

US asks Netanyahu to refrain from "provocation" Israeli settlers confiscate Palestinian land in WB

BETHLEHEM, West Bank, Nov 10: The Israeli Army confiscated Palestinian land Monday, Palestinian witnesses said, apparently to build a bypass road for Israeli settlers in the area, reports AFP.

AP adds: Settler leaders acknowledged for the first time Thursday that those taking land were not acting on their own, but as part of an organised campaign.

These are lands that belong to us, by contract. If we don't grab them, someone else will, so we're grabbing them," said Aharon Domb, leader of the Jewish settlement movement.

Ahmed Tibi, advisor to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, criticised the "continuation of the settlement policy which constitutes a violation of the Wye Plantation Accord" signed last month in Washington.

Evidence of the settlers' last-minute push is evident on hill-tops down the middle ridge of the West Bank. Every few kilometers, water towers stick up from the landscape on spidery legs, with a few blocklike houses surrounding them like flies caught in a web.

"It must be clear, that the Palestinians will respect their commitments but they will do everything to prevent the confiscation of their land," he said in a statement.

This is the West Bank heartland, far from Israeli cities, and the focus of the settlers' land claim.

The hill-hopping has prompted new friction between the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the United States.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told Netanyahu in a phone call last week that expansion of settlements now is a "provocation," the newspaper Maariv said Monday, Israeli denied it.

US Embassy spokesman Larry Schwartz said he could not comment on the Netanyahu-Albright conversation, but that Israelis and Palestinians undertook, during last month's Mideast summit, to refrain from unilateral actions that might prejudice the outcome of a permanent peace agreement.

He said he hoped Israel's government would realise that new settler outposts are "not appropriate," and would dismantle them.

Netanyahu's senior adviser, David Bar-Ilan, said that the settlement activity "may be an irritant, but certainly is not against the agreement."

India votes against draft resolution on NPT

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 10: India voted against part of a draft resolution that called upon all states to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), particularly those states operating unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, reports IANS.

India's long-standing views, on nuclear issues, were expressed by India's Ambassador to the Disarmament Conference in Geneva, told the First Committee which approved the draft. Kunadi said she was obliged to vote against the sixth preambular paragraph.

The paragraph recalled the decision of the 1995 Conference of the Parties to the NPT to call upon all states not yet party to the treaty to accede to it at the earliest date. The paragraph was approved by a vote of 141 in favour, two against, including India and Israel, and two abstentions, including Pakistan.

to the NPT. Israel said that the text was the only one to single out a member state. While it dealt with an important issue, it did not address the realities of its region.

The General Assembly draft resolution on the setting up of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone noted that Israel remained the only state in the region which has not been party

Many nuclear related developments had occurred in recent years, such as the sombre experience gained by the U.N. inspection team on the disposal of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction as well as other activities undertaken by some countries in the region," the representative said.

He said that draft's co-sponsors were not really promoting its alleged specific purpose. The representative said that other drafts on crucial issues were presented in a restrained manner and avoided singling out any one state. "When it came to Israel, such restraint was ignored," he said.



Jamil Akhtar of Pakistan, left, and Lt General A K Ahuja of India shake hands before entering peace talks between the two countries in New Delhi on Monday that focused on their 30-year-old maritime boundary dispute.

Another witness testifies against Anwar Ibrahim

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 10: Prosecutors trying to prove that Anwar Ibrahim misused his powers as Malaysia's deputy prime minister to cover up his sexual misdeeds called in a second police officer Tuesday to testify, reports AP.

ing statements by Azizan Abu Bakar, the former driver, who says Anwar committed sodomy with him.

Abdul Aziz Hussein of the Special Branch was giving details of the interrogation of two key people: the sister of Anwar's former secretary, and his former driver. Both have made sexual misconduct allegations against Anwar.

Abdul Aziz, the special branch police officer, was expected to go into detail about the statements of both accusers.

The trial has become a point of contention with Malaysia about to host a mammoth summit of world leaders next week. Critics say the trial and allegations that police beat the 51-year-old Anwar highlight the country's human rights abuses.

Last week, the first witness, former Special Branch Chief, Mohammed Said Awang, testified that Anwar had forced police to arrest and coerce retractions from the two.

