under the stern eye of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who wants Israel to commit to a "timeout" in settlement expansion, and reportedly also is pushing for a commitment on the date and scope of an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank land.

The Palestinians, however, say they fear that Foreign Minister David Levy, who is leading the Israeli delegation, is not authorised to negotiate on those issues.

"He can hold talks all day long, but your Cabinet didn't empower him to do a thing," Arafat told Maariv. "He can conduct talks, but he cannot propose any solutions."

The talks were held up a week while the Israeli govern-

ment debated the positions Levy would take. On Wednesday, the Israeli Cabinet authorised Levy to fly to Washington for the talks.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Aviv Shiran said Levy was "empowered by the Cabinet to talk about all the issues on the agenda." Including a timeout and West Bank withdrawal.

Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel said Israel was looking for "practical progress" in areas such as the opening of a Palestinian airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip, called for in the existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements but not yet implemented.

"We're very close to making progress on some of the issues," he said.

Fogel would not comment on whether Israel would negotiate on the more complicated issues of the settlements and the further redeployment. He said, however, that Israel would not go forward with a redeployment until the Palestinians did more to satisfy Israel's security demands.

"We have lingering suspicions that they're not really committed to fighting terror," he said.

Under the existing peace accords, Israel was to make three withdrawals by mid-1998 from parts of the West Bank it still occupies. The Palestinians, however, rejected Israel's first proposed withdrawal in March as too small — only 2 per cent of Israeli-controlled land would have passed into Palestinian hands — and Israel put any further withdrawals on hold following two suicide bombings in Jerusalem.

Arafat adviser Ahmed Tibi said the Palestinians would concentrate on settlement activity and the Israeli redeployment — "in other words, the issue of land" — at the Washington talks, and that all other issues were secondary.

If there is no progress on those issues, he told Israel's Army Radio, "the talks are doomed to failure, and we will get sucked into a whirlpool, into the dynamic of a resurgent crisis."

Netanyahu has been urging the Palestinians to agree to move directly into negotiations on a permanent peace agreement, skipping the interim withdrawals, but they insist the idea is only a ploy by Israel to avoid giving back land.

Women face uphill battle in today's polls in Jordan

AMMAN, Nov 3: Jordan's only elected woman lawmaker recalls that a Muslim fundamentalist leader once offered her a free wardrobe if she would take to the veil as an observant Muslim, reports AP.

Another time, a conservative tribal leader hurled an ashtray at legislator Toujan Faisal when she spoke out against corruption during a debate in parliament.

Faisal refused the clothes and the ashtray missed. But the message in both cases was clear: Women should stick to their traditional role — staying at home or appearing veiled in public — and leave politics to men.

But the 48-year-old Faisal is ignoring the message despite her troubles as a lawmaker. This year, she is back as one of 17 women among the 535 candidates contesting Tuesday's parliamentary elections.

"It was an arduous and painful path, just like a garden full of prickles," Faisal told The Associated Press. "But I know I am daring and very few can do what I do."

A former television talk-show hostess, Toujan first contested elections in 1989. But she

Dodi was the one for Di

LONDON, Nov 3: Princess Diana told her two hair stylists that Dodi Fayed, who died with her in the car crash in Paris, was "the one" for her on the day she left Britain for the final time. According to extracts from a new book published here, reports AFP.

"I think this is it. This is the one," Diana told her hairdressers Tess Rock, 31, and Natalie Symons, 27. The Sunday Mirror newspaper reported in its extract of the women's book "Our Diana Diaries."

Rock and Symons said that their late, famous client declared she was attracted to the millionaire son of Harrod's Store-owner Mohammed Ali Fayed because of his exotic accent and the way he said, "Diana, you're so Noughty."

Diana also had an affectionate brother-sister relationship with the Prince of Wales despite the bitter break-up of their marriage, the women reportedly learnt.

The hair stylists said they had written the book to challenge views in other books and newspapers that Diana was an "emotional wreck."

"She was absolutely not the emotional wreck that (author Andrew) Morton makes her out to be, the flaky woman that the papers keep talking about. She was a 36-year-old woman who was happy and madly in love," said Rock.



