

# Accord to open way for permanent peace in ME

# Highlights of ME peace accord

WASHINGTON, Oct 24: A breakthrough Middle East agreement, mediated by President Bill Clinton over nine tortuous days in the seclusion of a Chesapeake Bay retreat, opens the way for Israel and the Palestinians to enter the home stretch of even tougher negotiations for a permanent peace, reports AP.

This agreement is designed to rebuild trust and a new hope for peace between the parties," Clinton said Friday at a White House ceremony to sign the accord. "Now both sides must build on that hope, carry out their commitments, begin the difficult but urgent journey toward a permanent settlement."

The land-for-peace agreement is known as the "Wye River Memorandum," for the Wye River Conference Centre on Maryland's Eastern Shore where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat camped for nine days with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. They were joined on all but two days by Clinton and, on two occasions, by the ailing King Hussein of Jordan.

"Today is a day when Israel and our entire region are more secure," Netanyahu told the audience of exhausted negotiating teams, members of Congress and the Washington diplomatic corps. "Now this has required sacrifice from both sides, and reaching into what Lincoln called the 'better nature of mankind.'"

Arafat, who joined Netanyahu in praising Clinton for relentlessly pushing them to overcome their differences, said the Palestinians now had higher hopes for reaping the benefits of peace with Israel.

"We will never leave the peace process and we will never go back to violence and confrontation," Arafat said to a burst of applause.

All three men showed the strain of the marathon negotiations. The talks began Oct 15 on a brilliantly sunny afternoon in the Wye River woods and ended Friday afternoon after an all-night session that was stretched longer by a last-minute Israeli demand for the release of an American imprisoned for spying for Israel.

"People around the world should be heartened by this achievement today," Clinton declared. "Israel can have the genuine security and recognition it has sought for so long. The Palestinian people can at long last realise their aspirations to live free, in safety, in charge of their own destiny."

Achieved just 11 days before the Nov 3 elections, the Wye River accord was a big diplomatic triumph for Clinton, suggesting the portrait of an effective leader despite the threat of impeachment. He spent 85.5 hours at the talks, an extraordinary investment of presidential time, energy and prestige.

In a speech Friday night to black religious leaders, Clinton said he was honored to have held the summit. "I felt that it was a part of my job as president, my mission as a Christian and my personal journey of atonement," he said.

Early reaction to the accord was positive on Capitol Hill.

Sen Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat, praised it as "testament to the fact that seemingly intractable disputes can be resolved when the political will exists to do so."

Melvin Salberg, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, thanked Clinton for his role and said Netanyahu had proved Israel's commitment to achieving peace.

The agreement will give the Palestinians 13 per cent more of Israeli-held territory on the West Bank of the Jordan River. In return, the Palestinians

pledged steps to fight terrorism by Islamic militants and agreed to scrap provisions in their Palestine Liberation Organisation charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

Clinton said he will travel to the Middle East to address the Palestinian National Council and urge reconciliation, tolerance and respect. Aides said the trip would be in mid-December at an undisclosed site.

Friday's hard-won accord is an interim step toward a final agreement due to be completed

by May 4, 1999. The timetable is important because Arafat has said he intends to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state — his goal for more than 30 years — if a final peace settlement is not reached by May. Such a move would carry unpredictable consequences.

Clinton cautioned that even under the best circumstances, a permanent peace accord will be hard to get.

"No doubt, as peace gains momentum, forces of hate — no

matter how isolated and desperate — will once again lash out," Clinton said. He said Netanyahu and Arafat "know this ... and are prepared to face it."

