

Mubarak reiterates support for Arafat

Israel will go ahead with Jewish settlement plan in E Jerusalem

JERUSALEM, Nov 9: Israel said Sunday it will go ahead with plans to invite construction bids at a Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem that has angered Palestinians, but again avoided fixing a date for cabinet approval of the Wye river accord, reports AFP.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was due Sunday to convene a meeting of his cabinet which has yet to approve indefinitely — a move likely to delay parliamentary debate on the accord, which was scheduled to begin Wednesday.

The cabinet broke off debate on the agreement Friday after a bomb attack by Palestinian militants in a Jerusalem market left 24 Israelis wounded and killed both of the bombers.

Israel announced just after the attack that it would press ahead with construction at Har Homa, a controversial Hilltop settlement in occupied Arab East Jerusalem, and Deputy

Housing Minister Meir Porush reiterated Sunday that building plans were underway.

"The decision to press ahead with inviting bids will be taken in the next few days," Porush told Israeli radio.

The ultra-orthodox minister has been one of the strongest voices in government urging Israel to move forward with the Har Homa project, which has divided members of Netanyahu's cabinet in addition to sparking intense anger among Palestinians.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon urged the cabinet to go ahead with the plan but was vetoed by Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, who warned of an explosion of Palestinian violence if construction begins, the Haaretz newspaper reported Sunday.

And while one Netanyahu spokesman said Friday that Israel would begin inviting con-

struction tenders immediately, a second spokesman denied the statement later in the day.

Israeli public radio reported after the conflicting statements that the government had already decided to begin soliciting the tenders, but that world of the decision was to have been kept secret until the cabinet approved the Wye river agreement.

Another report from Paris adds Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak described the Israeli government as "unpredictable" because Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "says one thing and does another."

Mubarak said in an interview to be published in German daily Die Welt yesterday.

"We are trying to build bridges, but with this Israeli government we see no prospects," Mubarak said of Egypt's role in the Middle East peace process.

The Egyptian leader said Ne-

tanyahu "might one day decide to break the peace treaty with Egypt."

He also reiterated his support for Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"What more can he do? Arafat has nothing more to give. If we are going to take the latest Israeli claims seriously, Arafat should imprison his entire people," Mubarak said.

Referring to Israel's repeated demands for Arafat to take a tougher stance on anti-Israeli extremists the Egyptian president added that no country is able to prevent extremists from carrying out the suicide attacks often used in the region.

Under the Wye Plantation Agreement signed between Palestinians and Israelis at the White House on October 23, Israel is to withdraw 13 per cent of the West Bank to Palestinian rule in exchange for a Palestinian crackdown on anti-Israeli extremists.

Dawn-to-dusk bandh in Bihar

PATNA, Nov 9: The dawn-to-dusk Bihar bandh called by Rashtriya Loktantrik Morcha (RLM) to protest against price rise and alleged false implication of RJD president Laloo Prasad Yadav began this morning amid light security, reports PTI.

The bandh was peaceful so far, official sources said.

In the state capital, major shops and business establishments downed their shutters.

Vehicular traffic was also thin in the morning.

Private bus operators suspended their services across the state in view of the call.

Essential services including medical, power and water supply and trains have been exempted from the purview of the bandh, according to RJD spokesman, Shakeel Ahmed Khan.

The state administration has sounded a general alert across the state to maintain law and order.

RLM president, Mulayam Singh Yadav, after meeting the RJD president, Laloo Yadav, at make-shift jail at Fulwarisharif last week called Uttar Pradesh and Bihar bandh.



As the leaders of the two Iraqi Kurdish factions that control northern Iraq, Jalal Talabani of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) centre, listen, Hoshiyar Zibari, a senior spokesman of KDP Briefs the media about a meeting between the two leaders, in Ankara on Sunday. Talabani and Barzani have discussed a recent peace agreement they had signed in Washington in September. — AP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY



Rigoverto Hernandez, 26, give water to his dying cow in Bajos de Choloma. Some 9 miles from Pedro Sula on the northwest coast of Honduras Sunday. With hunger, dehydration and disease, Hurricane Mitch continues to kill in Honduras, pushing the death toll in the region well past 10,000. — AP/UNB photo

Mountaineer Lord Hunt dead: Britain's Lord Hunt, who led the first successful expedition to Mount Everest in 1953, has died at the age of 88, his family said on Sunday. Reuter reports from London.

