

Clinton-Lewinsky affair

Judiciary Committee chief wants to proceed with impeachment inquiry

WASHINGTON, Sept 15: Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch today said he wanted to proceed with impeachment inquiry against President Bill Clinton over the sexual scandal, even as some Democrats are demanding that Clinton be reprimanded or censured by Congress but allowed to complete his term, reports PTI.

Stating that he wanted to go ahead with the judiciary committee's impeachment inquiry, Hatch said he, however, would make the announcement after consulting other members. Hatch and Democratic senator Bob Kerry said Clinton is not helping himself because his lawyers are technically defending his lies.

Meanwhile, some Democrats, including Vice President Al Gore, are saying publicly that Clinton should be reprimanded or censured by Congress but allowed to complete his term.

But Republicans seem determined not to let him off so easily.

The White House is letting it be known that the president is not reading the Starr report and

has left it to his lawyers to handle it while he is focusing on his job.

The judiciary committee is currently going through the 2,000 page report and has time till September 28 to decide how much of it should be published.

The committee, after deciding to open its impeachment inquiry, will take several weeks to complete its job. After hearings and examination of witnesses, it will submit its recommendation to the full house.

An AP reports adds: Facing possible impeachment proceedings, President Bill Clinton is increasing his White House damage-control team with attorneys and lobbyists experienced in dealing with Congress to deal with the Monica Lewinsky affair.

Grag Craig, a senior State Department official who once worked for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, is expected to join the White House troubleshooting squad headed by John Podesta, the president's deputy chief of staff, sources said.

Craig is former law partner of Clinton attorney David Kendall, who has stepped into

the spotlight with blistering criticism of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's report accusing Clinton of perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power.

Another likely recruit is Steve Ricchetti, a lobbyist in private practice who once worked for Clinton as a deputy assistant for legislative affairs, lobbying lawmakers on the administration's behalf. Also expected to return is Susan Brophy, another former Clinton lobbyist in Capitol Hill who had moved overseas with her husband, GERAL McGowan, the US ambassador to Portugal.

The administration had tried to recruit a former member of Congress, a big name such as former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, but officials said that appeared unlikely now.

Even as Clinton adds new staffers, several battle-hardened members of his team are about to leave. White House press secretary Mike McCurry, who has weathered eight months of often contentious briefings, is departing by the

end of this month or early next month. Rahm Emanuel, the combative senior adviser often seen on Sunday talk shows attacking Starr, has told colleagues he is leaving soon. Also, White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles likely will leave by the end of the year to return to North Carolina to run for governor.

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton came to New York on Monday seeking more than the \$4 million he helped raise for fellow Democrats. He also wanted a chance to display some unity with other leaders in his party.

He got warm words of support from Vice President Al Gore — and praise from Congress' top two Democrats, too, at a \$50,000-per-plate luncheon at a private home.

Later, Clinton sought to assure the crowd at a \$10,000-per-plate fund-raising dinner that Democrats cannot allow his personal troubles involving former White House intern Monica Lewinsky to discourage voters during congressional elections this November.



President Clinton addresses the audience and the cast of the Lion King, Monday, after a special performance at the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York, for Unity '98. President Clinton is joined on the stage with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jason Raize as Simba the lion, and composer Lebo M, in suit, can also be seen. — AP/UNB photo

81 more political opponents held in Myanmar

YANGON, Sept 15: Determined to crush opponents of military rule, Myanmar's government has arrested 81 more members of the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi political party, the party said Tuesday, reports AP.

The National League for Democracy said the new arrests started Monday, pushing the total number of government opponents rounded up since May to at least 783, including 198 elected members of parliament.

The sweep is the largest crackdown against democracy activists since the early 1990s. The military has ruled Myanmar, also known as Burma, since 1962.

Most of the arrests have taken place during the last two weeks as the military tried to foil the NLD's attempt to convene the parliament elected in 1990.

The NLD won 82 per cent of the seats in that assembly, but the military, despite promising to hand over power to the winners before the polls, refused to honor the result.

Suu Kyi has not been seen in public since the latest wave of arrests began two weeks ago. Troops have reportedly been stationed near her home and the Yangon office of her party.