Tuesday's testimony was focusing on statements by Ummi Hafida, who said Anwar had sex with the wife of his own personal secretary. Ummi is the sister of the secretary.

But Mohamed also sparked a controversy by saying that he may have submitted a police report in 1997 to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad indicating that top government officials

and Cabinet ministers had conspired against Anwar.

On Monday, Mohamed denied such a report existed. "Is there a such a report?" High Court Judge Augustine Paul asked Mohamed. "Think. Think quite carefully."

Kashmir issue overshadows talks Pakistan, India seek solace in economic cooperation

NEW DELHI, Nov 10: As India and Pakistan reached the halfway mark Tuesday in a series of talks aimed at easing their rivalry, it became increasingly clear New Delhi was foundering in its attempt to turn the focus away from their Kashmir territorial dispute, reports AP.

said, estimating it at \$3 billion a year, indicating that ordinary people in the two countries want close ties even if their governments are stalemated over Kashmir.

fought three wars since each gained independence from Britain in 1947, and continue to exchange shells and bullets almost daily across Kashmir, the Himalayan territory divided between them that both claim in its entirety. Their enmity reached new heights of tension in May when India tested nuclear weapons and Pakistan responded with its own tests.

Last week and Monday, the first three of six rounds of New Delhi talks — on water sharing, proposals for a cease-fire on a Kashmiri battleground known as the Siachen glacier, and a 30-year-old maritime boundary dispute — ended with little or no progress reported. Tuesday, commerce ministry officials from the two countries opened discussing on boosting trade.

The Times of India reported Tuesday that official exports from India to Pakistan and from Pakistan to India totalled about \$1.6 billion last year.

Under international pressure following the nuclear talks, the two countries began peace talks on Kashmir last month in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad. The ongoing follow-up talks in New Delhi are a test of India's argument that progress can be made on lesser issues, improving the atmosphere to the point where progress also can be made on Kashmir.

Analysts like Bharat Karnad, a national security expert at New Delhi's independent Centre for Policy Research, says Tuesday's round on trade ties could yield results. Black market trade between India and Pakistan is already brisk, Karnad

On Tuesday's agenda was a proposal for cash-strapped Pakistan to sell electricity to India; Indian demands that Pakistan reciprocate India's decision to grant most-favoured-nation trade status to Pakistan; steps to improve movement of goods between the two countries by rail and to start bus service between the Indian capital and the Pakistani border city of Lahore.

But Pakistan says nothing can move forward without a Kashmir settlement, and that stance has overshadowed the New Delhi talks.

'US should target Saddam to resume talks with UN inspectors'

WASHINGTON, Nov 10: The United States should target Iraq President Saddam Hussein to force Baghdad to resume cooperation with UN weapons inspectors, a former UN expert said Monday, reports AP.

himself, that's something that Saddam feels that he can weather, that's not true confrontation from the Iraqi definition," Ritter said.

"Saddam is the sole person responsible for the Iraqi policy of non-cooperation," former weapons inspector Scott Ritter said in an interview with CNN.

Speaking on the same programme, US State Department spokesman James Rubin said that "nothing could be further from the truth," when asked to respond to Ritter's statement about the reactive nature of US policy.

The United States should be threatening him directly, that's the only way for a diplomatic solution to work, a diplomatic solution backed by the real threat of credible military force that can remove Saddam Hussein from power," he said.

He stressed that Washington continued with its containment policy against Saddam, aimed at destroying as many weapons of mass destruction as possible, and "keeping the tightest sanctions regime in history one."

The former US Marine said that the US Definition of confrontation might involve firing cruise missiles at Iraq.

"It may not be the most satisfying policy, but it's a policy that serves our interests," Rubin said.

Rubin repeated that "all options are on the table, including the military option."

BRIEFLY

Gunmen kill 5 in Angolan mine Five people were killed and four were taken hostage in a pre-dawn attack by dozens of armed men on a Canadian owned mine in northeastern Angola, the mine operators said on Monday, AFP reports from London.

Two Britons, the mine manager and a director, were killed as well as a Portuguese and two Angolans, the company's spokesman Michael Gunberg said.

