

# Israel, Palestinians agree on safe passage route

**JERUSALEM, Oct 5:** Israel and the Palestinians agreed Tuesday to establish the first open link between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — seen by Palestinians as a vital step toward eventual statehood, reports AP.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat approved the deal, which would allow Palestinians for the first time to move freely between the areas, travelling on a fixed set of highways across the breadth of Israel.

The so-called "safe passage" route will provide Arafat with one of the key underpinnings of the state he has long sought, and is the most significant achievement of the newly revived peace process.

Arafat approved the deal in Gaza in a meeting after midnight with the Palestinian negotiating team who had just returned from Jerusalem, said an

Arafat aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A signing ceremony was scheduled to be held at a Jerusalem hotel later today.

Barak, who won elections in May on a campaign of renewing the peace process, is eager to show results. Although they missed the scheduled opening of the route last week, negotiators were able to hammer out last-minute compromises on security to reach a deal.

Negotiators said the "safe passage" agreement signaled a new, more cooperative tone in negotiations following a ceremony marking the revival of peace talks in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on September 4.

"That we have solved this issue shows that there is a new atmosphere," chief Israeli negotiator Shlomo Ben-Ami told The Associated Press, clutching a rolled-up copy of the agree-

ment.

"Our negotiations were conducted in a very positive businesslike atmosphere," Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said. "Both sides exerted maximum effort... both sides were aware of the sensitivities and concerns of both sides."

The 45-kilometre highway route leads across Israel from the northern part of the Gaza Strip, on the Mediterranean coast, to the southern part of the landlocked West Bank.

For Palestinians, the route is an essential link between the two territories under their control. Previously, they had to deal with tight Israeli travel restrictions or take a circuitous route through other Arab countries.

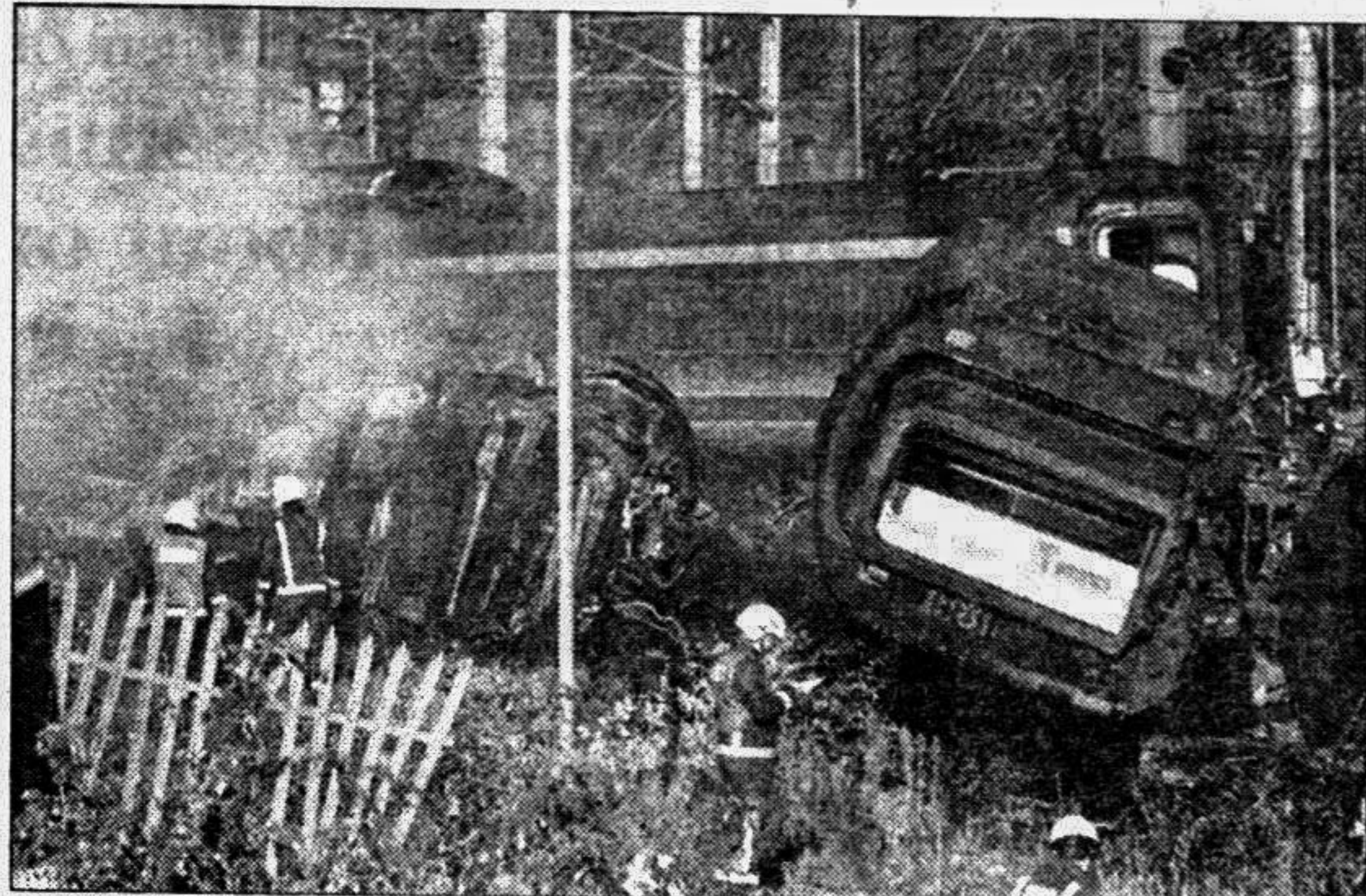
Many Israelis, however, see the route as an invitation for terrorist attacks. Right-wing

