

International

Anwar pleads innocent to charges against him

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29: Malaysia's ousted deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, pleaded innocent Tuesday to nine charges of corruption and illegal sex acts, reports AP.

Anwar, who, according to a lawyer, had visible bruises from police violence, made the plea after being brought to a courthouse early in the morning for the beginning of what could be a landmark legal case in this Southeast Asian nation.

A defence lawyer said the 51-year-old politician, who is leading a campaign against Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's 17-year rule, had asked the court for an independent medical examination.

Anwar replied, "Not guilty, I claim trial," as each charge was read out before Judge Hasnah Hashim.

Wearing brown trousers and a checked shirt, Anwar smiled as he entered the courtroom. He then embraced his wife, Azizah Ismail, two of his daughters, and his father.

Anwar pointed to large bruises above his left eye and on his neck and rolled up his shirtsleeves to show his family the scars of police beatings

on the first night of his custody, witnesses in the courtroom said.

Asked by someone how long he could withstand police violence, Anwar replied: "As long as it takes."

He appeared pleased when his wife showed him copies of international newsmagazines that had featured cover stories on his movement.

Anwar's case was transferred from the lower sessions court to the High Court at the prosecutor's request. He was led into the Jalan Raja Court 15 minutes before it was scheduled to open and taken into a magistrate's courtroom after a nearly three-hour wait in the court's judicial lockup.

Anwar, arrested on Sept. 20, faces nine counts of corruption and "unnatural" sex acts. The punishment for each count could be several years imprisonment.

A 10th charge will be brought against him in another court in a Kuala Lumpur suburb Wednesday, said a statement by the Attorney-General's office.

Reporters jammed the narrow courthouse corridor for a

glimpse of Anwar, but the jailed leader was sneaked into the courtroom through a back door. Only a few of the reporters could get inside the small courtroom.

Outside, hundreds of riot police encircled the court house.

Anwar is being held by armed police under the harsh Internal Security Act, which allows for imprisonment without trial. The start of legal proceedings on the corruption and homosexuality charges was independent of Anwar's detention under the ISA, the government's law office said.

After he was fired Sept. 2 by the prime minister, Anwar had led a campaign against his former boss, saying Malaysia needed a more liberal and clean government.

Since his arrest, Kuala Lumpur has been rocked by street protests demanding his release and Mahathir's resignation.

The Attorney-General's office said all the charges against Anwar had been based on a police investigation into accusations contained in a book titled "50 reasons why Anwar cannot become PM."

Albanian PM resigns

TIRANA, Albania, Sept 29: Albanian Socialist premier Fatos Nano resigned Monday, some two weeks after rioting over a politician's assassination pushed the Balkan nation to the brink of anarchy, reports AP.

Nano's resignation was announced Monday after a meeting of the Socialist Party leadership in the Albanian capital, Tirana.

A statement said that Pandeli Majko, the 31-year-old general-secretary of the Socialist party, would be the party's candidate for prime minister.

The resignation came two days after former Albanian President Sali Berisha promised thousands of supporters that street protests would continue until the government steps down.

Speaking in the capital before a crowd of about 3,000 people, Berisha called Nano a "killer," and blamed him for the current political turmoil.

The unrest in Europe's poorest country erupted after a popular opposition leader was killed outside Berisha's Democratic Party headquarters on September 12. Berisha blamed his political rival Nano for the killing and demanded his resignation.

Immediately after word of

Nano's resignation spread in Tirana, gunfire erupted in several parts of the capital. But it was not clear whether it was just celebratory shooting by his political foes — supporters of rival Berisha.

Nano became prime minister last year after his Socialist Party of former communists defeated Berisha's Democratic Party in parliamentary elections.