People of Baghdad read Iraqi newspapers on Sunday to follow news of the current impasse between their government and the UN. The Iraqi leadership decided last Thursday to continue cooperating with the Security Council's Special Commission but not to allow American weapons inspectors. Two Americans were for the second time politely refused entry after landing at an airfield west of Baghdad Sunday.

— AP/UNB photo

Protests on in Baghdad supporting govt move US congress leaders for military action against Iraq

WASHINGTON, Nov 3: Congress' top four leaders agreed that the United States should respond quickly, including taking military action, to show Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that his decision barring Americans from UN weapons inspection teams is unacceptable, reports AP.

The only thing that he (Saddam) seems to understand is action, and that's what's going to have to happen," House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt said Sunday.

But the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, said that while all options are being considered, at this stage it is the United Nations, not the United States, that must confront the Iraqis.

"This is not a fight between the United States and Iraq. This is Iraq confronting the United Nations and (UN) Security Council Violations," Richardson said Sunday on ABC television's "This Week."

The Baghdad government declared last week that Amer-

cans could no longer participate in UN weapons inspections and gave 10 American inspectors in Iraq until Thursday to leave the country.

On Sunday, Iraqi officials, turned away three Americans trying to enter in advance of the teams' resumption of work on Monday and Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations said Sunday night they would not be allowed in Monday, either.

Also late Sunday, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan offered to send a mission to Iraq to defuse the crisis after the United States dropped opposition to such a move.

Lott speculated that the reason the Iraqis are trying to shut out the Americans is that the inspectors "were very close to finding some more very dangerous weapons."

Saddam's actions, added Daschle, "are completely unacceptable, and I think we have to act sooner rather than later."

Talking from New York, Richardson said the United Na-

tions is not seeking a military confrontation with Iraq. The first priority has to be to resolve this diplomatically. We want to be in concert with the UN and especially our colleagues on the Security Council," he said.

AFP from Baghdad says: Protests took place in Iraq for the fifth straight day Sunday supporting the government's decision to stop cooperating with US officials from the UN Special Commission to disarm Iraq (UNSCOM), witnesses said on Monday, either.

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Some 15,000 people rallied in Mosul, 400 kilometres (250 miles) north of Baghdad, with banners that said "Yes to President Saddam Hussain," "No to the Americans" and "No to injustice," witnesses there said.

Iraqi Kurds also took part in the march, they added.

State television reported that similar demonstrations occurred in the southern cities of Basra, Diwaniya, Najaf, Nasiriyah and Hillah, and in the northern city of Kirkuk.

Court grants bail to Kim's convicted son

SEOUL, Nov 3: Citing health reasons, a Seoul court granted bail Monday to son of President Kim Young-sam serving a three-year jail term for bribery and tax evasion, reports AP.

Court officials said Kim Hyun-chul, 37, was expected to be released later Monday under bail of 100 million won (drs 105,000) after serving less than a month of his sentence.

Attorneys for the president's son told the court he was under extreme mental and physical strain and could not continue prison life.

In October, a district court sentenced Kim Hyun-chul to prison and ordered him to pay about what he was convicted of taking in bribes and avoiding in taxes.

It was the first-ever criminal case involving a close relative of an incumbent president and one of the most publicised trials in South Korean history.

President Kim was not implicated in the case but the scandal eroded his authority in his final year in office. The president's single five-year term ends in February, and he is barred by law from seeking reelection.

Serbia's popular ultranationalist to run again for presidency

BELGRADE, Nov 3: An ultranationalist who received the most votes in Serbia's invalidated presidential elections will run again in the repeat vote, his party said Sunday, reports AP.

Vojislav Seselj, leader of the ultranationalist Serb Radical Party, has become a key player in Serbia, the dominant republic in what remains of Yugoslavia.

In the October 5 elections, which were invalidated by low turnout, Seselj defeated the Socialist candidate and protege of Yugoslavia's autocratic President Slobodan Milosevic, Zoran Lalic.

Milosevic has picked a new candidate for the repeat race, his close aide and current Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic. Many analysts believe Milutinovic will be no match for the increasingly popular Seselj.

In the last elections, Seselj walked away with a majority of votes cast.

Several democratic opposition parties called for a boycott of the last elections to protest what they said were unfair conditions. They succeeded in persuading more than half of the electorate not to vote.