Israelis protested the measure Sunday.

Barak, speaking to parliament Monday, said the land route should only be a temporary solution. He said he hoped to build an elevated highway between the Palestinian territories to increase security and reduce friction between Israelis and Palestinians.

The final sticking point in negotiations had been over who would distribute permits for the route. Erekat said the compromise was that Palestinians would apply to a Palestinian office for magnetic entry cards. Palestinian officials would then turn the application over to Israeli officials for a security check.

After approval, the traveller would pick up the card from a joint Israeli-Palestinian office. The message would operate at least 10 hours a day, seven days a week, Erekat said.



Smoke billows from the wrecked carriage of one of the two high-speed trains that collided near London's Paddington station yesterday, killing at least eight people and injuring 160 others, 20 of them seriously. Emergency services were still attempting to free some 100 passengers still feared trapped in the charred train more than two hours after the accident. — AFP photo

## Chechen rebels recapture four villages

**GROZNY, Russia, Oct 5:** Chechen rebels have recaptured four Chechen villages from Russian forces, killing more than 40 federal troops in overnight fighting, Chechen officials said on Tuesday.

Chechen forces won control of the Alpatovo, Rubzhnoye, Ishterskaya and Chernokozovo villages. The Naurskaya regional prefect Taus Bagurayev told AFP.

The villages are all situated on the north bank of the key Terek river, in the northwestern portion of Chechnya.

Bagurayev said more than 40 bodies of Russian soldiers were counted on the battlefield. Another 10 Russian soldiers had been taken prisoner by the Chechens, he said.

Bagurayev reported no casualties among the rebels.

He added that Russian forces on Tuesday were shelling several of the villages seized back by the Chechen with Grad multiple rocket launchers and other artillery fire.

These included Alpatovo and Chernokozovo, as well as the neighboring villages Soviet-skaya, Rossiya, Novoye Solkusheno and Mekenskaya, all in the Naurskaya region.

Earlier Russian news agencies reported that federal troops also engaged in fierce battles with Chechen forces along the eastern border with Dagestan, surrounding three villages in the zones.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin earlier in Moscow said that Russian forces had reached the River Terek and currently control a third of Chechen territory.

## India yet to decide on participating in CTBT meet

**NEW DELHI, Oct 5:** India is yet to decide on participation in the two-day United Nations Conference on Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) beginning in Vienna on October six, an external affairs ministry spokesman said yesterday, reports PTI.

"The matter is being examined, no decision has yet been taken in this regard," he said when asked if New Delhi would participate in the conference on accelerating the entry into force of CTBT.

Asked whether India had been invited for it, he said in New York we have been informed that although participation in this conference is for the ratifying states and signatory states are present as observers, non-signatory states may also be present.