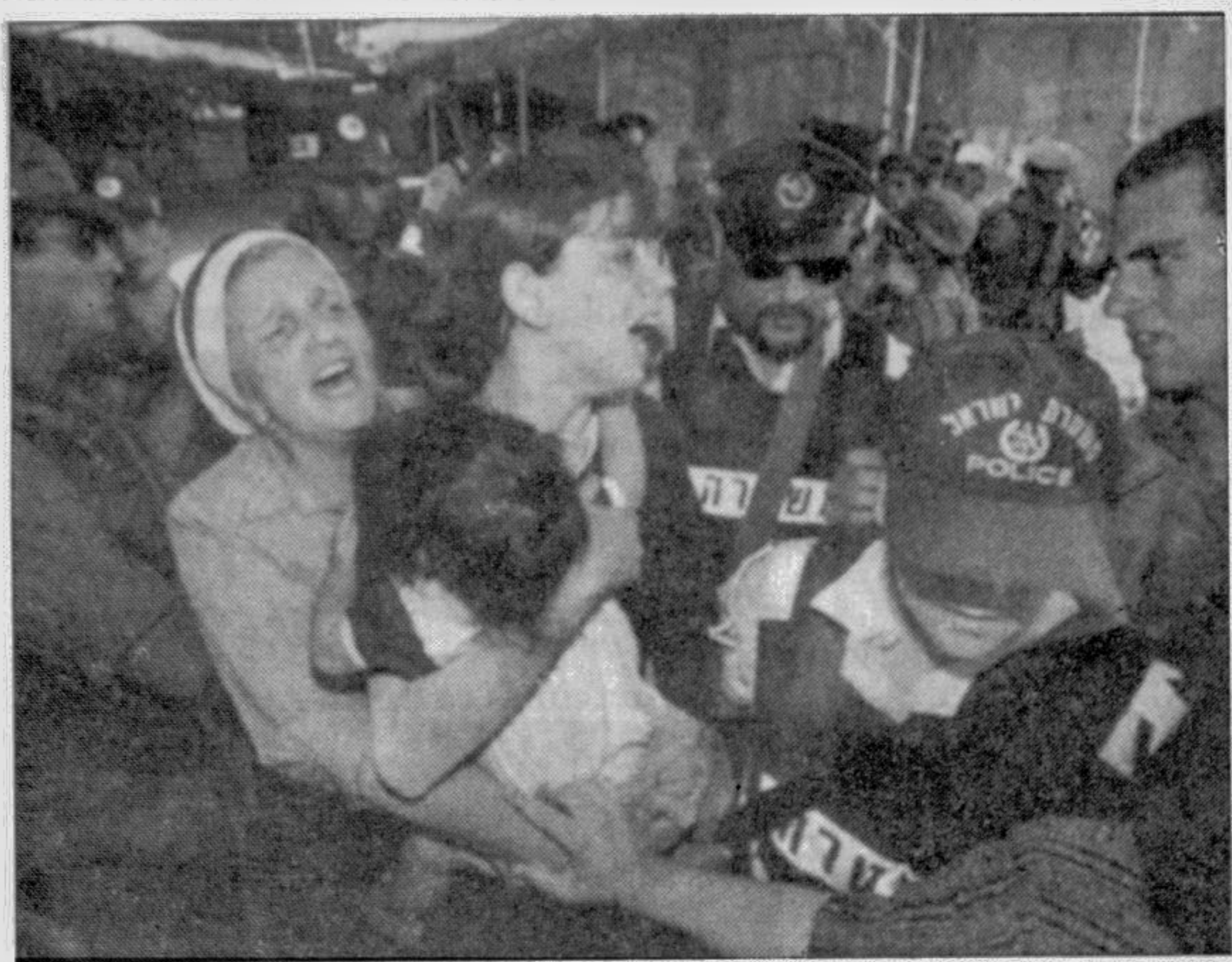
That internationally supervised ballot followed widespread lawlessness and chaos that erupted with the collapse of phony pyramid schemes in which many Albanians lost their entire savings.

Nano stepped down Monday after he told President Rexhep Meidani that he had been unable to put together a new Cabinet according to his own wishes and ideas.

More important, Nano has failed to institute key economic reforms, attract foreign investors and instill in Albanians hope for a better future.

There is enmity between Nano's Socialists and Berisha's Democrats who kept calling for his resignation and boycotted parliament most of the time.

Political tensions reached fever pitch with the Sept. 12 assassination by unidentified gunmen of Azem Hajdari, a close Berisha associate.



Israeli police officers forcibly remove Jewish settlers and their children, including Miriam Levinger, left, from the Arab market in the West Bank town Hebron Monday following a violent confrontation in the market. Earlier Monday a Jewish settler was injured by gunshots fired from the Palestinian-controlled area of Hebron. — AP/UNB photo

Stage set for deal between Israel-Palestinian Authority

WASHINGTON, Sept 29: Now that Israel has agreed to give up another piece of the West Bank, President Bill Clinton wants to know what security assurances Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will offer in return, reports AP.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed at the White House on Monday he was ready to withdraw from parts of the West Bank provided the land would not be used as a base for attacks on Israel.