Cambodia bans newspaper: The Cambodian government handed down a suspension order Tuesday to a newspaper calling for King Norodom Sihanouk to stand trial for crimes against humanity. AP reports from Phnom Penh.

Bus mishap kills 21 in Bogota: A bus flipped off a rural bridge and into a stream on Monday, killing 21 passengers, the majority of them children on their way to classes, police and rescue workers said, AP says from Bogota.

US to seek access to DPRK site: The US State Department said Monday it will demand access to an underground facility suspected of being a site for development of nuclear weapons, AP says from Washington.

Indian tribe approves historic treaty: Indians of British Columbia's Nisga'a tribe have approved a historic treaty that would fulfill their century-old quest for self-government in a remote valley near the southern tip of Alaska. AP reports from Vancouver.

4 Hamas members held in Israel: Four members of the headline Palestinian group Hamas have been arrested in connection with the fatal stabbing of an ultra-orthodox French Israeli in Jerusalem in February, Israeli police said Monday, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Vajpayee leading 18-horse chariot? AIZAWAL, Nov 10: Congress President Sonia Gandhi on Monday termed the BJP-led government at the centre as an 18-horse chariot and said each horse was pulling in different direction, reports PTI.



French novelist Dominique Bona smiles after she received France's prestigious Renaudot literary award in Paris on Monday. Bona got the Renaudot prize for "Le Manuscrit de Port-Ebene", a novel set in the Dominican Republic. — AP/UNB photo

Addressing election meetings in the state she said in the past eight months the country has had an 18-party government in Delhi headed by BJP.

"Actually we should not call it a government. It is really an 18-horse chariot with each horse pulling in a different direction," she said attacking the Vajpayee government for its failure to contain price rise and solve the problems faced by the common people.

Anti-govt rebels kill 100 civilians in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, Nov 10: Anti-government rebels in eastern Sierra Leone slaughtered nearly 100 civilians on Monday while fighting raged in the region for several hours, reports there said, reports AP.

junta that overthrew the civilian elected government in May 1997.

The killings of 96 civilians took place in the town of Sumaya, in the eastern part of the diamond-rich area of Tongo fields, they said.

Momoh, who ruled the country from 1985 to 1992, was cleared by a 12-member jury of treason charges, and thereby escaped a death sentence.

Twelve civilians suffered serious machete wounds and were taken to hospital at Kenema, 240-km east of the capital Freetown, the reporters said.

Twenty-four officers and soldiers found guilty of having assisted the junta were executed by firing squad on a beach outside the capital on October 19, provoking condemnation by the international community.

Sierra Leone has been wracked by civil war since 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took up arms against what it saw as the corruption of the Freetown government.

Two days later the High Court sentenced 11 civilians to death in connection with treason charges, seventeen other civilians, among them five journalists, were also given the death penalty several weeks earlier.

The RUF rebels have joined forces with the former junta which was kicked out of power in February by the Nigerian-led West African force ECOMOG.

ECOMOG has maintained that Liberian armed forces are assisting die-hard rebels in fighting the civilian-government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

Renegade ex-soldiers and rebels are still on the loose in outlying parts of the West African country, where witnesses and medical sources frequently report that they are committing atrocities against civilians.

Liberia's President Charles Taylor has denied the allegations, saying any Liberians assisting rebel troops were mercenaries.

While the precise agenda of the front remains vague, its methods — said to include immersing limbs in boiling oil — after killing hospitals with hundreds of victims crude amputations, have delivered a clear message that its struggle is far from over.

US Supreme Court rejects White House's appeals

WASHINGTON, Nov 10: The US Supreme Court has rejected White House and Clinton administration appeals arguing that presidential lawyers and bodyguards should be shielded from testifying to the Monica Lewinsky Grand Jury, reports Reuters.



Indian Army soldiers lift a body of a militant at their headquarters in Budgam, some 20 kms from Srinagar, after four of the militants were killed in an encounter with the army on the outskirts of Srinagar on Monday. Security forces in Kashmir battled for five hours with separatist militants holed up in a residential area of the capital. — AP/UNB photo

Habibie opens assembly to cast rules for '99 parliamentary polls

JAKARTA, Nov 10: Amid tight security and student protests, President BJ Habibie on Tuesday opened a controversial government assembly that will cast rules for 1999 parliamentary elections, reports AP.

us to think clearly, so as to prevent the euphoria of freedom from burying the very essence of democracy," said Harmoko, a longtime ally of Suharto.