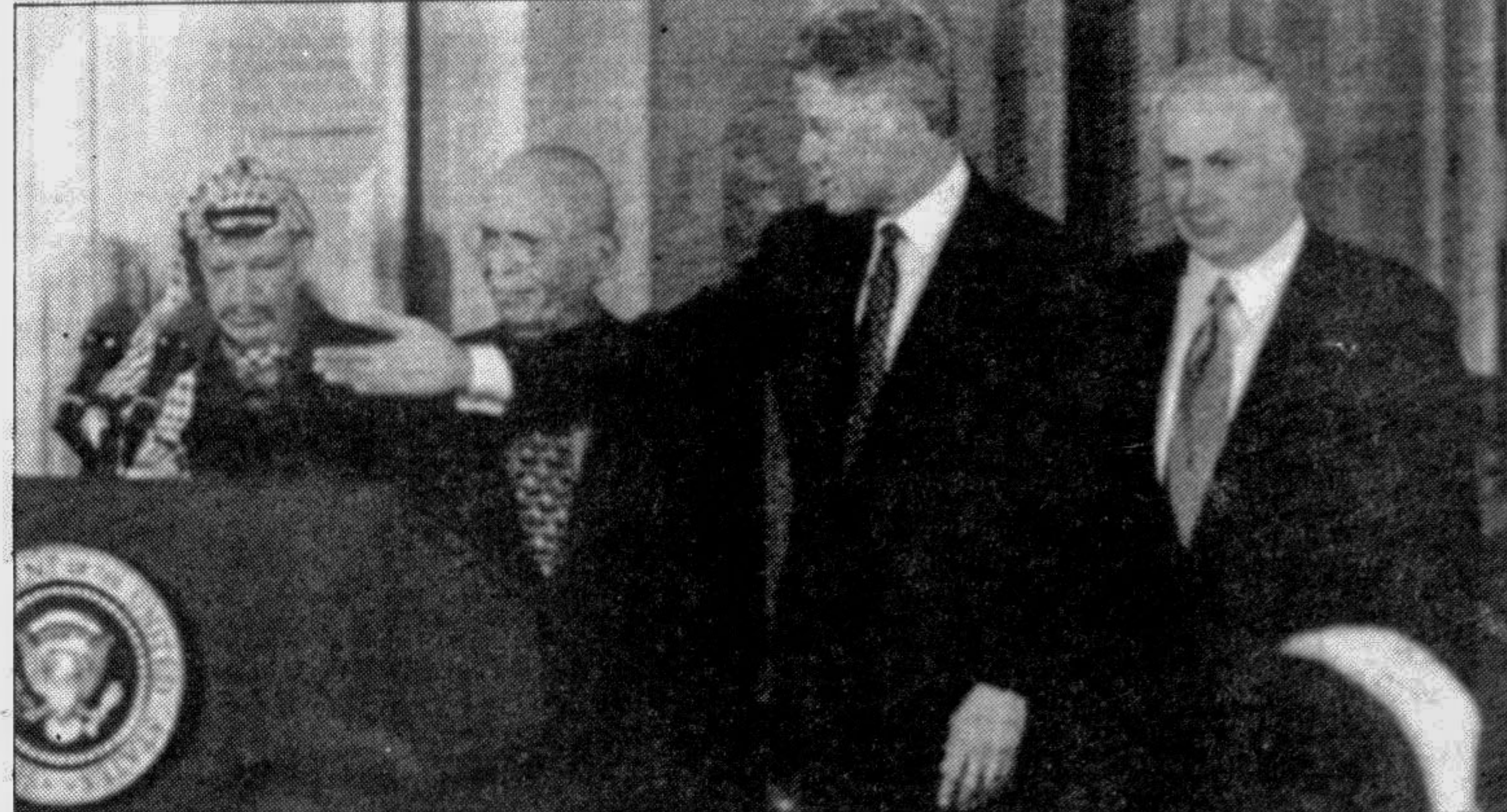
Jordan's Hussein, who twice intervened in the talks with emotional appeals for peace despite his battle with cancer, said Israel and the Palestinians were moving in the right direction.

"There has been enough destruction, enough death, enough waste," the king said. "And it's time that together we occupy a

place beyond ourselves, our peoples, that is worthy of them and of their sons, the descendants of the children of Abraham."

Clinton pledged to ask Congress for a package of aid to help Israel meet security costs associated with troop redeployments and to assist Arafat's Palestinian Authority with economic development.

Asked about the size of the US aid commitment, Albright declined to cite any specific amounts.



President Clinton leads, from left, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, King Hussein of Jordan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, right, into the East Room of the White House, where Arafat and Netanyahu signed the West Bank accord, Friday. — AP/UNB photo

WASHINGTON, Oct 24: An Israeli-Palestinian interim peace accord was signed at the White House Friday, reports AP.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Jordan's King Hussein and US President Bill Clinton signed the accord after nine days of negotiations. The Wye River memorandum signed Friday came after a marathon nine-day set of Middle East peace talks at Wye Mills on the Maryland shore.

The accord ended a 19-month deadlock in the Middle East peace negotiations and will lead in 10 days' time to discussions on the final status of Palestinian territories in advance of the May 4, 1999 deadline for a final settlement under the Oslo accords.

Here are the central points of the memorandum.

— Israel will transfer 13 per cent of territories it controls in the West Bank to the Palestinians, the Palestinian Authority will allocate three per cent of its territory for 'green spaces' and 'or nature reserves.'

The Israeli side will have responsibility in the green spaces for protecting Israeli citizens and countering terrorism.