Before flying home to Israel for the holy day of Yom Kippur, Netanyahu insisted the Palestinian Authority must do more to prevent terror attacks by Islamic militants against Israel.

In his meeting with Arafat Tuesday, Clinton was expected to discuss how the Palestinians will seek to ally Israel's security concerns.

The White House session was part of an accelerated drive by Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to conclude a West Bank accord at the White House when Palestinian-Israeli leaders meet again on Oct. 15.

The key provision would be withdrawal by Israel from 13

per cent of the West Bank captured in the 1967 Mideast war. That would be on top of 27 per cent already to the Palestinian Authority along with two-thirds of the Gaza Strip.

Under the new withdrawal, Israel would hand over 10 per cent of the West Bank to full Palestinian control, with an additional 3 per cent designated as a nature preserve in which Israel would retain security control for the time being.

Clinton directed Albright to go to the region next week for talks with Netanyahu and Arafat, who have been duelling over the future of the West Bank for nearly two years now.

As Netanyahu headed home, he expressed optimism that the long-south accord could be in hand in October — if the Palestinians reciprocated for Israel's promised pullback from the West Bank with stiffer anti-terrorism measures.

"I can't tell you that we agree on everything. That would not be true," Netanyahu said. "But I can tell you that we agreed on quite a few things."

The Palestinian leader urged

the nations of the world to "stand by our people."

Albright steered clear of any claims of breakthroughs, telling reporters, "We are very close on a number of subjects" and acknowledging that an accord on how much land Israel was willing to relinquish was among them.

But a senior US official later told The Associated Press, "Everybody things we broke the back" of that issue and now can focus on other matters.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Mideast leaders had committed themselves to go on from there to negotiations on a final settlement.

The biggest hurdle, according to Israeli and American diplomats, centres on Israeli demands that the Palestinian Authority dismantle terrorist cells on the West Bank and in Gaza, confiscate weapons and stop freeing apprehended suspects. Also, Netanyahu demands the Palestine Liberation Organisation nullify numerous anti-Israel references in its covenant.

Milosevic warned of NATO airstrikes Cohen sees no signs of Serbian pullout from Kosovo

RABAT, Morocco, Sept 29: US Defence Secretary William Cohen said Monday he had seen no signs of a Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo and warned Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic he must pull back his troops or risk a NATO air strike, reports AP.

The Balkan conflict was one of the top issues during Cohen's meeting with King Hassan II, whom he thanked for Morocco's participation in the international peace force in Bosnia.

Following his meeting with the king, Cohen told a news conference in the Moroccan capital that Serbia had indicated a readiness to pull back some forces from Kosovo.

Serbian Premier Mirko Marjanovic earlier had told the Yugoslav parliament Kosovo armed separatists had been defeated and special police units would be withdrawn from the embattled province.

"But we have seen no evidence that there has been any sort of strategic drawback at this point and we will insist that whatever words he issues

be followed up by concrete steps and deeds," Cohen said.

Hundreds of people have died and about 275,000 have fled their homes since Milosevic's forces began cracking down in February on ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, which is part of Serbia, the dominant republic in Yugoslavia.

The US and its European allies have warned Milosevic his forces risk becoming the target of NATO air strikes unless they end their offensive in Kosovo. Ethnic Albanians make up 90 per cent of the province's 2 million people and most want independence. Cohen appeared to have doubts the Serbs were ready to pull back.

"This may be another rhetorical declaration without any intent to match those words with concrete steps. But we will insist that he actually carry through with the withdrawal of his forces, army as well as the police," Cohen said.

Compliance with UN demands that Serb forces leave Kosovo would "be a very positive development."

Cohen said no specific deadline had been set for Serb troops to depart from Kosovo.

However, he said there was a consensus among the United States and its allies that "action had to be taken relatively soon" to prevent refugees from "either freezing or starving to death."

An estimated 50,000 people face deplorable conditions this winter if the conflict is not resolved in the next couple of months.

Earlier Monday in Rome, Cohen and Italian Defense Minister Beniamino Andreatta said planning for NATO air strikes had been completed.

In both Rome and Rabat, Cohen urged Milosevic to sit down with the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo to find a negotiated solution.