Commentaries in state-run newspapers have threatened to

deport her and arrest her party's vice chairman Tin Oo, a former defense minister and Buddhist monk.

The NLD statement on Tuesday said: "The authorities have been detaining members of the NLD who have not committed any offense or violated any law. We strongly condemn these unlawful arrests and call for the earliest unconditional release of the members."

Members of parliament who represent some of the country's ethnic groups have also been arrested.

The military government has denied arresting anybody. Instead, it insists those under detention have merely been "invited" to exchange their views on the convening of parliament and contend they are enjoying their stays at military guest houses.

The NLD said, however, that some party members were taken away in handcuffs and had hoods put over their heads by the squads of soldiers that picked them up.

Many former political prisoners have recounted being arrested in the same manner. They have claimed that they were beaten and tortured while under arrest, and always forced to wear hoods while being interrogated and abused.

Israel tests Arrow-2 missile Netanyahu says he will make no more concessions to PA

JERUSALEM, Sept 15: US envoy Dennis Ross has failed to move Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from his tough stand in ongoing peace talks, reports AP.

Netanyahu said Monday that although Israel hopes negotiations currently being brokered in person by Ross reap success, the ultimate outcome lies in the hands of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"Israel will not make any more concessions or gestures," Netanyahu said to rousing applause at a meeting of activists from his ruling Likud party north of Tel Aviv.

Ross so far has failed to achieve a breakthrough in the deadlock between Israel and the Palestinians over a long-delayed Israeli pullback in the West Bank, Netanyahu's adviser David Bar-Ilan said.

The American mediator held a fourth meeting Monday with Netanyahu and Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, and briefed them on his

latest meetings with Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai decided to further ease the blockade Israel imposed early Friday on Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by allowing 10,000 Palestinians who work in Israel to enter the country beginning Tuesday morning, the army said.

Meanwhile, in Washington, State Department Spokesman James Rubin described mediation efforts to reach an accord between the two sides as "excruciatingly difficult."

According to one report, on Israel's Channel One, Palestinian negotiators meeting Sunday night at US Ambassador Ned Walker's house shouted and swore at one another during the session.

Meanwhile, Israel announced Monday that its Arrow-2 missile successfully destroyed a simulated target in

the first comprehensive test of the anti-missile missile's systems.

The Arrow-2 is intended as a defence against ballistic missiles possessed by Iran, Iraq and other potential enemies such as Syria or Libya. It is being developed jointly with the United States, and can be integrated into American missile defence systems.

The missile was fired from the seaside Palmachim base and arched toward the sea on a flight lasting about 97 seconds, a statement released jointly by the defence ministry and the US military said. The missile systems tracked and downed a "virtual, or simulated, target."

Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai told reporters that other countries had expressed interest in joining a regional security plan that would make use of the Arrow missile capabilities. Defence officials said that the Arrow missile would be ready for use by 2000, media reports said.

Iran puts its armed forces on red alert on Afghan border

TEHRAN, Sept 15: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told the armed forces today to be prepared for imminent orders from political leaders on measures to take against the Taliban Islamic militia in Afghanistan, the official IRNA news agency reported, says AFP.

"We have human, Islamic, political and national concern in Afghanistan — that is to protect our national interests and thwart a threat to the country and the nation," Khamenei said in a meeting with Revolutionary Guards commanders.

"All officials and armed forces should be prepared to firmly and in a timely manner carry out whatever plans and correct decisions the (top) officials have made for the interests of the country," he added.

Khamenei, who is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces, said he was "notably addressing the Revolutionary Guards, the army, intelligence services and news and propaganda agencies."

An earlier AFP reports says: The remains of six Iranian

diplomats and a journalist slain by the Taliban militia in Afghanistan arrived in Tehran shortly before midnight Monday as President Mohammad Khatami and thousands of other mourners were waiting.

Soldiers carried the seven coffins, each draped in the Iranian flag, from the Red Cross plane at Tehran Airport to am-bulances while a military band played the national anthem followed by dirges, the official IRNA news agency said.

"You should be certain that we shall defend the honour and territorial integrity of the sovereign state of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the best possible way," Khatami told the families of the dead as thousands of mourners clad in black stood by.

Earlier Monday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned of a "huge threat" of war in the region over Afghanistan but said he was doing his best to prevent it.

