

News Digest

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Peace deal causes discord

Palestine, Israel agreement not popular with many on both sides

OFRA, West Bank (AP) — A Mideast peace deal reached Friday between Israel and Palestine has caused violence and political dissidence on both sides as their leaders returned home this weekend.

Jewish settlers took to the streets across the West Bank on Sunday, vowing to scuttle the agreement that gives more land to Palestinians.

The demonstrations came several hours before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to Israel, hoping to convince hard-liners that the deal he made with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was the best possible.

The agreement signed at the White House on Friday calls for Israel to hand over 13 percent more of the West Bank to Palestinian civilian control. That means some Jewish settlements will be surrounded by Palestinian-controlled territory, except for access roads.

Arriving back in Israel to a red-carpet welcome, Netanyahu said security concessions won from the Palestinians during the nine-day summit outside Washington would justify ceding more West Bank land.

"We are returning after a long and difficult effort to bring ... security and peace to Israel," he said. "We achieved such a deal — we achieved the best deal ... We did something good for the state of Israel."

Before leaving the United States, Netanyahu said he entered the agreement reluctantly.

"Any inch of land that we cede to the Palestinians is painful for me to cede,"

Netanyahu said.

At least 20 settlers — once Netanyahu's staunchest supporters — were arrested, and two police officers were hurt in Sunday's widespread demonstrations, including one outside Israel's international airport after Netanyahu's arrival.

"With the Lord's help, we will use all of our powers to break this agreement," said settler leader Ahron Dombé.

Near the settlement of Ofra north of Jerusalem, about 50 settlers and their supporters rushed past Israeli police and sat cross-legged on the highway, blocking the route. Some settlers held morning services at the roadside.

"I'm here to show that this is a sad day," said Natan El, 38, an engineer, sitting in the middle of the main north-south highway through the West Bank. "We are in danger of losing our land, the land we have returned to after 2,000 years."

Tensions also boiled over in the West Bank town of Ramallah, where infighting broke out among Arafat's supporters. Members of the Palestinian leader's political faction, Fatah, battled Palestinian security forces with rocks and bullets.

One 16-year-old youth was shot in

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the head and later died in a Jerusalem hospital.

The confrontation broke out after Palestinian intelligence agents searched Fatah headquarters, looking for illegal weapons. A crack-down on unlicensed arms is one of the provisions of the agreement.

In Israel, politicians predicted Netanyahu would face political turmoil as a result of the agreement when he brings it before his Cabinet today.

Twelve hard-liners in Netanyahu's government say they will vote against him in upcoming no-confidence motions in Israel's parliament, where Netanyahu has only a one-seat majority.

Netanyahu made overtures to the settlers to try to calm their fears, but they mostly went unheard.

"I say now here to our friends listening, you are us, you are us, and we are you. We love you, and we are fighting for you, and there is no other government that will fight like this," Netanyahu said.

But Dombé said he was deeply disappointed with Netanyahu and the ministers who voted for the accord and would begin polling settlers today to find a candidate to challenge Netanyahu.

"Netanyahu is no longer the leader of our national camp," Dombé said.



Jamaica faces offshoots of Hurricane Mitch

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — Driving rain squalls spawned by Hurricane Mitch forced churches to cancel Sunday services, flooded streets in the Jamaican capital of Kingston and sent residents scurrying for provisions.

Under menacing skies, seaports closed and buses and taxis stayed off Kingston's streets as Mitch, the 13th named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, swirled in the western Caribbean Sea south of Jamaica.

Packing 145-mph winds, Mitch was a powerful Category 4 hurricane that also could threaten the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Honduras and Colombia's tiny islands off Central America, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.

Taiwan braves torrential rains from Typhoon Babs

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Typhoon Babs brought torrential rain and landslides to Taiwan on Sunday after killing at least 156 people in the Philippines and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless.

The typhoon was centered about 185 miles southeast of Hong Kong by evening with gusts already lashing the territory.

Babs caused downpours over the island of Taiwan, with eastern towns recording more than 20 inches of rain in 24 hours. Authorities evacuated hundreds of people using rubber rafts from their homes near flooded rivers.

Anti-kidnapping official killed by car bomb in Russia

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — Chechnya's top anti-kidnapping official was killed Sunday when a bomb tore his car to pieces on the day he was to launch an offensive on hostage-takers in the breakaway republic.

Shadid Bargishev, 27, died on the operating table after losing both legs in the blast in the parking lot of the anti-kidnapping department office in the Chechen capital of Grozny.

The explosion came as law enforcement officials were preparing an operation to rescue people kidnapped in Chechnya. Bargishev's colleagues insisted they would go ahead with the offensive.

Two bodyguards and several passers-by also were seriously injured in the accident, doctors said.

Group demands Malaysian prime minister's resignation

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — One day after a police crackdown turned an anti-government protest into a riot, a leading Malaysian human rights group demanded Sunday that Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resign.

Saturday's protest spun out of control when police arrested dozens of people, shot water laced with pepper spray at thousands of demonstrators and bombarded a mosque with tear gas. More than 241 people were arrested and injuries were reported on both sides.

Demonstrators have staged a series of protests since ousted Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was jailed Sept. 20. Protesters demand political reforms, an end to Mahathir's 17-year rule and Anwar's release.