In addition to the Balkan quagmire, Cohen and King Hassan also discussed the Middle East peace process and the pending question of a referendum on the political status of the Western Sahara which Morocco claims as national territory.

Strike paralyses violence-plagued city Ruling party leader shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI, Sept 29: A provincial leader of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) party was shot dead today as a general strike paralysed the violence-plagued city of Karachi, police said, reports AFP.

Nab Shah, 50, the PM's joint-secretary in the southern province of Sindh, was attacked in the city's Eastern Soldier Bazar area.

The unidentified gunmen entered Shah's office and sprayed him with bullets, killing him instantly, police said.

A friend sitting nearby was critically wounded. Police said the assailants fled in a car, shooting into the air and causing panic among residents.

A senior police official termed the incident "an act of terrorism."

The killing took place as a strike called by a Shiite party, Tehrik-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP), to protest the killing of its leader, his son and two other party activists last week, paralysed the city.

Several provincial government officials have been among those deployed in Karachi in a new surge of violence in Pakistan's biggest city began in June.

Most of the victims were said to be activists and supporters of the influential Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) and its breakaway, MQM-Haqiqi faction.

AP adds: Paramilitary troops patrolled the streets of the southern Pakistani port of Karachi on Tuesday as a strike called by Shi'ite Muslims kept many shops and offices closed.

Rioters torched a car in the central Lquatobad area and three stones at passing vehicles, police said. Public transport remained off the roads as trucks mounted with machine-guns.

A force of more than 30,000 police and paramilitary troops are deployed in Karachi where some 3,000 people have died in political, ethnic and sectarian violence over the past three years.

BRRIFFLY

Ghana's president in Cuba: Ghana's President Rawlings arrived in Cuba on Monday on a three-day state visit during which he will decorate President Fidel Castro with the African nation's highest official award. Reuter says from Havana.

Rawlings, who arrived from the United Nations General Assembly in New York, was met at Havana's international airport by Cuban officials including Investment Minister Ibrahim Ferradaz and Deputy Foreign Minister Jorge Boianos.

2 Israeli youths convicted: Two Israeli youths were convicted Monday of killing a Palestinian pedestrian by striking him across the back of the head with a stick as they rode past in a van, AP reports from Jerusalem.

One of them was convicted of manslaughter, the other of causing death by negligence. On June 16, as the two were being driven home to the West Bank Jewish settlement of Beit Hagat, one of the two boys leaned out of the window and struck a Palestinian farmer, Mahmoud Majid Abu-Turki, on the back of the head.

Blast claims 3 in Russia: Three people were killed and seven were injured when a bomb exploded in a cafe in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi on Monday evening, interfax news agency said yesterday quoting police, AFP reports from Moscow.

The identity of those who planted the bomb was not known, interfax said.

1 dies in Indonesia quake: At least one person was killed when a magnitude 6.3 earthquake demolished or damaged at least 100 houses on the eastern end of the main island of Java, officials said yesterday, AP reports from Jakarta.

Monday night's quake was centred beneath the Indian Ocean and was also felt on the neighbouring tourist island of Bali, where there were no immediate reports of damage. The worst hit area was the district of Malang on Java, about 650 km east of Jakarta, where a 35-year-old woman was found dead under the ruin of her flattened house.

Russia launches military satellite: Russia's strategic missile forces launched a Kosmos class military satellite yesterday from a remote northern base, officials said, AP reports from Moscow.

The satellite was launched atop a Molnia-M booster rocket at 3:41 am Moscow time yesterday (2341 GMT Monday) from the Plesetsk launching pad, the strategic forces command said, according to Russian news agencies.

Clinton declares disaster areas in US: US President Bill Clinton declared parts of Florida, Mississippi and Alabama disaster areas Monday as the regions struggled to clean up in the aftermath of Hurricane Georges, AFP reports from Washington.

The declaration means federal funding will be available to individuals and local government in the areas devastated by the hurricane.



The first fuselage for the new Bombardier Aerospace CRJ Series 700 aircraft leaves Belfast Monday for Montreal, where it will join the aircraft's final assembly line. The 17.9 metre-long fuselage is being transported in an Antonov aircraft. — AP/UNB photo

Hillary heads to S America leaving domestic politics

WASHINGTON, Sept 29: First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is leaving domestic politics — and controversies — behind as she sets off on a trip to South America aimed at boosting the political and economic advancement of women, reports AP.