The Palestinian and Israeli sides agree to take all measures to prevent acts of terrorism and to take legal measures against offenders in their respective jurisdictions.

— A US-Palestinian committee will meet biweekly to review the steps taken to eliminate terrorist cells and evaluate legal measures against suspected terrorists.

— The Palestinian side will prosecute illegal weapons manufacturing or sales, a US-Israeli-Palestinian committee will work toward preventing

weapons or explosives smuggling into Palestinian territories. — The Palestinian side will issue a decree banning all forms of incitement to violence or terror and set up procedures for quashing all such expressions or threats. — A US Palestinian Israeli committee will monitor cases of incitement to violence and make recommendations for how they can be stopped.

— In the area of security cooperation the two sides will maintain a 'continuous intensive and comprehensive' bilateral programme including an exchange of forensic expertise, training and other assistance.

— A second committee comprising high ranking US Israeli and Palestinian officials will meet at least every two weeks to review counter terrorism measures.

— The Palestinians will provide a list to the Israelis of its policemen, who will execute their duties with due regard to internationally accepted norms of human rights and the rule of law.

— The Palestinian Liberation Organisation's National Committee and the Palestinian Central Council will expunge anti-Israeli articles from the national charter, US President Bill Clinton will address the Palestinian governing bodies when they convene to amend the charter.

— The Israeli and Palestinian sides agree to take necessary steps for the 'timely' opening of an industrial park in the Gaza Strip and to fulfill a new protocol for an international airport there, the sides will launch a 'strategic economic dialogue' to enhance their economic relationship.

## BRIEFLY



UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, left, shows his Seoul Peace Prize, a biennial award set up in 1990 to commemorate the 1988 Seoul Olympics, as his wife Nane applauds at the Shila Hotel in Seoul Friday. Annan was chosen as the recipient of this year's prize for his contribution to world peace through international diplomatic and humanitarian endeavours. — AP/UNB photo

**5 Kurdish rebels burn to death:** Five Kurdish rebels burned themselves to death in Turkish jails on Friday in a show of loyalty to their leader, and rebels and far-left prisoners took dozens of guards hostage in coordinated protests at jails across the country, Reuters reports from Diyarbakir, Turkey.

In addition to five who died by their own hands, five other Kurds set themselves ablaze and were seriously burned, a prison official said. The rebels were demonstrating their support for Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan, banned from neighbouring Syria under a recent Turkish-Syrian agreement. Later in the day, Kurdish rebels and far-left prisoners took dozens of guards hostage in a coordinated protest, state-run Anatolian News Agency said.

**Vietnam flood death toll now 28:** The death toll from flooding in central Vietnam has risen to 28, with damage estimated at 100 billion dong (7 million dollars) in one of the country's poorest regions, officials said Saturday, AP reports from Hanoi.

Downpours with 300 to 500 millimetres of rain earlier this week have raised water levels in most rivers in the region and submerged large tracts of land. The Binh Dinh provincial flood and storm control committee said eight people had died there, while Quang Ngai reported seven deaths. Six people were killed in Khanh Hoa province, four in Ninh Thuan and three in Phu Yen.

## Typhoon Babs death toll climbs to 124

MANILA, Oct 24: Typhoon Babs raced toward southern China on Saturday, leaving behind a trail of destruction on the Philippines' main island where at least 124 people died and hundreds of thousands were forced to flee their homes, reports AP.

Philippines President Joseph Estrada declared three provinces and a city in the worst hit area on the southern tip of Luzon island under a state of calamity. He was expected to add more provinces to the list once the full extent of the damage was determined.

Disaster officials said the toll on lives and property would rise as telephone service is restored and roads blocked by landslides and flooding are reopened in the worst hit areas.

By early Saturday Babs had moved out over the South China Sea, 280 kilometers (175 miles) west-northwest of Dapunan City in Pangasinan province, weather officials said. It had sustained winds of 120 kph (75 mph), with gusts up to 150 kph (95 mph), and was headed toward southern China.

## Vajpayee tells Sonia Resist attempt to create instability

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has asked Congress president Sonia Gandhi to desist from any attempt to create instability in the country and rejected suggestions that the coming assembly elections will be a referendum on his government's performance, reports PTI.

"If the Congress Party and its leader Sonia Gandhi are truly sincere in their promise of constructive opposition, then they should desist from any attempt to create instability in the country," he said in an interview to English weekly 'India Today' for its forthcoming edition.

Asked if he thought Congress, which had promised to function as a constructive opposition party, was a responsible opposition, Vajpayee said the Congress did not claim to form the government in March and it did not lend support to other parties interested in forming the government because of its own compulsions.