Russian supply ship lifts off for Mir space station

MOSCOW (AP) — A cargo ship with the last supplies this year for the Mir space station blasted off smoothly Sunday after more than two months of delays so the Russian government could scrape up the needed cash.

Amid the food, water, fuel and bundles of New Year's gifts aboard the Progress cargo ship was a giant space mirror designed to illuminate sun-starved northern cities.

The launch originally was scheduled for August but was delayed several times, including a Oct. 15 postponement when Russia's space agency said it still couldn't afford to buy the booster rocket from its manufacturer.

Serbian newspaper fined for criticizing Milosevic

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — A Belgrade court fined the editors and publishers of an independent newspaper \$260,000 for criticizing Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, an editor said Saturday.

Under a harsh media law passed by Serbia's parliament Thursday, a Belgrade district judge ruled the journalists were guilty of "trying to undermine the constitutional order" of Yugoslavia by criticizing Milosevic and his rule.

The editors, Slavko Curuvija and Dragan Bujosevic, and publisher Ivan Tadic, along with the publishing house of the independent weekly, Evropljanin, were ordered to pay the fine within 24 hours, Curuvija said.

Democratic fund raising targeted

House investigators find bank records pointing to misconduct in 1993.

WASHINGTON (AP) — House investigators unearthed bank records that confirm a long-held suspicion that \$45,000 in Democratic donations made

by the controversial Lippo Group at a 1993 event featuring Vice President Al Gore were reimbursed with foreign money.

The House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, which continues to investigate alleged Democratic fund-raising abuses, located the records just as the statute of limitations for criminal liability expired.

It forwarded the evidence to the Federal Election Commission and asked for a prompt investigation.

Federal law generally prohibits donors from giving foreign funds in U.S. elections, although a federal judge in Washington recently put a wrinkle into the law by ruling it doesn't cover so-called soft-money donations made by corporations and wealthy individuals to political parties.

The Justice Department or election commission could appeal the ruling.

Three checks of \$15,000 each were written by three U.S. subsidiaries of

Lippo, an Indonesian-based financial conglomerate, and donated in connection with a Sept. 27, 1993, fund-raiser in Los Angeles headlined by Gore.

All three donations went to the Democratic Party's soft money accounts, and Senate and House investigators have suspected for over a year that the donations had foreign origins.

The checks — one each from Hip Hing Holdings Ltd., San Jose Holdings Ltd. and Toy Center Holdings of California — were signed by two Lippo executives and are dated Sept. 23, 1993. One was John Huang, a Democratic fund-raiser and former Commerce Department official who has been a focus of the fund-raising probes.

The committee investigators said the newly uncovered bank records show the three Lippo subsidiaries received reimbursements of \$15,000 each from a \$45,000 wire originating Oct. 15, 1993, from Lippo's headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Abortion provider shot, killed by sniper in New York

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Dr. Barnett Slepian's own words signaled a chilling premonition of his own violent end.

Four years before his death on Friday, Slepian wrote a letter to the editor reacting to his frequent run-ins with "nonviolent" anti-abortion forces. In the August 1994 letter, he wrote: "Please don't feign surprise, dismay and certainly not innocence when a more volatile and less restrained member of the group decides to react ... by shooting an abortion provider."

Slepian, a 52-year-old obstetrician-gynecologist, was killed by a sniper who fired a rifle bullet through a window in his home Friday night. His was the first fatality among five sniper attacks on upstate New York or Canadian abortion providers in the last four years.

The killer remained at large Sunday as an international investigation continued. Police listed no suspects. All of the previous attacks have occurred within a few weeks of Nov. 11, Veteran's Day, which is known as Remembrance Day in Canada.

In the 1994 letter to The Buffalo News, Slepian said he did not begrudge anti-abortion demonstrators who "scream that I am a murderer and a killer when I enter the clinics at which they 'peacefully' exercise their First Amendment right of freedom of speech."

But, he wrote, they all share the blame when one member of the group goes too far and turns to violence.

In a statement Sunday, the founder of Pro-Life Virginia called Slepian's

killer "a hero," one who ended Slepian's "blood-thirsty practice."

"We as Christians have a responsibility to protect the innocent from being murdered, the same way we would want someone to protect us. Whoever shot the shot protected the children," the Rev. Donald Spitz said.

Slepian often expressed his fears that abortion foes were encouraging violence. In a 1994 interview with Buffalo television station WIVB, Slepian said: "Maybe they are not going to perform it, but they're setting up their soldiers to perform the violence."

Three years earlier, he told the station he was not afraid for himself, but for his family and four children. "I think, if I wasn't around, what they would go through," he said.

All of his children were home when Slepian's wife, Lynn, called 911 after the sniper's bullet entered the doctor's back, pierced his lungs, exited his body and ricocheted into another room.

People on both sides of the abortion debate condemned the killing.

The Revs. Rob and Paul Schenck of the National Clergy Council, who helped organize a massive abortion protest in Buffalo in 1992, urged people to defend life peacefully.

"The murder of Barnett Slepian 'is wrong, sinful and cowardly,' they said.

Dr. George Tiller of Kansas, who was wounded in an August 1993 shooting in the parking lot of his clinic, called it "a well-orchestrated political Armageddon against women and their freedom."

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