

## Israel plans to shift Gaza settlers to West Bank

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel is considering moving settlers slated for evacuation from Gaza to expanded West Bank enclaves despite US objections to the Jewish state cementing a hold on occupied land, security sources said yesterday.

The daily Maariv said Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz ordered plans drawn up for hundreds of new homes at the Gush Etzion bloc for use by 7,500 Gaza settlers who are to be evacuated under a plan to "disengage" from conflict with the Palestinians.

Mofaz's office did not immediately comment on the report. A senior Israeli security source confirmed the Gush Etzion idea was "being studied," but said it had not yet received approval. Tightening its West Bank grip as part of the Gaza pullback scheduled for 2005 might put Israel at odds with key

ally the United States, whose "road map" peace plan, now tattered by 3 and a half years of fighting, seeks a "freeze" on settlement building.

But that provision of the plan has been called into question by President Bush's unprecedented assurance to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in April that Israel could keep some West Bank land where some major settlement blocs lie. "The US administration supports the road map," a US official said in response to the Maariv report. "Exactly what constitutes a settlement freeze is a matter of discussion."

The Palestinians, who want the West Bank along with Gaza -- occupied by Israel since 1967 -- for a viable independent state envisaged by the "road map," cried foul.

"The whole idea was to turn a Gaza withdrawal into an opportunity (for peace)," Palestinian Negotiations Minister Saeb Erekat

told Reuters. "If Mr. Mofaz takes settlers from Gaza to the West Bank, that would kill the idea."

On Monday, Israel issued orders to confiscate further tracts of West Bank land for a new segment of a barrier it says keeps out suicide bombers. Palestinians accuse Sharon of carving up the West Bank for eventual annexations by Israel.

Israel killed two wanted Palestinian militants in a West Bank air strike on Monday, hours after taking steps to ease movement of Palestinian inhabitants there -- something the United States has long demanded.

The latest West Bank actions drew censure from Israeli opposition leader Shimon Peres, whose Labour Party could join Sharon's ruling Likud in a broad coalition that would bolster him against ultra-rightists in his camp opposed to withdrawals.

## No political future for Sharif, Benazir in Pakistan: Musharraf

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan's former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif do not have future in the country's politics, President Pervez Musharraf was quoted as telling National Assembly members affiliated to the PML-PPP. Patriots combine likely to contest the 2007 general elections from a single platform.

Expressing satisfaction with Musharraf's frank assessment of the performance of the ruling political combine, the National Assembly members were quoted by The News as saying that they were pleased with the sound assurances given by the president to several of their grievances.

According to the paper, however, Musharraf did express his displeasure with the performance of the PML (Q) both within and outside Parliament on major issues

since November 2002, and is said to have issued certain guidelines to his political lieutenants in the National Assembly.

He said to have particularly emphasised on the ruling MNAs failure to defend his policies to counter terrorism, particularly the military operation in the WANA. Musharraf is said to have complained that the opposition parties' point of view on all such issues had been prominently reflected.

Sources said that Musharraf clearly hinted at activating the recently unified PML at grass roots level to develop its "ideological base", also made it clear to all that time had come to take the unified PML to the masses from traditional "drawing rooms".

Musharraf did not utter a single word about any change in the present political set-up of the country as was being widely speculated until recently.



Activists of India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) shout slogans and wave banners against Congress Party led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in New Delhi yesterday. The activists were protesting against the proposed rise in tariffs on electricity, petrol and water.

PHOTO: AFP

## Indo-Pak talks on trafficking of drug begins

ANI, Islamabad

Senior officials of Pakistan and India have reportedly begun a meeting in Islamabad to discuss ways and means to curb the menace of drug trafficking and smuggling.

The talks are part of the composite dialogue process initiated by the two countries.

The six-member Indian delegation for the two-day talks is headed by NK Singh, Director General of the Narcotics Bureau. The two countries held their first talks on this issue in 1998 and have not met ever since.

According to news reports, officials of both sides are reportedly upbeat about a positive outcome of the talks given the present thaw in the relations between the countries.

If the talks proceed well, India and Pakistan could cooperate in preventing trafficking of the substances like opium, produced largely in Afghanistan and transited through the region.



PHOTO: AFP

Major General Nadeem Ahmed (R), Director General of Pakistan Anti Narcotics Force, poses for photographers as he shakes hands with his Indian counterpart Madhur Kumar Singh (C) while Pakistani Ministry of Narcotics Control Secretary Khalid Latif (L) looks on during a break of a meeting on drug trafficking and smuggling, in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistan and India have started bilateral talks on combating drug trafficking and smuggling across the common border of the both countries.