## Chinese dissidents renew bid to form party

BEIJING, Oct 24: Defying a police crackdown, democracy campaigners in two Chinese provinces have renewed efforts to set up an opposition party to challenge Communist Party rule, groups reported Saturday, reports AP.

Emboldened by the government's signing of two key UN rights treaties, dissidents have sought to test the country's 49-year ban on opposition politics.

The pro-democracy activists have been trying to register the China Democracy Party in at least nine provinces and major cities since July. But police have detained at least 20 of them — mostly for short periods of time — and all applications have been turned down.

Two dissidents in southern Guizhou province and at least five in central Henan province sent applications for party branches this week to civil affairs authorities, a US-based opposition party and a dissident monitoring group in Hong Kong said Saturday.

Hours after Wang Bing telephoned Henan officials to notify them of the application on

Friday, police in Anyang city told the dissident he must appear for questioning on Monday, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement reported.

Police also took away another veteran campaigner, Leng Wanbao, from his home in northeastern Changchun city Friday night and his whereabouts were unknown as of Saturday morning, the Information Centre said.

Democratisation has already become an unstoppable world trend, and forming political parties and groups is a basic, heaven-bested human right that cannot be taken away," the Information Centre quoted the Guizhou dissidents as saying in their application.

The Henan dissidents noted that "the twins of dictatorship and corruption seriously threaten China's social equality" and only democratic, constitutional government could stop them, the Chinese Democracy and Justice Party reported.

Both applications stressed that because freedom of assembly was already enshrined in China's constitution party

backers were doing nothing illegal.

Guizhou dissidents Zeng Ning and Wei Dengzhong pointed out that the government pledged to respect basic rights by signing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights earlier this month.

China has yet to ratify the treaty or another key rights pact it signed a year ago. At an unprecedented government-backed international human rights conference in Beijing last week, the spokesman for the State Council, or Cabinet, said China would hew to its own interpretation of rights.

In their roundup of would-be China Democracy Party members, police have indicated that the group has been branded subversive by Chinese leaders.

Another dissident, Chen Zengxiang, was sentenced recently in a closed trial to seven years in prison. His family has not been told why, but the US-based Chinese Democracy and Justice Party claims that Chen was a member of its underground network inside China.

## Vajpayee on mending fences with Pakistan India 'willing to go more than half the way'

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: India is "willing to go more than half the way" to mend fences with Pakistan provided it stopped meddling in Kashmir, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was quoted as saying in an interview, reports AP.

Vajpayee's comments to the 'India Today' magazine, to be published this weekend, urged Islamabad not to call for outside mediation to resolve a decades old dispute over Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan demands a UN-sponsored referendum in the divided territory but India says its sovereignty over the Himalayan state of Kashmir is unquestionable.

Vajpayee also said that although Kashmir was the bone of contention between the two estranged South Asian neighbours, the dispute should not be

## Peru, Ecuador end decade-old dispute

LIMA, Oct 24: Peru and Ecuador ended a bloody, decades-old dispute by accepting on Friday a binding proposal from peace brokers, including the United States, that effectively rid Latin America of its last border flashpoint, reports Reuters.

Presidents Alberto Fujimori of Peru and Jamil Mahuad of Ecuador said they accepted the proposal drawn up by the United States, Brazil, Argentina and Chile and will sign an accord on Monday settling the dispute that last flared into war in 1995.

Starting Monday, we are going to have peace in both countries — hopefully forever", Mahuad said.

Said Fujimori: "this is one huge problem out of the way, both countries are winners because both have achieved peace."

## Hun Sen for sharing of parliament presidency

TAKHMAU, Cambodia, Oct 24: Cambodian leader Hun Sen has thrown his support behind a proposal for the ruling party to share the presidency of parliament with the opposition, an aide said Saturday, reports AP.

Both Hun Sen's Cambodia People's Party and the main opposition party, FUNCINPEC, have staked claims to the top post in parliament, a dispute that has been a major stumbling block in stalled negotiations to form a new government following July elections.

A behind-the-scenes proposal for the two parties to share the position with co-presidents has been negotiated about since formal negotiations broke down earlier this month, but Hun Sen is the first party leader to openly support the idea.

Hun Sen spoke of the potential deal in a Saturday meeting with Japanese Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Nobutaka Machimura, Hun Sen said Prak

## Sokhonn told reporters at the Cambodian leader's heavily fortified residence 15 km south of Phnom Penh.

"There has been a proposal that there should be co-presidents in the parliament. The prime minister is pleased and agrees with it," Prak Sokhonn said. "He is now waiting for an answer from FUNCINPEC."