Hunt, a British Army officer, directed the team that climbed the world's highest mountain on the eve of Queen Elizabeth's coronation. The two members of that team who actually stepped on the summit were Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay.

Hunt — whose full name was Henry Cecil John Hunt — was knighted after the Everest expedition and made a life peer in the House of Lords in 1966. He wrote several books, including the Ascent of Everest, which became a classic of mountaineering literature.

Turk ship captain held in Italy: Italian police have arrested a Turk suspected of having captained a ship found abandoned by its crew off the Italian Coast with 230 illegal immigrants aboard, AFP reports from Lecce, Italy.

The ship "Zeynep" was spotted on Saturday by police about 400 metres from a beach south of Otranto, the ship described as "an old tub," was packed with immigrants, most of them Turkish Kurds and Africans who had boarded the ship in Turkey 10 days previously. The 25-year-old suspect is accused of inciting illegal immigration. He was intercepted by coast guards on Saturday while sailing in a life-boat belonging to the Zeynep, police said on Sunday.

\$84m anti-quake plan for Beijing: China is to invest a total of 700 million yuan (\$4 million dollars) in strengthening anti-earthquake measures in and around the capital, amid fears of a major earthquake in the next few years, official media said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Considering the unparalleled importance of the region, and the severe quake situation, the state council (has) decided to build the capital circle into an anti-quake and disaster relief pilot zone," head of anti-earthquake operations in the Ministry of Construction Qu Qi told the China Daily.

2 US Navy planes collide: A Navy plane conducting night landing exercises collided with another plane on the flight deck of the USS Enterprise. Both air crews ejected and the Navy was searching the Atlantic for the six missing fliers, AP reports from Norfolk, Virginia.

The collision on Sunday night set off a small fire on the deck, but it was quickly contained, said Capt. Joe Gradisher, a Navy spokesman for the Atlantic Fleet air crew. The two planes involved were an EA6B Prowler and an S-3 Viking. The Prowler had a crew of four, and the Viking had a crew of two, Gradisher said.

Quake shakes Indonesia: An earthquake measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale rocked Indonesia's eastern island of Flores on Sunday but there were no reports of damage or casualties, meteorology officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The earthquake jolted the area at 0725 GMT on Sunday with the epicentre located 80 km below the Sabu Sea, around 90 km south of Ende Town. The tremor was also felt in the towns of Waingapu, Ruteng and Maumere said the officials.

Clinton urges Cambodian leaders to resume talks

PHNOM PENH, Nov 9: US President Bill Clinton urged Cambodian political leaders on Monday to resume stalled negotiations to try to solve election-related disputes and form a new government, reports AP.

"It is imperative that Cambodia's leaders participate in peaceful dialogue leading to a resolution of outstanding election issues and formation of a government," Clinton said in a message addressed to King Norodom Sihanouk on the occasion of Cambodian Independence Day.

Clinton's message, released by the Royal Palace, praised the role King Sihanouk has played in trying to bring about reconciliation in his country.

The 76-year-old monarch is considered by many people to be the best hope for brokering an end to the political deadlock triggered by July's parliamentary elections.

The ruling Cambodian People's Party of Co-Premier Hun Sen won 64 of the 122 seats in the National Assembly, but failed to capture the two-thirds majority needed to form a new government.

Opposition parties led by Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy, holding the remainder of the seats, claimed that Hun Sen's victory was achieved through fraud and intimidation.

The opposition leaders have so far refused to cooperate with Hun Sen in forming a new government. Both left the country right after the September 24 convening of the new National Assembly due to fear of political persecution and arrest.

Talks between government and opposition representatives failed to break the stalemate.

In his message to King Sihanouk, Clinton suggested that dialogue be resumed between political leaders in order to form a new government which "reflects the will of the people as expressed in the July elections."

The president assured Sihanouk that the United States will continue to work with the monarch "to ensure that the future brings true democracy and a lasting peace to Cambodia."

The king, who led his country to independence, held a ceremony Monday marking the 45th anniversary of the occa-

Over 100 men flee prison in Sumatra

JAKARTA, Nov 9: More than 100 men have fled a prison in the western Indonesian province of south Sumatra after overwhelming four prison guards, a newspaper report said today, reports AFP.

Only three of the 107 who escaped were recaptured on Sunday night shortly after the break-out of the main entrance of the state jail in the province's capital of Palembang, the Kompas Daily reported.

Police were still searching for the rest, the daily added.

South Sumatra police chief Brigadier General Pandji Atmasudirdja said that eight teams of 35 men have been deployed to recapture those who had escaped.