He said India, which had been informed about the conference by the UN, has maintained a consistent stand on CTBT that it remained committed to bringing discussions on the treaty to a successful conclusion.

Quoting external affairs minister Jaswant Singh's speech at the Unga in New York on September 22, he said India was engaged in discussions on a range of issues including CTBT and they would be resumed by the newly-elected government.

Our position remains consistent, we remain ready to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion. Naturally this requires the creation of a positive environment as we work towards creating the widest possible consensus domestically. We also expect that other countries shall adhere to this treaty without any conditions, Singh said.

## Obuchi announces new cabinet

**TOKYO, Oct 5:** Fresh off re-election as president of Japan's ruling party, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi named a new Cabinet on Tuesday and kicked off a coalition government that will have a commanding majority in both houses of Parliament, reports AP.

The reshuffle, which was delayed as the government dealt with last week's nuclear accident, was aimed at both strengthening the position of Obuchi's Liberal Democratic Party in Parliament and bolstering his efforts to pull Japan out of its worst economic downturn in decades.

The Cabinet roster was announced by Mikio Aoki, a close Obuchi ally and the new chief government spokesman. The Cabinet was to be formally sworn in by Emperor Akihito later Tuesday.

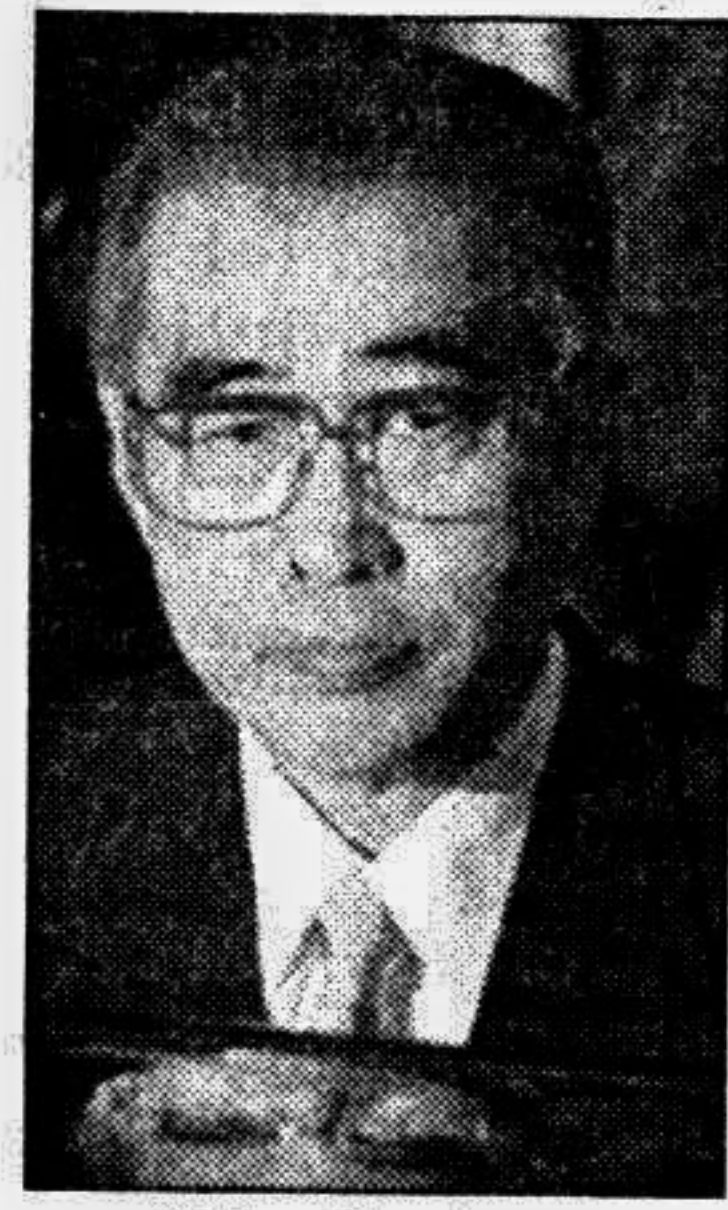
Stressing the need for continuity, Obuchi retained his top economic advisors — Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa and Economic Planning Agency head Taichi Sakaiya — in the new 18-member Cabinet.