The Taliban, which controls most of neighbouring Afghanistan, appealed for talks with Iran to be held under the UN charter, the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) said as the militia's officials handed over the remains to an Iranian team in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Khamenei warned in a message broadcast on state radio and television. "So far I have prevented the region of a fire in the region, which is not easily extinguishable."

Swiss Air crash Forensic experts identify 8 bodies

HALIFAX, Canada, Sept 15: Forensic doctors so far have identified eight victims from among the human remains found at the crash site of Swiss Air Flight 111, said chief forensic doctor John Butt Monday, reports AP.

Only one victim was identified by sight, four were identified from dental records and three from fingerprint records, he said.

US embassy bombing Tanzanian police arrest five suspects

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania, Sept 15: Tanzanian police have arrested five people in connection with a terrorist attack on the US Embassy, including the owner of a garage where part of the bomb reportedly may have been made, reports AP.

"Every day we're finding new leads, making new discoveries," Home Affairs Minister Ali Amari Mohammed said Monday.

Police say two men, identified only as a Tanzanian businessman and a foreigner, were taken into custody last month for alleged involvement in the Dar es Salaam attack Aug. 7 which killed 11 people.

Three others, including Tanzanian garage owner Thomas Lyimo, were being held because they have information valuable to investigators, said Adadi Rajabu, Tanzania's director of criminal investigation. Tanzanian media have reported that Lyimo's garage was used to build at least part of the bomb. Rajabu

refused to comment.

US law enforcement sources said agents are interviewing possible suspects jailed in Tanzania, and have come close to arresting three other people suspected of involvement.

In Washington, FBI spokesman Frank Scafid said would not characterise anyone arrested in Tanzania as a suspect.

"If there are five people in custody there, that fact is not in and of itself significant," Scafid said.

Lyimo owns the Tommy Spades Manufacturing Co. plant in Kimara, a suburb of Dar es Salaam. Investigators believe the bomb — or at least part of it — may have been built at the Tommy Spades plant, local media reported. The Washington Post said the device was welded to the chassis of the embassy's water truck, which was repaired at the Tommy Spades garage shortly before the bombing.



Santa Claus adjusts a \$300,000 tiara on a model at the unveiling of the 1998 Neiman Marcus Christmas catalogue in Dallas on Monday. The tiara is mounted in sterling silver and 15-kt yellow gold. — AP/UNB photo

Sunni militants set Shi'ite mosque ablaze in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 15: Scores of rampaging Sunni Muslim militants poured kerosene oil on a Shi'ite Muslim mosque and set it on fire Tuesday outside the federal capital of Islamabad in the latest spate of violence between rival Islamic groups, police said. No one was injured, reports AP.

Militant Sunni Muslims belonging to Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), or Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet, attacked the Shi'ite mosque in Wah Town, some 40 kilometres west of Islamabad, local police officials said.

The militants, shouting slogans against Shi'ites, surrounded the mosque before setting it on fire, police said.

The mosque was partially destroyed in the attack, they said.

The attack came two days after four gunmen shot and killed a Sunni Muslim leader and three of his companions in Islamabad.

Hundreds of people have been killed in recent years in bitter feuding between the rival Islamic sects in Pakistan.

Violence continues in Albania

TIRANA, Sept 15: Albanians braced today for more unrest as opposition supporters of ex-president Sali Berisha prepared to demonstrate here at 11.00 am (0900 GMT) the day after three people were killed and 14 injured in street battles with the security forces, reports AFP.

The situation appeared increasingly unstable after two days of escalating violence sparked by the weekend slaying of a leading opposition deputy close to Berisha.

On Monday, riot police charged and retook the parliament and government buildings and state television studios seized by Berisha supporters in mid-afternoon. Members of Berisha's opposition Democratic Party called on Prime Minister Fatos Nano to resign but he refused.

Nano's spokesman Ben Blushi, said the premier "will not quit" because that would be "ineffective in the current situation, which is a coup d'etat."

However, in what seemed

like a gesture to the opposition, the five-party ruling coalition announced Monday night after talks with President Rexhap Meidani that "changes" were needed in the government.

In another development, the government appeared to have backpedalled on an order issued earlier that Berisha should leave the country by 05.00 AM Tuesday (0300 GMT) or face arrest.