Czech president to remain in hospital

PRAGUE, Nov 3: Czech President Vaclav Havel, who is suffering from pneumonia, will have to remain in hospital for at least eight days, the head of his medical team said on television Sunday, reports AFP.

Havel "still has a fever and feels tired and weak, but is in a good mood," said Dr Miroslav Cerbik, who is also the Czech Republic's deputy health minister.

The 61-year-old president took a turn for the worse early Sunday and became feverish. The doctors said, but gave no further details.

Havel underwent a second lung X-ray which gave nearly the same results as one on Tuesday, Cerbik said.

Cerbik also said the President would have to recuperate for several weeks after the hospitalisation, although he could not be precise on the amount of time needed for a full recovery.

Havel, who underwent surgery for lung cancer last year, spent a "difficult" night Wednesday at a military hospital, his personal doctor said.

Still on an antibiotic, he had returned home Thursday where he was put under the care of a team of four doctors.

The Prague newspaper Pravo on Saturday quoted Havel's wife Dagmar as saying it was his second bout with pneumonia since August and she was concerned about his health.

Ex-secret service agent faces espionage charge in UK

LONDON, Nov 3: A former member of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service has been arrested and charged with spying for a foreign power, police reported Sunday night, reports AP.

The government agency, also known as MI-6, is responsible for spying against foreign countries.

Scotland Yard said in a statement that the 34-year-old man has been charged under the section of the Official Secrets Act dealing with espionage activities against the British state.

The statement did not identify the man or say what foreign power he is accused of spying for but said he will appear before London's Bow Street Magistrates Court on Monday for arraignment. It gave no time for Monday's court hearing.

Arraignment hearings normally last only a few minutes and are confined to formal identification of the accused and outline details of the charge. The accused, who at that stage is not required to say whether he or she is guilty or innocent, is then normally remanded to await trial at date to be announced later.

Scotland Yard refused to give any details about the case. But it said it had nothing to do with



American First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton takes leave of the American Ambassador Philip Lader after attending a reception at the American Embassy in London's Grosvenor Place Sunday.

— AP/UNB photo

Gunmen kill 2 Shi'ite Muslims in Pakistan

LAHORE, Nov 3: Gunmen shot and killed two Shi'ite Muslim activists in eastern Punjab province on Monday in the latest round of religiously motivated killings to sweep the country, reports AP.

Dilawar Hussain and his brother, Bakr, were sitting outside a store in the busy downtown district of Sialkot, some 200 kilometres (120 miles) north of the Punjab capital of Lahore, when four men on two motorcycles sped past.

They opened fire and the brothers died immediately, according to police officials.

Both brothers were activists of the militant Shi'ite group, known as the Movement for the Enforcement of Shi'ite law. The victims also were brothers-in-law of a member of the Punjab Provincial Assembly, Akhtar Hussain Rizvi.

No one has claimed responsibility for the latest killings, but police suspect Sunni Muslim rivals.

In recent days religiously motivated violence has claimed several lives, mostly in the southern port city of Karachi. On Sunday three Sunni Muslim clerics were shot dead, as well as a young student, who was killed on his way to attend the funeral of one of the slain clerics.

Pounding the coast with winds of more than 130 kilometres per hour (80 mph), the storm left a trail of destruction in its wake through Ca Mau province, local officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

The rebels of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked an army patrol south of Killinochchi Saturday, leading to a fierce fire fight, the officials said.

They said four soldiers were killed and 12 wounded in the clash.

They quoted LTTE radio

transmissions to say that 26 rebels, including four leaders,

were also killed or wounded in the encounter.

Dozens killed as storm lashes Vietnam's coast

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam, Nov 3: More than 200 fishing boats were sunk and hundreds more were missing at sea as a powerful tropical storm lashed Vietnam's southern coast early Monday, reports AP.

Dozens of people were confirmed dead, but officials

warned the death toll could climb into the hundreds with the fishing boat crews still unaccounted for.

The United Nations Disaster Management Unit said at least 1,150 small boats were missing in the wake of tropical storm Linda, which slammed down on southern Vietnam's Ca Mau province Sunday night and early Monday morning. Linda was classified a typhoon by Vietnam's meteorological office.

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