But Hakujo Yanagisawa, head of the Financial Reconstruction Commission, a Japanese government body overseeing banking industry reform, will be replaced by the ruling Liberal Democratic party's financial issues chief, Michio Ochi.

Ochi has served twice as minister for a economic planning and is a former Finance Ministry bureaucrat.

Obuchi also named Yohei Kono to be the new foreign minister, and gave Takashi Fukaya the portfolio. Kono has previously held the post of foreign minister, and Fukaya was formerly minister of posts and telecommunications.

Obuchi is generally credited



Keizo Obuchi with succeeding in setting off a glimmer of recovery with a bank bailout and public spending packages, and public opinion polls indicate he is one of the most popular prime ministers Japan has had in years.

## Pak troops kill three civilians in Kashmir

**SRINAGAR, India, Oct 5:** Three civilians were killed and two wounded on the Indian side of Kashmir when Pakistani troops fired artillery shells across the region's military control line, police said today, reports Reuters.

Two villagers, Mohamad Shaif and Shaif Mohammad, were killed on Monday evening when an artillery shell fired by Pakistani troops exploded at Churanda village, a police official said.

Churanda village lies in Uri sector 102 km (64 miles) west of Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir.

Later on Monday, one person died of splinter injuries when an artillery shell fired across the line exploded at Karamah in Kupwara 87 km (54 miles) northwest of Srinagar, police said.

They said Pakistani forces resorted to heavy artillery shelling across the Line of Control at Kanzaawan, Khojri, Hajira and Badwan villages of the Gurez sector in northern Kashmir's Baramulla district.

"There are no reports of any loss of life in these areas," a police official said.

India and Pakistani troops frequently exchange mortar and small arms fire along the 720 km (450 miles) line which divides disputed Kashmir between the two nations.

## JKLF marchers close to LoC

**DHARAM SIAL, Pakistan, Oct 5:** Kashmiri pro-independence activists carrying shrouds symbolising their readiness to die came within 100 metres (yards) of the dividing line between Indian and Pakistani Kashmir today, reports Reuters.

More than 100 activists of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) defied police for a second day to try and cross the Line of Control (LOC) into the Indian-ruled part of Kashmir.

Witnesses said JKLF supporters walked through forests and swam across the Poonch river in Madarpur sector to get to Dharam Sial village, where Indian army positions were visible.

The Kashmiri activists oppose the Line of Control and want an independent Kashmir. They also oppose any possible move to make the line a permanent border between arch-rivals India and Pakistan.

JKLF sources told Reuters that hundreds of supporters were still at Hajira village, 12 km (eight miles) east of the LOC, and would attempt to break police cordon on their way to Dharam Sial.

They said JKLF leader, Amanullah Khan, was in hiding and expected to avoid the police roadblocks by making his way through hills to arrive at the village later today.

"We are waiting for Amanullah Khan to arrive before we cross over," said Jamshed Mirza, a JKLF supporter. "And if he is unable to make it, we will wait for his signal (message) before crossing," he said looking towards the Indian side.

India said last week it would hold Pakistan responsible if there was any breach of the LOC.

Village residents said the Indian army had been issuing warnings through loud-speakers that intruders would be shot but JKLF supporters marched and raised banners in front of the Indian troops demanding

Kashmir's independence.

On Monday Pakistani police fought pitched battles with hundreds of JKLF supporters to try to stop their march which a government minister said was a "suicide" march.

But Amanullah Khan told Reuters on Monday that, despite the Pakistani crackdown and Indian warnings, it would make another attempt to cross the military Line of Control today and if he was arrested, JKLF's second-line leadership would take over.

The JKLF planned the march to oppose the existence of the 720 km (450-mile) Line of Control, drawn in 1972 after the last of three wars between India and Pakistan, two of them over Kashmir.

Pakistan told the JKLF last week to call off the march, saying it could lead to Indian firing and bloodshed.

India rules about 45 per cent of Kashmir, Pakistan just over a third and China the rest of the disputed Himalayan region.