The trip, planned long before Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr issued his report about President Bill Clinton's relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, will be Mrs. Clinton's first solo journey abroad since then, although she's already been on the road 10 days this month.

A congressional delegation and administrative officials, including Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo, were accompanying her to her first destination, Puerto Rico, scheduled for late Tuesday afternoon, to tour areas devastated by Hurricane Georges.

Then Mrs. Clinton will head to Santiago, Chile, for the annual meeting of the first ladies of the Americas, and then on to Montevideo, Uruguay, for a Vital Voices conference, a US foreign policy initiative focusing on lifting women's political and economic roles, expected to draw about 400 women from across the Western Hemisphere.

Associate of Bin Laden held in London

LONDON, Sept 29: A suspected member of Osama bin Laden's terrorist organisation was arrested in London on an extradition warrant from the United States and appeared in court Monday, reports AP.

The police extradition squad arrested Khalid al Fawwaz, 36, at his north London home late Sunday afternoon, Scotland Yard police headquarters said. His nationality was not given.

The warrant alleges that Al Fawwaz conspired with bin Laden to murder citizens of the United States between Jan. 1, 1993 and Sept. 27, 1998 in the jurisdiction of the US District Court in New York.

No further details of the allegations were available. Al Fawwaz made a five-minute appearance Monday at Bow Street Magistrates Court, under increased security.

Throughout the hearing, the black bearded, stockily built Al Fawwaz sat in the dock showing no emotion.

He was ordered to appear again Oct. 5 at the Belmarsh Magistrates Court in south London for further extradition proceedings.

Police said he was an influential figure in Al Qaeda, the organization of Bin Laden, the Saudi exile wanted by US authorities for allegedly coordinating simultaneous attacks on American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.



Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, left, talks with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, at UN headquarters, Monday. The Secretary-General met today with an Iraqi delegation led by Aziz to discuss the 7-week-old stalemate with Baghdad over arms inspections. — AP/UNB photo

Iraq to cooperate fully with UN chief

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 29: Iraq would cooperate fully with the UN chief in good faith as well as in a professional and objective manner in solving the recent standoff between the United Nations and Iraq, Tariq Aziz, Iraq's deputy prime minister, said on Monday, reports Xinhua.

Tariq made the remark after holding one-hour meeting with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Aziz and Annan discussed the recent standoff between Iraq and the United Nations Special Commission in charge of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (UNSCOM) as well as Annan's ideas for a comprehensive review of Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions which demand Iraq scrap all its prohibited weapons.

Speaking to reporters, Aziz said "the comprehensive review is not a reward to Iraq, the idea that Iraq should do this or that concession before the comprehensive review takes place is not legal and is not logical."

The review is a moral and legal action by the UN Security Council itself in accordance with its own resolution.

"Iraq has complied with resolutions of the Security Council for seven years and a half, and the Security Council has not taken steps to reduce or lift the sanctions against Iraq according to its own resolution," Aziz added.

The deputy prime minister described his meeting with Annan as cordial and constructive. Aziz arrived at the headquarters of the United Nations over the weekend. He will stay here for a couple of days during which he is due to meet members of the Security Council and to meet the UN chief once again by the weekend.

The standoff between Iraq and the United Nations came when Iraq announced to suspend its cooperation with the UN weapons inspectors after talks collapsed between Iraq and UNSCOM in early August.



A model wears a sheer see-through dress by British designer Bella Freud during her fashion show in London Monday. Freud's show was part of London Fashion Week, where designers are showing their Spring/Summer 1999 collections. — AP/UNB photo

Insult to Khomeini Court bans 2 Iranian dailies

TEHRAN, Sept 29: A Tehran press court on Monday banned two Iranian publications for insulting the late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iranian television reported, says AP.

The court revoked the publishing licenses of the daily Taus and the monthly Jameh-e Saleh. The owner of the monthly was given a five-year suspended jail sentence for "publishing lies, insulting the state authorities, and distorting the utterances" of Khomeini, who died in 1989, the station said. It gave no further details.

The case against the daily Zan, on charges of "publishing lies, defaming public figures and causing public concern," was adjourned to allow further investigations, said the TV, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Zan, or Woman, is owned by Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of former President Hashemi Rafsanjani.