"We are not entirely sure of the exact number of prisoners that fled. We are still waiting for the prison administration's investigation. Tonight we have managed to recapture only three prisoners," Atmasudirdja was quoted by the daily as saying.

He added that the break-out might have occurred following the lax of security after Sunday's visiting hours, with individual cells left unlocked. The prisoners escaped after the night shift had taken over and they knocked down the four security guards.

Gingrich pledges to be 'active citizen in public life'

MECHANICSBURG, Pennsylvania, Nov 9: Newt Gingrich said Sunday he's given no thought to a run for the presidency since quitting as House speaker but wants to stay "an active citizen in public life," reports AP.

Two days after announcing he will quit the speakership and abandon his seat in the House, Gingrich appeared relaxed and smiled as he paid a birthday visit to his ailing mother at the Country Meadows Assisted Living Center, a tan brick building outside Harrisburg.

Talking to a few reporters before he went in, Gingrich said he had no word on fellow Republican's fight to succeed him, he has given no thought to running for president and he will otherwise discuss his political future Monday night in Washington at a meeting of GOPAC, the Republican fundraising group he once headed.

"In the next couple of years I want to be an active citizen in public life," said Gingrich, accompanied by three body guards and his niece, 12-year-old Emily Brown. "I'm going to take time off and see America better, do some learning. I love learning."

"The next Congress is the next Congress," he said. "I have served my country, my party, the House. My career is one I will treasure all my life."

Gingrich's mother, Kathleen, turning 72 Sunday, was feeling ill. "The family is concerned because she's not in good health," Gingrich said but did not elaborate.

Baghdad calls for mass mobilisation against enemy plots

Clinton puts off decision on use of force against Iraq

WASHINGTON, Nov 9: After two hours of talks with his top security advisers, President Bill Clinton has put off a decision on whether to use force against Iraq to reopen weapons sites to UN inspectors, reports AP.

During the talks at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Clinton reviewed diplomatic and military options with Defence Secretary William Cohen, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

He then "asked for a follow-up on both fronts," said David Leavy, spokesman at the National Security Council.

"They will report to him over the next several days," Leavy said. "The president has made no decision."

Leavy and other administration officials described the situation as "very serious."

Among the considerations was that Iraq might respond to an attack by permanently banning the international search for illegal chemical and biological weapons.

Iraq announced last month that it was halting cooperation with UN weapons inspectors until the Security Council begins moving to lift crippling trade sanctions, which were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

The Security Council has said the embargo won't be lifted until UN inspectors certify that Iraq has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction, as required by UN resolutions that ended the 1991 War.

Iraq says the sanctions, which also ban almost all other trade, have led to the deaths of 1.5 million Iraqis in the past eight years many of them children — by causing shortages of food and medicine and a deterioration of water and sewage systems.

Fifteen UN weapons inspectors, some of them experts on missiles, left Baghdad on Saturday as the United Nations began to reduce its presence in Iraq.

As Clinton weighed military action Sunday, Iraqi ministers said they would not back away from their decision to bar the inspections.

Trade Minister Mohammed Mehdi Saleh said Iraq had suffered so long under the UN sanctions it had nothing to fear from new US threats.

On Thursday, the Council condemned Iraq's declared halt to inspections, but the 15 nations remained divided on whether to authorities military strikes.

The United States has insisted there already is a legal basis for bombing Iraq and that it will act alone if necessary.

Earlier AFP says UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said on Sunday he had no immediate plans to go to Baghdad following Iraq's decision to end cooperation with United Nations weapons inspectors.

Asked by journalists if he planned to visit Baghdad, Annan said: "The question does not arise at present. There are lots of discussions in New York. I am in contact with everyone, but I want to continue my visit here."

Annan was speaking in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott, where he kicked-off a 10-day North African tour on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Iraq remained defiant on Sunday in the face of international condemnation over its break with UN arms inspectors and called for mass mobilisation against "enemy plots."

Indo-Pak talks resume

NEW DELHI, Nov 9: India and Pakistan resumed week-long talks here today, with the focus moving to a border demarcation dispute over a tidal Creek flowing into the Arabian sea, reports AFP.

Sir Creek is the third issue to be addressed in the week-long talks, which failed to produce any progress on the first two topics on the agenda — a row over an Indian dam and demilitarisation of the Siachen glacier.