JKLF marchers close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. The image shows a group of people, some holding flags, gathered near a fence or barrier. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a protest or a gathering of supporters.

## Quake hits Turkey: 67 injured

**ISTANBUL, Oct 5:** An earthquake measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale struck the Aegean resort town of Marmaris in Turkey early Tuesday, causing a panic in which at least 67 people were injured, the NTV news channel reported, says AFP.

According to Marmaris mayor Isa Kucuk, several buildings suffered light damages, but most injuries occurred when people jumped out of windows and balconies in a panic.

The tremor, which struck at 3:53 a.m. (0653 BST) and was felt along the Aegean coast up to Izmir, was followed by more than 20 aftershocks measuring up to 4.2 on the open-ended Richter scale.

Schools in the area were closed for the day, until the damage to school buildings can be assessed.

Marmaris is one of the most popular tourism resorts in Turkey.

## 46 killed in bus crash in Indonesia

**JAKARTA, Oct 5:** Forty six people were killed and 19 seriously injured when an intercity bus crashed into a roadside rockface in Indonesia Tuesday, police said, reports AFP.

The "Turangga" bus, which was travelling from Jakarta to the town of Bandung some 200 kilometres southeast of the capital, crashed 85 kilometres into its journey.

Forty six people, including the bus driver, were killed instantly while 19 others were rushed to two nearby state hospitals in Cianjur and Cimacan, local police told AFP.

"Reports we have received showed that 46 people were killed, 19 others were severely injured and nine others lightly injured," said police Sergeant Master Cipto.

At Sayang state hospital in Cianjur, an emergency ward worker said 12 dead and 18 injured people, all of them Indonesian, had been admitted. Six of those injured were in a critical condition, he said.

The other dead and injured were taken to the Cimacan clinic.

## US to extradite Saudi citizen

**The United States will soon extradite to Saudi Arabia a Saudi citizen suspected in a 1996 bomb attack there that killed 19 US soldiers, the Department of Justice said Monday, AFP reports from Washington.**

Hani El-Sayeh faces charges in Saudi Arabia stemming from a June 25, 1996 truck bombing outside military barracks in Khobar, near the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran, that left 19 US soldiers dead and some 300 injured.

## UN official to visit Myanmar

**A senior UN official will travel to Myanmar later this month to discuss human rights and other issues, the United Nations said Monday, AP reports from United Nations.**

Alvaro de Soto, the UN assistant secretary-general for political affairs, has visited Myanmar about five times since 1995, meeting with government leaders and democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Spokesman Fred Eckhard said he had no details about de Soto's upcoming trip, which was slated to have occurred last month but was postponed.

## Mubarak set to begin new six-year term in office

**CAIRO, Oct 5:** Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was set Tuesday to formally start a fourth, six-year term in office after he obtained 93.79 per cent of the votes cast in a no-surprises referendum more than a week ago, reports AFP.

Mubarak was to take the oath of office at the People's Assembly, the parliament that nominated him in June as the sole candidate for president in the September 26 referendum.

Under the Egyptian constitution, the government of Prime Minister Kamal Ganzuri must tender its resignation after the president takes his new oath of office.

Mubarak has said he will take the opportunity to bring new faces into the cabinet although he has not said how big the reshuffle will be.

Official newspapers reported that the president would wait until Thursday to name the new government.

On Monday a top Mubarak advisor said the president would replace the "weak" Ganzuri in the reshuffle.

The new prime minister and the members of his cabinet will be chosen in accordance with the criteria of competence, honesty and integrity and will be the sort of people who put the public interest above all personal interests," Samir Ragab wrote in a front-page editorial in the government-owned Al-Gumhuriya newspaper.

## Clinton vows all-out push on nuclear treaty

**WASHINGTON, Oct 5:** US President Bill Clinton vowed an all-out fight for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons tests, as the Senate opens private hearings on the issue, before a full debate Friday and a vote on October 12, reports AFP.

Despite the urgency, Clinton acknowledged long odds the pact would get past the Senate where it is seen as flawed and dangerous.

"I will do all I can to get the treaty ratified" by the Senate, Clinton said Monday at the start of a White House meeting with his top national security advisers on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

"It is strongly in our interest to achieve agreement that can help prevent other countries like India, Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran and others from testing and deploying nuclear weapons," he stated.