Berisha himself, speaking to AFP said, "there is no ultimatum that I leave Albania and even if there was, I would never leave."

Berisha rejected government claims that he was leading a coup and accused the government of trying to "spark a civil war" by trying to force him out of Albania.

The deaths and injuries in the retaking of the government buildings followed statement by Interior Minister Perikli Teta that police would "fire without warning on armed bandits" at-

tacking government buildings, in a warning clearly targeting Berisha supporters.

He pledged that convoys of police vehicles patrolling Monday night would "take control of the situation" overnight.

By late Monday night the situation had calmed somewhat, with only sporadic gunfire heard.

Meidani, in an interview with CNN, accused the Democratic Party of exploiting the killing on Saturday of opposition deputy Azem Hajdari to launch a coup.

Meanwhile the prime minister's spokesman said government officials were giving "serious consideration" to an intervention by the international community which would "not be only a political one."

Blushi said that if the unrest spread to other cities beside Tirana it would be "catastrophic for Albania, but also for (the southern Serbian province) Kosovo and the whole region."

Off the Record

106 years old, and still going strong

NAGOYA: They charm audiences on TV talk shows, spend their spare time watching sumo wrestling and crack each other up with jokes about how many teeth they have left, reports AP.

At 106, Japan's oldest twins are still going strong.

On Monday, the pair — Kin and Gin, or "Gold" and "Silver" — received 106 tulip bulbs from a tulip association to honour them ahead of Tuesday's National Respect for the Aged Day.

"It's nice to be able to live this long, but the truth is that... nobody up there wants to invite me, so I can't go," Gin Kanie told Associated Press Television, grinning and making her weathered face even more wrinkled.

The sharp-witted female twins, who live in the central Japanese city of Nagoya, 300 kilometres west of Tokyo, are often cited as examples of graceful aging in a society that reveres the elderly.

The twins said there is no secret to a long, healthy life.

"I just eat what I like," Kin Narita said. Gin said fried chicken is her favourite food, but she had to give it up for dental reasons.

"I used to have five teeth, but now I have only four," she said.

As they sat on a couch next to each other, Kin said she's happiest when she's with her sister Gin.

"That's what I think at least. I don't know what this person has to say, though," Kin said, turning to Gin, who said with a smile: "Hmm, that's a tough question."

The two looked at each other and burst into laughter.

BRIEFLY

Typhoon Stella may hit Japan: A strong typhoon raging over the Pacific could strike in eastern Japanese cities, including Tokyo, today, the meteorological agency warned, AFP says from Tokyo.

The approaching Typhoon Stella was located some 550 kms southwest of Hachijojima islands early yesterday, moving northwest at 20 kms per hour, the agency said yesterday.

First dropsy cases reported in Nepal: Nepal reported its first cases of dropsy more than a month after the disease caused by adulterated mustard oil killed at least 24 people in neighbouring India, a domestic news agency said yesterday, AP reports from Katmandu.

Nepal produces some mustard oil but it largely depends on imports from India. The government banned imports after people began falling sick in India. Mustard oil sales were also stopped in India.

Yeltsin to go ahead with meetings: President Boris Yeltsin intends to go ahead with meetings this week with Ukraine's president and the former prime minister of Japan, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported Monday, AP says from Moscow.

Several high-level meetings with foreign diplomats have been cancelled because of the changes in Russia's government. However, the Kremlin press service said Yeltsin would still meet with former Japanese premier Ryutaro Hashimoto on Thursday and with Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma on Friday and Saturday, ITAR-Tass said.

Central African Republic leader in China: Jean Mette Yapende, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Central Africa, arrived in Beijing yesterday on a 7-day official visit to China at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan.

This is the first China visit by Yapende.

China praises new Russian PM: China foresees further improvements in its friendly relations with Russia following changes in the Russian government, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said yesterday, AP reports from Beijing.

Vyegny Primakov, who was named as prime minister by President Boris Yeltsin last week, made "great contributions" to China-Russian relations as foreign minister, spokesman Zhu Bangzao said at a twice-weekly media briefing.