The Indian delegation is led by Lieutenant General AK Ahuja, the Surveyor General while retired Rear Admiral Jamir Akhtar leads the Pakistani side.

The one advantage Sir Creek has over the previous disputes is that it has no direct link with

the seemingly intractable issue of Kashmir.

However, like so many of the territorial rows between India and Pakistan, the details are complex and the stance of the two arch rivals firmly entrenched.

At stake in the Sir Creek dispute are hundreds of square kilometres of continental shelf, believed to be extremely rich in oil and other natural resources.

The boundary dispute has prevented both India and Pakistan submitting claims under the UN convention of the Law of the Sea on the limits of their respective continental shelves.

India wants the boundary to be drawn straight down the middle of the Creek, which separates the eastern Pakistani province of Sindh from the western Indian state of Gujarat.

Building collapse Search for bodies continues in Mumbai

MUMBAI, Nov 9: The search for bodies continued for the third consecutive day today at the site of the building collapse in the industrial city of Thane, which claimed at least 18 lives and left 16 others injured, reports PTI.

The estimates of those missing and believed to be buried in the debris varied between ten to 20 persons. Fire brigade last night said 18 bodies had been retrieved so far.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Manohar Joshi visited the site this morning and spoke to the injured at Thane civil hospital.

Four persons, including those who sold land to the builder for construction of the unauthorised building were arrested yesterday.

Anwar accuses Mahathir of being 'drunk with power'

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 9: As Anwar Ibrahim's trial entered its second week, the ousted deputy prime minister accused Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in an interview published on Monday of being "drunk with power," reports AP.

"It's a tragedy that he is unable to see that absolute power corrupts absolutely!" Anwar told Time magazine. "In his desperate attempt to cling to power, he has no qualms about using all instruments of government to serve his ends."

Anwar was arrested on September 20, two weeks after he was fired by Mahathir, setting off anti-government protests. Anwar has pleaded innocent to 10 charges of corruption and illegal sex acts.

On Monday, the trial resumed after a weekend recess with a former police intelligence chief telling the court there were irregularities in an investigation of two people who had made allegations against

Anwar.

Mohamed Said Awang said the sister of Anwar's private secretary, Ummi Hafidha Ali, had claimed that Anwar had sex with her brother's wife. In addition, Anwar's personal driver, Azizhan Abu Bakar, had said his former boss sodomised him 15 times.

Anwar, who is charged with misusing his powers, asked police to obtain retractions from the two witnesses, Mohamed testified. Police then closed the probe, despite having found some basis for the allegations against Anwar, Mohamed told the court.

In the Time magazine interview, Anwar said he has lost six kilograms (13 pounds) of weight in jail, even though he keeps up a regimen of jogging to stay fit and reading voraciously.

"Busy with prayers, devouring books, strategising 'reformist,' avoiding the indolence of prison life," Anwar said.

Coup rumours against PNG govt untrue

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea, Nov 9: Rumours there would be a military coup against the Papua New Guinea government were untrue, Prime Minister Bill Skate said Sunday, reports AP.

Papua New Guinea's commercial television station reported that Skate had met with acting Police Commissioner Robert Korus and Defence Force commander Brig Gen Jerry Singkor to put an end to coup rumours and assure citizens that both the police and the armed forces would not act outside their constitutional roles.

Skate later told Australian Associated Press that he had moved to address the rumours after several foreign missions and business houses had expressed concern.

He said the rumors of a military coup had been instigated by critics who were trying to break his government. Character assassination had failed, so the critics were trying to find another way to destabilise him.

The rumour about a military coup and police and the defence force having a clash is all coming from my critics — people who are trying to discredit me and my government," Skate said.

Off the Record

'Badges' for trees

PARIS: The Paris municipality is planning to put electronic "badges" on all the estimated 90,000 trees planted along its streets, enabling them to be identified individually, reports AFP.

The scheme set to cost 3.5 million francs, (700,000 dollars) will be completed by the end of next year, according to the city's Parks and Gardens Department.

In 1992, Paris drew up a data bank on the tree lining its boulevards, listing for each tree, its variety, date of planting, remedial care and so forth. But on the ground it was sometimes difficult to pinpoint the right tree because there might be several planted between two buildings in the same street.

After rejecting as "ineffective" the idea of painting each tree with a number and as impractical that of nailing a sign on the tree trunk which might damage the tree or be ripped off by vandals. The experts opted for a tiny electronic badge to be inserted into the trunk and masked by putty the same colour as the bark.