Clinton signed the treaty more than two years ago and submitted it to the Senate for approval. It languished there until Friday, when the Republican Party majority called for a snap debate followed by a vote October 12.

Private hearings by the Senate Armed Services Committee are scheduled to begin Tuesday, while a full debate was planned for Friday.

Clinton complained of the short notice and confessed the 67 votes needed for the treaty's approval were not there, even if all 45 members of Clinton's Democratic Party supported the pact as they have said they would.

"We don't have enough now," he said. "I hope we can get

them."

The 100-member Senate must approve all US treaty commitments by a two-thirds majority.

A total of 154 countries have signed the treaty and 47 have already ratified it, including 17 of 44 "nuclear-capable" states. Russia, China and the United States are among those states which have not ratified it.

Republican Senate leaders, traditionally more hawkish on defence than their Democratic colleagues, have argued that the United States should not be bound by a treaty they see as unenforceable and damaging to US national security.

Senate Armed Services Committee chairman John Warner, a Republican, predicted the CTBT would go down in failure.

Warner said most senators would be persuaded to vote against the treaty, especially after seeing evidence that Russia in particular was "actively engaged" in use of its nuclear weapons testing facilities.

The Central Intelligence Agency has admitted in a classified report that it cannot monitor low-level nuclear weapons tests precisely enough to ensure compliance with CTBT criteria. The Washington Post reported Sunday.

Clinton countered however that the treaty would enhance US capability to monitor compliance by other nations through "new tools."

"We'll have monitoring stations. We can do on-site visits. There's the deterrent impact of a country signing and then getting caught violating it," Clinton argued.

While it has not carried out a "critical" nuclear bomb explosion for testing purposes since 1992, the United States has used classified super computers to verify weapons reliability through models and simulation.

Washington recently asked Moscow to grant US inspectors access to Russia's Novaya Zemlya testing facility to ensure compliance with the CTBT, which does permit some "subcritical" explosive tests, according to published reports.

Moscow said it would consider the proposal, but asked that Russian experts also be given access to the super computers that the United States relies on to maintain the integrity of its nuclear arsenal.

Clinton, flanked by Defense Secretary William Cohen, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and CIA director George Tenet said approval of the treaty was "very important to protecting our people from the danger of nuclear war."

He also stressed that failure by the United States to ratify the treaty would prevent it from entering into force and would send a message to the world that Washington was no longer interested in curbing the proliferation of nuclear arms.

"So it would be, in my judgment, a grave mistake not to ratify the treaty," he said.

The State Department announced earlier that Albright would cut short a planned visit to California, Michigan and Canada this week to join the White House lobbying offensive on the pact.

Clinton vowed all-out push on nuclear treaty. The image shows President Bill Clinton speaking at a podium. He is wearing a suit and glasses, and appears to be in a formal setting, possibly a press conference or a public event.

## Strike paralyses Assam ahead of vote counting

**GAUHATI, Oct 5:** Young boys played cricket on deserted highways in Assam state Tuesday during a 10-hour general strike called by the youth wing of the governing party to protest 20 election related killings, reports AP.

Other youths threw stones at cars that ventured onto the roads in the northeastern state the day before ballot counting begins for India's new national parliament.

Shops and businesses were closed and only a few people were on the streets. Paramilitary and police vehicles lined the roads during the strike that was declared from 5 a.m. (2330 GMT Monday) to 3 pm (0930 GMT Tuesday). Police reported scores of preventive arrests to stop members of the youth wing of the state's governing Asom People's Party from using violence to enforce the strike.

But the main opposition parties were suspicious and charged in a press release that the strike was called so that supporters of the governing party could raid the stored ballot boxes and tamper with the voting sheets before counting begins Wednesday morning.

## New trial against Ocalan in December

**ANKARA, Oct 5:** A criminal court here is to begin hearing a new trial against Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan on December 15 on charges brought against him more than 20 years ago, the Anadolu news agency reported Tuesday, reports AFP.

Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), is to stand trial along with 100 other defendants on charges of treason, murder, armed usurpation, carrying firearms illegally and being a member of an armed group.

The defendants include Ocalan's ex-wife, Kesire Ocalan, and senior commanders of the organization, Cemil Bayik and Murat Karayilan.