Flood situation improves further in Assam

GUWAHATI, Sept 15: The flood situation in Assam further improves today with the water level of the rivers receding, but that we hardly a respite for the people confronted as they are with a new problem — acute shortage of food and essential commodities, reports AFP.

Officials sources said that whatever food stuff was available remained out of reach of the common people because of their skyrocketing prices. With road and rail communication remaining disrupted, hardly any food stuff and other commodities reached the affected 21 districts.

However, the state government has set up a monitoring price to keep a check on the prices, the sources said.

Vast stretches of land still lay submerged. Most of the affected people were still sheltered in the 1,025 relief camps set up by the state government.

The death toll in the current wave of floods was 156 with more than 45 lakh people affected in 5,126 villages, the sources said. In the worst-affected Dhemaji district, the road and rail communication remained disrupted for more than three months. Most of the affected were still sheltered in 87 relief camps.



Opposition Sali Berisha's Democratic Party protesters march downtown after gaining possession of a tank which was guarding the government building in Tirana, on Monday. Gunfire broke out Monday after protesters carried the bodies of Berisha's deputy Azem Hajdari — who was killed late Saturday and two others to the office of the Prime Minister Fatos Nano, whom Berisha's opposition party blames for the deaths. — AP/UNB photo

Students demand release of Muslim political prisoners in Jakarta

JAKARTA, Sept 15: A group of Muslim students protested near the presidential palace today to demand the release of Muslim political prisoners but were violently pushed away by security personnel, reports AFP.

"Religious leaders are detained while PKI are being freed," the protesters yelled while marching towards the state secretariat next to the Merdeka Palace.

The protesters, from the Association of Muslim Students, were referring to members of the outlawed Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) three elderly members of which were released by the government under an amnesty along with more than 60 other political prisoners since May.

Heavy security of some 100 armed soldiers prevented the demonstrators from approaching the state secretariat, and some of the soldiers violently pushed them away from a bridge behind the state secretariat complex.

The protesters dispersed briefly but regrouped later and moved to go to the Istiqal main mosque, some 700 metres away.

"Free political prisoners and detainees," said one of the posters carried by the demonstrators.

A statement distributed by the protesters called for the "unconditional release of all Islamic political detainees and prisoners."

Butler asks Iraqi govt to cooperate with UN team

STOCKHOLM, Sept 15: The head of the United Nations weapons inspection team for Iraq on Monday called for Saddam Hussein's government to cooperate with the UN in releasing information about its weapons of mass destruction, reports AP.

If Iraq complies, the UNSCOM inspections team will replace "immediately" and "honestly," Richard Butler said.

He spoke after meeting with Jan Eliasson, a top Foreign Ministry official who was one of several envoys sent by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to Iraq last year in a previous flare-up between Iraq and the world body.

The visit came as Iraq's parliament urged the UN Security Council to renew its regular sanctions reviews and threatened to end all cooperation with UN arms inspectors if it fails to do so.

The parliament's move came in response to last week's Security Council decision to suspend its regular reviews of the sanctions — leaving Iraq with no avenue for ending the embargo imposed because of its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The Security Council's 15-0 vote suspending the reviews was its toughest action so far in response to Iraq's Aug 5 decision to halt all new inspections of weapons sites.

Sweden currently heads the UN Security Council and Eliasson said the council has intention of backing off from the resolution.

Butler said an assessment of Iraq's missile and chemical weapons programmes could be made within a matter of months if Iraq provides some missing information, but said information on Iraq's biological weapons programme "as a whole is in bad shape."

Butler summed up the situation with three points, saying: "One: the materials we require in each weapons field in order to tell the (security) council that it is over, that Iraq is disarmed of its weapons of mass destruction, those materials exist. Two: They are in the possession of the government of Iraq. Three: It's their call. If they want to give us those materials, we'll keep our promise to verify them quickly and honestly. If they don't, if they decide not to, then I don't know that this thing would ever end, and that would be a tragedy for the Iraqi people."

Pakistan welcomes Indian Minister's statement

ISLAMABAD, Sept 15: Pakistan today welcomed a statement by Indian defence minister George Fernandes that the five-decade-old Kashmir dispute may be approaching a solution, reports BSS.

Pakistan has always tried to persuade India to begin a serious dialogue to settle the dispute, state television quoted a foreign office spokesman as saying.