LTTE lost 240 men in two-day encounter with army

COLOMBO, Sept 29: The LTTE today admitted that it had lost 240 men in the two-day encounter with army at northern Paranthan and claimed to have over-run the military installations and captured the nearby Killinochchi town, reports PTI.

A Tamil news agency Tamil Net, which was featured on the pro-LTTE website — Ilnkai Tamil Sangam — has quoted the clandestine LTTE radio, Voice of Tigers, as saying that it so far lost 240 men.

The radio also provided the names of 83 LTTE militants killed in the attack on army garrison.

However, the radio in its morning broadcast did not give any specific army casualties.

'76 pc Indian women have suffered sexual abuse'

NEW DELHI, Sept 29: Some 76 per cent of middle-class Indian women have suffered sexual abuse, mainly at the hands of family members, according to a nationwide study published today, reports AFP.

The extensive eight-month study, entitled "voices from the silent zone" and conducted by a Delhi-based group recovering and healing from incest (Rahil), surveyed 600 middle — and upper-middle class women across the country.

Iranian FM says No formal talks until US alters attitude

NEW YORK, Sept 29: Iran's foreign minister said that despite US calls for formal talks with his country, there was no basis for negotiations without a meaningful change in Washington's behaviour toward Tehran, reports AP.

"While we see the emergence of a new tone in the United States, old unfounded allegations are yet to cease," Kamal Kharrazi said Monday in a speech to the Asia Society in New York.

"It is evident that prolongation of outdated behaviour ... can simply not provide the necessary basis for an invitation to political dialogue," Kharrazi said, reading from a prepared text in English.

He said that while US Secre-

tary of State Madeleine Albright had called for a "road map" for an eventual resumption of relations between the former allies, Washington continued to undermine his government.

For example, Kharrazi cited the US economic sanctions on Iran, Congress' decision to allocate \$20 million for covert activities in Iran, and approval for radio broadcasts against his government.

"Logically, the United States' active pursuit of the policies I have already outlined and the absence of visible signs of its intention or ability to change course are hardly compatible with the proposal to develop a road map to change the state of affairs," Kharrazi said.

Hurricane Georges ploughs into Gulf Coast

PASCAGOULA, Mississippi, Sept 29: Hurricane Georges ploughs into the Gulf Coast and then parked there, pouring rain at a 2.5-cm-an-hour pace before weakening to a tropical storm that could have a long and ruinous stay, reports AP.

Winds dropped to 72 kph Monday night, 48 kph below hurricane strength and down from a high of 175 kph. New Orleans was spared the catastrophic direct hit that many had feared.

But that was little comfort to the thousands who huddled in shelters from Florida to Louisiana and were expected to remain there for days. Outside, all was chaos — trees ripped from the ground, windows sucked from their frames, floods roaring down roads.

Forecasters said up to 76 cms could fall by the time the storm clears out sometime in the middle of the week. Flash floods were issued for much of Mississippi and Alabama through Tuesday. Parts of Florida were also under flood watches.

National guardsmen waded

through chest-deep water to carry children and lead adults to safety from a flooded housing project near downtown Mobile, Ala. In the Florida Panhandle, Guardsmen had to rescue about 200 people from their flooded homes.

In New Orleans, where authorities had feared the worst — a sopping rain and huge storm surge that would put the entire city under water — there was a collective sigh of relief. Instead of hitting the Big Easy head on, Georges struck at Ocean Springs, Mississippi, between Biloxi and Pascagoula, dealing New Orleans rain and wind but no catastrophe.

Three storm-related deaths were reported. A man died Monday in a New Orleans fire started by candles being used for light after the hurricane knocked out electricity. An 86-year-old woman died while she and 250 other nursing home residents waited for beds in a Baton Rouge shelter. A 66-year-old Pensacola, Florida woman was killed Sunday in a house fire.

Off the Record Sex, lies and videotape WASHINGTON: Americans who haven't had enough of the sex-and-lies scandal surrounding President Bill Clinton can now buy the four-hour video of his testimony before the Grand Jury, reports AFP. The cassette went on sale Monday for 9.95 dollars and shot up to 26th place on the bestseller list of amazon.com, and internet site selling books and other materials over the internet. Sellers are hoping the presidential video doesn't suffer the same fate as the Starr report. Available at amazon.com since September 15 sales of the book version have stagnated, and one edition is now at 497th place.