INTERNATIONAL

ME peace talks conditional on end of settlements: Abbas

US pushing for final deal in two years

AFP, Cairo

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said yesterday he was open to peace negotiations with Israel, but that as agreed with Egypt talks could only resume when Jewish settlement activity ends.

"There is no objection to returning to the negotiating table or holding any meetings in principle," Abbas told reporters in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh after talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"We have said, and we will continue to say, that when there is a halt of settlement activity and recognised terms of reference, we are ready to resume negotiations," Abbas said.

He said Egypt agreed with his views,

contradicting reports in Israel's Maariv newspaper, which said Mubarak was to press Abbas to accept a US peace plan to restart the talks immediately.

(the status of) Jerusalem be included in the negotiations, that settlement activity must end and there must be clear terms of reference," Abbas said.

Egypt's intelligence chief Omar Suleiman before heading to Sharm el-Sheikh. He will later travel to Qatar, Kuwait and Turkey.

after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Mubarak in Cairo about the stalled peace process and as diplomats said Washington was drafting letters of guarantee for the peace talks.

Meanwhile Jordan's King Abdullah II also arrived Monday in Sharm el-Sheikh where he held talks with Mubarak, the Egyptian news agency MENA said.

According to a statement from the royal palace in Amman, the discussions will centre on "efforts to start serious and effective peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians."

Earlier the Israeli paper Maariv said Washington is pushing a plan to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks that foresees reaching a final deal in two years.

Under the plan, the Israelis and Palestinians will immediately start final status talks that were suspended during the Gaza war a year ago and Mubarak would press Abbas to agree to the deal, Maariv said.



Palestinian students demonstrate outside the destroyed premises of the American international school in the Gaza town of Beit Lahia on Sunday to mark the first anniversary since the deadliest Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip.

18 drown as boat sinks in West Bengal

AFP, Kolkata

At least 18 people, including 11 children, died after an overcrowded boat capsized in a river in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, police said Monday.

The small vessel, with 38 passengers on board, sank on Sunday while crossing the Runarayan river in Kolaghat, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) southwest of the state capital Kolkata.

"The ferry was overcrowded and leaking, and it overturned in the middle of the river," West Bengal police inspector general Surojit Kar Purakayastha told

The vessel hit a bridge before it capsized, he said.

Eleven survivors were treated in hospital.

Cold wave leaves over 100 dead in **Uttar Pradesh**

ANI, New Delhi

With temperatures dipping below normal and snowfall witnessed in the upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh and the Kashmir Valley, the normal routine of the people was disturbed for the third consecutive day and over 100 deaths were reported in Uttar Pradesh.

The states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been the worst affected by the intense cold conditions.

A dense fog continues to prevail in Uttar Pradesh and the maximum temperature was recorded at 2 to 10 degrees Celsius below normal in most parts of the state.

Meanwhile, the death toll has risen over 100 due to the severe cold, with several fresh casualties reported during the last 24 hours.

Delhi too is finding it tough to fight the cold.

"President Mubarak has stressed that

Abbas arrived on Sunday and met with

His visit to Egypt comes almost a week

Congress legislators revolt | Terrorists against party chiefs in Tripura, Nagaland

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Agartala/Kohima

A section of Congress leaders and legislators in Tripura and Nagaland have revolted against their state party chiefs and have demanded their immediate removal, party sources said yester-

The Congress is the main opposition party in Tripura and Nagaland and is in power in the remaining five northeastern states -- Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front and Naga People's Front (NPF) - led Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) are at the helm of affairs in Tripura and Nagaland, respec-

Seven of the total 10 Congress MLAs have asked party presi dent Sonia Gandhi to oust incumbent president of Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Samir Ranjan Barman alleging massive irregularities in the organisational election and non-functioning of the party in the state.

Similarly, 13 of the 19 Congress legislators in Nagaland want a change in the state leadership.

In a letter to AICC president Sonia Gandhi, the aggrieved Congress legislators demanded the immediate removal of Barman, also the former chief minister of Tripura. The letter said: 'Under his (Barman) leadership, the Congress is getting marginalised and has lost all the elections over the years miserably."

The agitated leaders include Congress party leader Ratan Lal Nath and former TPCC president Gopal Roy.

When contacted, a visibly annoyed Congress' Tripura party chief Barman told IANS: "Let them (the dissident leaders) do whatever they like."

threaten to attack trains in Bihar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE,

Security has been tightened at main railway stations and in all trains passing through Bihar after an alert of possible attacks on railway installations by Taliban-trained suicide squads, an official said yesterday.

"Security was beefed up in trains and at railway stations in Bihar following a tip off about a threat of terrorist attacks," state Home Secretary Amir Subhani said.

The senior divisional security commissioner of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has sounded a high alert in Eastern and East Central Railway zones. The commissioner has sent a letter to the superintendent of the rail police of Patna, Katihar and Jamalpur in Bihar in which it was made clear that Talibantrained suicide squads may target railway installations.