## 'Iraq abuse ordered from the top'

BBC ONLINE

The US commander at the centre of the Iraqi prisoner scandal says she was told to treat detainees like dogs.

Brig Gen Janis Karpinski told the BBC she was being made a "convenient scapegoat" for abuse ordered by others.

Top US commander for Iraq, Gen Ricardo Sanchez, should be asked what he knew about the abuse, she told BBC Radio 4's On The Ropes programme.

One soldier has been sentenced and six others are awaiting courts martial for abuses committed at Abu Ghraib jail.

Gen Karpinski said more damaging information was likely to emerge at those trials.

Gen Karpinski was in charge of the military police unit that ran Abu Ghraib and other prisons when the abuses were committed.

She has been suspended but not charged.

Photographs showing naked Iraqi detainees being humiliated and maltreated first started to surface in April, sparking shock and anger across the world.

Gen Karpinski said military intelligence took over part of the Abu Ghraib jail to "Gitmoize" their interrogations - make them more like what was happening in the US detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which is nicknamed "Gitmo".

She said current Iraqi prisons chief Maj Gen Geoffrey Miller - who was in charge at Guantanamo Bay - visited her in Baghdad and said: "At Guantanamo Bay we learned that the prisoners have to earn every single thing that they have."

"He said they are like dogs and if you allow them to believe at any point that they are more than a dog then you've lost control of them."

## US urges Americans to quit Saudi Arabia

AP, Washington

The US government is renewing its call for Americans to leave Saudi Arabia after the recent terrorist attacks, saying the safety of US workers was more important than any effect on oil supplies or the Saudi economy.

An estimated 35,000 Americans have been working in Saudi Arabia and it was unclear how many have left since the increase in attacks, which have come at the same time the Bush administration has been pressing the Saudis to boost oil production to help lower gas prices in the United States.

Referring to US workers in Saudi Arabia, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said, "We first and foremost have a responsibility to Americans. We need to give them our best advice on how to handle any particular situation overseas."

"As far as the maintenance and

continued flow of oil and the economy in Saudi Arabia, that is something I think the Saudis will have to describe, what provisions they can make and how they can operate those facilities."

He would not say how many American workers had chosen to remain in Saudi Arabia as part of the kingdom's huge expatriate work force.

"In this kind of situation, we feel that giving out numbers just identifies how many potential targets there might be," Boucher said.

The US government is in close touch with Saudi authorities investigating the apparent kidnapping of the latest American victim, Paul M. Johnson of New Jersey, who worked on radar systems of Apache helicopters for Advanced Electronics Co., Boucher said. The Saudi firm has US defence giant Lockheed Martin among its customers.

## Koreas end propaganda blitz along border

AFP, Seoul

An eerie silence descended on the Cold War's last frontier yesterday as South and North Korea ended five decades of propaganda warfare conducted around the clock through batteries of high-performance loudspeakers.

The plug was pulled on the ear-splitting broadcasts shortly after midnight for the first time since the 1950-53 Korean War, South Korean military officials said.

South Korea also turned off hundreds of electronic signboards after displaying a last flash message, which read "Peace, reconciliation and cooperation," they said.

Dozens of high-performance loudspeaker batteries stand on each side of the 248-kilometer (154-mile) border which is also dotted with slogan boards, electronic displays, posters and religious and ideological propaganda.

"Now, we announce the historic fact that our voice of freedom broadcasts are being brought to closure," South Korea said in its last broadcast, according to the defence ministry.

South Korean loudspeaker broadcasts feature news, current affairs, pop music and weather reports destined for a North Korea starved of information from the

outside world.

North Korea's propaganda is more overtly political, focussing on praise for North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il and attacks on the presence of US troops in South Korea.

In a last broadcast, North Korean loudspeakers called for inter-Korean reconciliation and a joint campaign to drive out US troops from the peninsula, according to the South's defence ministry.

"US Imperialists are the arch-enemy blocking the reunification of our fatherland and the root cause of our ordeal of suffering," it said.

The two sides will begin dismantling all propaganda materials on the border area on Wednesday.

South Korea operates about 100 propaganda billboards aimed at luring North Korean soldiers to defect. North Korea has erected 200 huge signs and drawings which include slogans such as "The United States is our arch enemy" and "Our general is the lodestar," a reference to Kim Jong-Il.