Leaders of the People's Consultative Assembly said they were determined to abandon the authoritarian legacy of former President Suharto, who quit in May amid riots and protests.

"We are therefore confident that the people will never accept a government formed by way of anarchy," Harmoko said.

But hundreds of students who gathered at a university campus rejected the meeting of Indonesia's highest legislative body, saying it was not sincere about democratic reform. They cited the military's prominent role in politics.

Fears abound that political tension now will trigger unrest similar to the riots that eventually forced Suharto from office. Students demonstrated against the assembly on Monday, but huge numbers of troops blocked them from approaching Parliament.

Harmoko said delegates will revoke old decrees that preserved special presidential powers during the Suharto era, and would concentrate on human rights and clean government and trying to fix Indonesia's shattered economy.

"This is no longer the time for us to give a negative response to criticism lodged against the government," he said. "Worse,

This is actually the time for

even when quite often the reaction over a criticism is accompanied by the allegation that is a subversive exercise."

"In a sign of compromise, Indonesia's military chief has said that the armed forces are willing to discuss demands to limit their prominent role in politics.

Advani has no moral right to invite ministers on HR conference'

CALCUTTA, Nov 10: West Bengal Home (police) Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharjee on Monday rejected the Union Home Minister L K Advani's invitation to the home minister's conference on human rights in Delhi on November 28, reports PTI.

India to stage trials of AIDS vaccine

NEW DELHI, Nov 10: India, home to some five million carriers of the virus that leads to AIDS, has finally agreed to stage vaccine trials and join global efforts for a cure, officials said on Monday, reports AP.

The choice of vaccine — Indian or foreign — will be decided at the "right time" NACO's Rao said.

India's National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) took the decision, which has to be formally ratified by the Indian Cabinet, after two days of talks with officials from the US National Institute of Health and the United Nations AIDS programme UNAIDS.

"We have to tread very carefully on this," Rao added. India had refused international clinical trials nine years ago following domestic criticism that Indians could be used as guinea pigs by Western countries and multinational pharmaceutical companies.

The president will seek to restore International Monetary Fund assistance to both countries and lift prohibitions on their participation in investment and trade programme run by the Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corp, said White House spokesman Joe Lockhart.

World Health Organisation Director-General Gro Brundtland had said in New Delhi earlier this year that as many as seven million Indian were carrying the Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV), NACO chief Rao, however, puts the figure at around five million.

The investment programme were worth 300 million dollars to India before the sanctions were imposed, Pakistan did not participate in them.

Most of the 16,000 new HIV infection cases registered every day worldwide are in developing countries.

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More than 40 million people are expected to be infected with HIV by 2000.

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Three Indonesian soldiers, one rebel killed in E Timor

DILI, Indonesia, Nov 10: Three Indonesian soldiers and one separatist rebel were killed in a clash in the troubled territory of East Timor, the military said on Tuesday, reports AP.

A deeply conservative country, India has had problems addressing many of the issues linked to AIDS, such as intravenous drug use, homosexuality, prostitution and teenage sex.

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Bhattacharjee said that an accused of Babri Mosque demolition case, L K Advani, had no moral right to invite the state home minister at a conference on human rights.

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Bhattacharjee expressed hope that all non-BJP home minister's would boycott this conference responding to his appeal and opposing the invitation on moral ground.

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The rebels also took away 30 guns and ammunition from the post that was guarded by four soldiers, Supadi said.

The attack was the third fatal clash recently in Manufahl, about 40 km southeast of Dili, the capital of East Timor.



Members of the space shuttle Discovery crew watch as Spanish astronaut Pedro Duque, right, ponders a question during a news conference at the Kennedy Space Centre on Sunday. The shuttle crew departed shortly after for Houston where they will continue debriefing. From left: Shuttle pilot Steven Lindsey, mission specialist Steve Robinson, mission specialist Scott Parazynski, Duque. — AP/UNB photo