Qaeda militants killed in operation Yemeni capital. The Japanese foreign min-Yemeni forces have tightened istry said consular services

Yemen tightens security

France also shuts its mission, two

around embassies

AFP, Sanaa

liner.

source said.

ingYemen.

security around the airport

and foreign embassies in

Sanaa, officials said yesterday,

amid fears of strikes by an al-

Qaeda branch linked to a

Security forces, mean-

pected al-Qaeda members in

an operation north of the

capital on Monday, a tribal

sures come as US authorities

announced intensifying

airport checks on passengers

travelling from or via 14 "ter-

ror linked" countries, includ-

The US and British

embassies in Sanaa have

been shut since Sunday for

what they said were reasons

of security, while France on

Monday announced it was

shutting its mission in the

The stricter security mea-

business as usual. The German foreign minisbotched attack on a US airtry confirmed security had been tightened at its mission in Sanaa but that the embassy while, shot dead two sus-

had been suspended at its

embassy in Yemen but the

mission was conducting other

remained open. Yemeni officials, asking not to be named, told AFP on Monday that security had

been tightened outside all embassies in the capital. US President Barack Obama has accused the Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) of arming and training a Nigerian accused of trying to

blow up a Detroit-bound Northwest Airlines jet on Christmas Day. AQAP claimed responsibility for the failed attack and

called for strikes on embassies in Yemen.

Hundreds gather for Zuma's fifth wedding

AFP, Nkandla

South Africa's political and business elite as well as hundreds of villagers in traditional dress yesterday gathered for President Jacob Zuma's fifth wedding in his remote home

Three large tents were erected for the "udendwe" wedding ceremony under overcast skies in Zuma's rural homestead in Nkandla, deep in the countryside of KwaZulu-Natal province.

During the service, his 37year-old bride Thobeka Madiba will be introduced to the elders as well to ancestors, two years after 67-year-old Zuma paid a dowry to her family, a gift known as "ilobolo".

Several sheep, goats and cows have already been slaughtered for the feast to follow.

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Myanmar junta asks people to make 'correct choices' in election

A Pakistani man directs his horse drawn cart in the fog on a street in

Lahore yesterday. At least 15 people, including women and children,

were injured in fog-related road accidents there yesterday.

AFP, Naypyidaw

Military-ruled Myanmar's junta chief urged people yesterday to make "correct choices" at national elections to be held this year, in a message to mark the country's 62nd independence anniver-

Senior General Than Shwe said his seven-step "road map" to democracy was "the sole process for transition" in the annual message, which was read out by another general at a ceremony in the remote administrative capital Naypyidaw.

"Plans are under way to hold elections in a systematic way this year. In that regard, the entire people have to make correct choices," Than Shwe's message said. Critics of Myanmar's regime say the polls are a sham

designed to cement the ruling generals' grip over the nation, especially as opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi recently had her house arrest sentence extended beyond 2010. A date has still not been announced for the elections, which

will be the first since 1990 when the junta refused to recognise the landslide win of the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Suu Kyi. The 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner has been locked up for 1

of the last 20 years, despite repeated calls from the international community for her release. As in previous years, Than Shwe used the anniversary of the

country's independence from Britain to warn people "to remain vigilant at all times against dangers posed by neo-colonialists" usually a reference to the United States.

Myanmar's leaders marked the anniversary with a military parade in Naypyidaw, 400km north of the former capital Yangon, attended by ministers, military officials and 1,000 government staff.

ভৰ্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি ২০১০

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Twins born a year apart!

AP, Tampa

Identical twin boys in Florida will get to celebrate their birthdays individually after they were born in separate decades.

Margarita Velasco delivered the twins by caesarean section at Tampa General Hospital. Marcello was delivered just before midnight. His twin, Stephano, was delivered just as

the new year began. Their father Juan says it'll be good for each boy to have his own birthday party. The twins are in intensive care because they were born about 10 weeks early. Doctors say they'll get to go

home in about eight weeks. "As we started getting ready to do the Caesarean section, we looked at the clock and exclaimed, 'Oh, my God, it's almost midnight!" said Katherine Lynch who performed the caesarean section.



Photo taken on Sunday shows a farmer trying to round up his horses from a flooded paddock near Coonamble in the Australian state of New South Wales. Major flooding ravages Coonamble, thanks to heavy storms since Christmas Day. The floods forced more than 1,000 people to evacuate their homes and move to higher ground.

Flooded Australian town declared disaster zone

AP, Sydney

Authorities declared two flooded farming regions in southwestern Australia natural disaster zones Monday as residents in one town nervously watched a rising river in hopes that it wouldn't break its levees.

Parts of Coonamble and Bourke districts in New South Wales, several hundred miles northwest of Sydney, have been isolated by floodwaters since heavy rains last week. While meteorologists said the worst of the rain was over, rivers and reservoirs were still rising from the extra water, and Coonamble's Castlereagh River was expected to peak later Monday.

Congress, TDP split on Telangana ahead of all-party meet

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Hyderabad

A day ahead of the all-party meeting in New Delhi to discuss statehood to Telangana, Andhra Pradesh's ruling Congress and main opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Monday continued to be undecided on their stand and were likely to put forward a divided opinion.

While the representatives of both the parties from Telangana will urge the central government to immediately start the process for formation of Telangana state, their counterparts from Andhra region will oppose any bifurcation of the state.

Political observers say the meeting of eight recognised political parties convened by Home Minister P Chidambaram is not expected to achieve any dramatic breakthrough on the sensitive issue that has divided people along regional lines.

While three parties stand for statehood to Telangana, two are opposed to it and three undecided.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India (CPI) and Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) will urge New Delhi to immediately initiate the process for formation of Telangana state within a specified timeframe.



Rescuers evacuate passengers trapped in a train carriage due to heavy snowfall in Ulan Bator, China's Inner Mongolia region yesterday. Record snow disrupted air and road travel in northeast Asia on Monday, grounding dozens of planes in China and South Korea and forcing schools to close in Beijing, with more freezing weather on the way.

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