The badges can be "read" at a distance of 30 centimetres.

The electronic tagging first invented for cattle, has been experimented on trees in Mannheim in Germany and in London. But in Paris, it will be the first time such a system has been used on such a large scale.

The system will enable gardeners to treat diseased trees before they can contaminate others and thus prevent epidemics like the one which decimated elm trees in the city in the 1970. It could also help contain a termite invasion which began in 1994 and has already affected 1,300 trees.

Cloning for 'body repair kit'

LONDON: British researchers behind the cloning of Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned vertebrate, are in talks to develop ways of cloning human cells for transplanting organs, the BBC reported on Sunday, says Xinhua.

Scientists, including researchers from the Roslin Institute in Scotland where Dolly was created, are planning to collaborate with their American counterparts on a revolutionary "body repair kit."

"We are in discussion and we are exploring a number of possibilities," Dr Harry Griffin, assistant director of science at the Roslin Institute, told BBC News Online.

A team of US scientists reported in the Science journal last Friday that they have engineered human embryonic stem cells, parent cells of all tissues in the body.

These undeveloped "parents" of all human tissues have the potential to become any component of the body and would eliminate the risk of rejection currently suffered by patients receiving donor transplants.

The Roslin Institute's expertise in cloning, using a technique called nuclear transfer, could be applied to "stem cell" research. Cloned cells would provide a limitless supply for a transplant patient and therefore avoid the need to give anti-rejection drugs.

"Our particular contribution might allow whose cells to be derived from the patient, thereby avoiding any immunological problems, for example of rejection of the human cells by a patient that recognises those cells as foreign," Dr Griffin said.

Troops patrol Jakarta ahead of govt assembly

JAKARTA, Nov 9: In a massive show of force, thousands of police and soldiers patrolled Jakarta on Monday ahead of a government assembly that has drawn the ire of student protesters, reports AP.

Parliament resembled an armed camp, with officers in riot gear deployed on the grounds to safeguard the assembly that will cast rules for 1999 parliamentary elections. Troops rolled out barbed wire barricades in front of some gates.

Violence flared on one university campus near Parliament, where government-backed civilian guards in trucks briefly hurled rocks and plastic bottles at students, witnesses said. Police did not intervene.

Students also scuffled with police at a courthouse and white-collar workers rallied at the stock exchange in protests

against the People's Consultative Assembly and its patron, President BJ Habibie. The four-day convention opens Tuesday.

Many student activists reject the 1,000-member assembly as a haven for cronies of former President Suharto, who quit in May after riots and protests against his 32-year authoritarian rule.

Habibie, a onetime confidant of Suharto who has tried to distance himself from the former leader, has promised the assembly will be "a milestone on the road to democracy."

He wants parliamentary elections to be held next May followed by the selection of a new head of state by a newly designed assembly at the end of 1999.

Habibie, a German-trained engineer, has undone many of the rigid controls that characterised Indonesian political life under 77-year-old Suharto.

Italian researcher voices optimism for cure of cancer

ROME, Nov 9: One of Italy's top cancer researchers Sunday voiced "optimism and hope" for efforts to find a cure for the disease, reports Xinhua.

Marking the National Anti-Cancer Day at a meeting with Italian president Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, Prof Umberto Veronesi said that more progress has been made against malignant tumors in the last twenty years than "in the previous 2,000."

But he also admitted that a "giant effort" is still needed, with innovative research ideas and more money for research.

He urged people to realise that tumors can now be cured "in 50 per cent of the cases," that is why he said national information days such as today's are important in helping "leave behind the prejudices of the past."

Veronesi also said that Italy is now in the vanguard of anti-cancer research and is making a "Constructive contribution to the world research effort."

Scalfaro expressed in his speech thanks to Health Minister Rosy Bindi, Veronesi and the others present for their "Seriousness" in cancer research.

20 killed in Colombian fighting

BOGOTA, Nov 9: At least 20 people were killed on Sunday in fighting between the Colombian Army and leftist rebels and rightist paramilitary squads, officials said, reports AP.

Two policemen, 17 guerrillas and one member of a paramilitary group were reported among the dead.



Former Lt Col Hugo Chavez, accompanied by his wife Maria Isable Chavez, waves to a soldier before voting in Venezuela's state elections in Caracas Sunday. Nationwide elections are for governors and Congressmen, but Venezuelans are also deciding the political fortunes of Chavez, a failed coup leader running for president on an anti-corruption, anti-establishment platform. — AP/UNB photo