"One concern about ending the propaganda war is the night-time quiet that can make our soldiers on night duty weary and feel sleepy," First Lieutenant Kim Kyong-Chun, a front-line army platoon leader, told Yonhap news agency.

## US Cong passes resolution keeping ban on Myanmar

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives in a landslide vote Monday passed a resolution renewing a one-year ban on all imports from military-ruled Myanmar as part of sanctions for abuse of human rights and repression of democratic opposition.

The resolution, jointly introduced by the ruling Republican party's New York representative Peter King and opposition Democratic party representative Tom Lantos from California, was adopted by an overwhelming vote of 373-2.

An identical resolution has been introduced in the Senate and is expected to be voted on soon.

The Bush administration has called for passage of the resolution to pressure Yangon to hold talks with the democratic opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

She is currently under house arrest and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party's activities have been curtailed.

The NLD won overwhelmingly in Myanmar's 1990 elections, considered free and fair by the international community, but was not allowed to govern.

## Iran threatens IAEA to reconsider cooperation

Pressure mounts on Tehran to come clean on nukes

AFP, Tehran

Iran reacted to fresh pressure from the UN nuclear watchdog Tuesday by threatening to reconsider its cooperation with inspectors trying to verify suspicions the Islamic republic is secretly developing atomic weapons.

As diplomats at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna mulled a tough European-drafted resolution that criticises Iran's failure to fully come clean, top regime officials here said they would not tolerate what they saw as a US-Israeli plot.

The new conservative speaker of parliament, Gholam Ali Hadad-Adel, warned the assembly may not ratify Iran's signature of the additional protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) allowing tougher UN inspections.

"The three European countries are demanding parliament adopt the protocol, but I say to France, Germany and Britain not to tell the Iranian parliament what to do," he told deputies.

"The Iranian parliament does not take orders from foreigners, because these orders do not reflect the interests of the Iranian people. If we consider it to be in the interests of the Iranian people we will adopt it, if not we will not," he said.

He also warned the Europeans not to "fall into the trap of the Zionists", a reference to Iran's oft-mentioned enemies in Israel and the United States.

And according to press reports, President Mohammad Khatami has also told Britain, France and Germany in writing to ease the pressure, or risk pushing Iran to consider "other alternatives".

Khatami also reportedly accused the so-called Euro-3 of aligning themselves with Iran's arch-enemy, the United States.

According to the Tehran Times newspaper, Khatami wrote that "Iran will not forego its inalienable right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes", and that "if such confrontational behaviour continues... Iran will contemplate other alternatives."

## Indian nuclear suspect 'possibly a conman'

THE STRAITS TIMES/ ANN, New Delhi

The man arrested in Dubai and deported to India over the weekend on suspicion that he was trying to sell Indian nuclear secrets may be just a conman attempting to make some easy money, reliable sources told The Straits Times.

So far, nothing has surfaced to suggest that Akhtar Hussain, an Indian businessman based in Dubai, was indeed in possession of secret documents he had allegedly procured through his brother, said to be a nuclear scientist in India, sources said.

Hussain was arrested by the Dubai police after he reportedly contacted some foreign embassies in the Gulf country and offered to sell them India's nuclear secrets.

He had been under surveillance after some diplomats told the Dubai police that they had been approached by him.

Late on Saturday, Hussain was sent to Mumbai in the western state of Maharashtra, where federal officials questioned him.



PHOTO: AFP

Former US president Bill Clinton (L) and Senator Hillary Clinton (2nd-L) stand by their official White House portraits during the unveiling event hosted by President George W. Bush (R) and First Lady Laura Bush (2nd-R) Monday evening in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC. The portraits, which will be hung in the Grand Foyer, are the work of self-taught artist Simmie Knox, the first African-American to paint an official presidential portrait.

## Sharon passes his first test in parliament

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon comfortably passed his first test in parliament Monday since losing his overall majority when deputies defeated a motion of no confidence in his Gaza pullout plan.

Shortly afterwards, two Palestinians, including a local leader of the hardline Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, were killed when an Israeli missile struck their car in a refugee camp near the northern West Bank town of Nablus.

A total of 37 members of the 120-seat chamber voted against the censure motion tabled by the far right-wing National Union, while 22 members voted for the motion. The remaining deputies either abstained or were not present.

The National Union was a partner in the ruling coalition until earlier this month, when Sharon sacked ministers Avigdor Lieberman and Benny Elon to ensure a majority in cabinet for his "disengagement" plan.