Prak Sokhonn said the proposal is the second attempt to find an acceptable post for FUNCINPEC leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who was ousted from his position as co-premier last year in a violent coup d'etat led by Hun Sen.

FUNCINPEC Secretary General Tol Lah said Saturday that there has been no change in the party's negotiating position and was reluctant to comment on Hun Sen's support of parliamentary co-presidents.

"We maintain our old position," Tol Lah said. "I have to wait until I discuss this with my boss."

## New steps proposed to crack down on illegal immigration in UK

LONDON, Oct 24: The British government has proposed new measures to crack down on illegal immigration, mainly from South Asia. Large numbers of illegal immigrants are suspected to be smuggled into Britain every year, including thousands of Punjabis from India and Pakistan. The government proposes to get tough with those smuggling illegal immigrants into Britain, Home Secretary Jack Straw has indicated, reports IANS.

The proposed measures include a controversial move to hold truck drivers responsible for any illegal immigrants caught in their vehicles. The thousands of trucks coming to Britain are said to be a common method of bringing South Asians illegally into this country. British Customs do not have the resources to check every truck and bus coming in. A new wave of illegal immigration has also opened up through the Eurostar train from Paris to London, Straw told the Commons Home Affairs Select

Committee. "There are too many flooding through on Eurostar. Paris. We are thinking about imposing carriers' liability on drivers of private cars because of the large numbers who are coming through that way," he said.

The liability is expected to be included in the Asylum and Immigration Bill due in the next session of Parliament. Straw called it the only way left to deal with "the substantial increase of wholly illegal immigrants."

But truckers associations are strongly resisting any move to hold them responsible for carrying illegal immigrants into Britain. "Our members are truckers, not immigration officials," Dan Hodges of the Road Haulage Association said in a statement. If the law is imposed, he warned, "we will have no option but to advise our members to release immigrants without informing the authorities when they discover them."

Immigration advisers in Birmingham told IANS that while Indians and Pakistanis

are keeping up a "steady flow," the highest number of illegal immigrants coming to Britain are from Kosovo, Yugoslavia and some East European states. Most of these slip into London on the Eurostar. Many of those who do succeed in settling illegally in Britain "are often greatly disappointed," said a Birmingham lawyer. "It means dangerous living, a lot of heavy work, and little money for it," he told said.

Most of the illegal immigrants from India are from the Doaba region of Punjab covering Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts. Many of them have relatives already living in Britain. They reach Britain and other West European nations travelling through Russia or the Central Asian republics and then East Europe. Britain, with its large Indian community of more than a million, remains a favorite destination. The illegal immigrants from India are known to pay half a million rupees each to middlemen for being smuggled into Britain.



A relative cries over the body of one of three ethnic Albanian children killed by Serb border police Thursday, during the funeral in the village of Gricina, 70 km south of Pristina, near the Albanian border Friday. The children were among a group of refugees returning to Kosovo from Albania. — AP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

### 10 books in the palm of a hand!

NEW YORK: Imagine holding 10 books in the palm of your hand — and being able to read them in dark.

That's the idea behind an electronic book unveiled Friday, reports AP.

Once the stuff of science fiction, Rocket eBook packs in 4,000 pages of text and graphics — or about 10 average novels — into a paperback-size, 625-gm device that sells for 499 US dollars.

It may seem sacrilege to would-be Jack Kerouac crossing in the country with a dog-eared copy of "On The Road" stuffed in the back pocket. But a half dozen other companies are developing their own versions of machines that would let people download novels through the Internet.

SoftBook Press of Menlo Park, California, is marketing a 1.4-kilo, 599 dollar device holding up to 100,000 pages targeting mostly corporate clients. And everybook Inc. of Middtown, Pennsylvania, is producing a 1.8 kilo device at 1,500 dollars which could hold a half million pages when available next year.

"If you can get on to the Web, you can buy a book — instantly," said Martin Eberhard, chief executive officer of NuvoMedia, the Palo Alto, California-based company that makes the eBook.

He introduced the plastic, high-tech tablet at the Barnes and Noble flagship store in New York. The giant bookseller is making electronic titles for the eBook available online for downloading onto a personal computer. It takes two to five minutes to download a book, which will cost 18 to 25 dollars.

There are no freight charges, no warehouses, no out-of-print books. Plus, it can be replaced anywhere.

"It's hard to replace getting comfortable on the living room sofa with a paperback," admits Eberhard. "But when I get into bed, and my wife says, 'The light's going off, dude!' — I can turn on the electronic book."