The new trial comes after hitherto forgotten legal proceedings brought against Ocalan in the southeastern Turkish province of Sanliurfa for crimes committed before the 1980 military coup were handed over to the Ankara chief prosecutor about a month ago.

The new case had not been included in the treason trial against the PKK leader on the prison island of Imrali, in northwest Turkey, which ended in death sentence on June 29.

Anadolu said that once the new trial starts, the case against Ocalan might be dropped as he has already been tried and sentenced on identical charges.

## 'Anwar bears no sign of poisoning'

**KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 5:** Doctors have concluded that former Malaysian finance minister Anwar Ibrahim does not show signs of poisoning, a court was told today, reports Reuters.

But Anwar's lawyers told his sodomy trial that medical experts had not ruled out the possibility the ex-minister, who last month alleged he had high levels of arsenic in his urine, had been poisoned.

Government prosecutors and defence lawyers argued over the conclusions of a report by 12 experts charged with investigating Anwar's allegation, first made on September 10, that political opponents had tried to poison him with arsenic.

Anwar's allegation set off the largest anti-government protests in nearly a year.

It also prompted concerns among some foreign investors over heightened political risk in Malaysia, deeply divided over the sacking and jailing of the charismatic former minister.

Deputy High Court registrar Rozilah Salleh on Tuesday read the court a report by a panel of 12 doctors summarising tests on Anwar's urine, nails and hair conducted by laboratories in Malaysia, Perth, Australia and London.

"He does not have diseases like HIV, AIDS, kidney failure, diabetes... or cancer which would cause the symptoms," the report said, referring to weight and hair loss.

"He also does not have clinical signs of acute or chronic arsenic poisoning."

## US to extradite Saudi citizen

**The United States will soon extradite to Saudi Arabia a Saudi citizen suspected in a 1996 bomb attack there that killed 19 US soldiers, the Department of Justice said Monday, AFP reports from Washington.**

Hani El-Sayeh faces charges in Saudi Arabia stemming from a June 25, 1996 truck bombing outside military barracks in Khobar, near the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran, that left 19 US soldiers dead and some 300 injured.

## Tourist plane plunges into ocean

**A sightseeing plane carrying Peruvian tourists over a coastal wildlife sanctuary plummeted into the Pacific Ocean early Monday, killing all on board, officials said, AFP reports from Lima.**

The plane plunged into waters less than two kilometres (a mile) off the coast of Pisco, a fishing village 200 kilometres south of the capital, Lima. The pilot and four passengers, including one child, died in the accident, authorities said.

## Divorce can be predicted in 3 minutes: Psychologists

**WASHINGTON, Oct 5:** US psychologists can predict in three minutes whether a newly married couple is likely to divorce in future, according to a study published in the fall edition of the US magazine Family Process, reports AFP.

The psychologists observed how 124 couples married less than nine months approached a marital argument.

Couples who start an argument with negative words, gestures or body and facial expressions are more likely to be divorced after six years of marriage, according to the study's authors, professors John Gottman and Sybil Carrere from the University of Washington in Seattle.

"It was possible to predict marital outcome over a six-year period using just the first three minutes of data for both husbands and wives," the researchers wrote.

"This suggests that for both husbands and wives the start-up of the conflict discussion is critical in predicting divorce or marital stability," they said.

The couples' arguments were filmed and then coded were assigned to their actions, with positive ratings for signs of joy, humour, affection or interest and negative ones for mistrust, disgust, aggressiveness, defensive sentiment, anger, sadness and fear. Each couple was followed for six years.

"Both husbands and wives in stable marriages display less negative affect and more positive affect in the very beginning of the marital conflict discussion," the researchers said.

New research, they said, is needed to try to determine which social factors play a role in the beginning of an argument.

Most interactions begin with the wife's description of the problem, followed by the husband's initial reaction," the researchers added.

More research is needed into the "causal mechanisms" that influence the harsh or soft tone at the beginning of the discussion, according to the researchers.

They suspect that when an argument is started with a harsh tone, it will be met with disinterest or indifference by the spouse, whereas a lighter discussion is more likely if the husband shows interest and affection toward his wife's words.