

Boutros to work for ME peace

PARIS, Nov 24: Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Boutros Boutros-Ghali, chosen to be the new United Nations Secretary General, said he believed his selection was an 'encouraging sign' for Africa and affirmed he would work for Middle East peace, reports AFP. 'I hope to fulfill the hopes of Africans,' he told the French newspaper journal Du Dimanche. But the added, 'it is up to them to show, through their initiatives, their desire to take part in the new debate which has opened on the international scene.'

Mujahideen repulse attack: 30 killed

ISLAMABAD, Nov 24: Afghan Mujahideen have repulsed attacks by government forces in Balkh province, suffering casualties of 30 killed and 200 wounded, the Resistance said Saturday, reports AFP. Fighting has continued in the area bordering on the Soviet Union for the four days while Kabul forces tried to recapture the district of Dawlatabad 'liberated' by the Mujahideen on November 7, the Mujahideen Media news agency said. The agency, quoting a wireless message from the district, said the government

PLO accepts Washington as ME peace talks venue

TUNIS, Nov 24: The PLO said on Saturday it was not opposed to Washington as the venue for further Middle East peace talks but expected its shadow delegation to be accorded the same facilities and treatment it received in Madrid, reports Reuters. The White House on Friday issued invitations to Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestinians to fresh round of peace talks on December 4 in Washington. Only Jordan has accepted the invitation. Israel, Lebanon and Palestinians said they were still considering it. PLO Spokesman Ahmed Abderrahman said the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation was examining the invitation that was handed to Palestinians in Jerusalem. He said the PLO would respond in a few days' time but 'in principle it is not against the choice of Washington as the venue for the negotiations.'

Mitterrand's popularity now lowest ever

PARIS, Nov 24: The popularity of French President Francois Mitterrand was down to its lowest rating at 28 per cent, according to an opinion poll to be published today by Le Journal du Dimanche, reports AFP. The IFOP poll, carried out in late October-early November among 1,994 people, also said that 57 per cent were displeased with Mitterrand, compared to 52 per cent in October. The rating of Prime Minister Edith Cresson also took a plunge with only 19 per cent approval and 53 per cent disapproval.

Majority in favour of Margaret

LONDON, Nov 24: A majority of respondents in a new British poll were in favour of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's proposal for referendum to be held on a planned single currency for the European Community, the Sunday Times newspaper said here, reports AFP. The poll found that 56 per cent of respondents were in favour of a referendum and 54 per cent would vote against the single currency, proposal if one were held.



MOSCOW: Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze (L) shaking hands with Palestinian leader Faisal Hussaini before their meeting. — AFP/UNB photo

US Senate okays \$270b defence bill, freezes B-2 bomber plan

WASHINGTON, Nov 24: The Senate Saturday approved a 270-billion-dollar 1992 defence spending bill which boosts outlays on the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) but freezes the controversial B-2 Stealth bomber programme, reports AFP. The chamber voted 66 to 29 to put Congress' final seal of approval on the defence package, and sent it to President George Bush, who was expected to sign it into law. The House of Representatives approved the bill Wednesday on a voice vote.

Shevardnadze warns Armenia, Azerbaijan not let bitter quarrel

MOSCOW, Nov 24: Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze warned the southern Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan not to let a bitter quarrel over a crashed helicopter develop into war, reports Reuters. Shevardnadze, quoted by Tass news agency, said on Saturday. The helicopter crashed on Wednesday in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave in Azerbaijan which has suffered more than three years of guerrilla war between militants from the two republics.

Yeltsin wants Red Army to retain single

WUENSNDORF (Germany), Nov 24: Russian President Boris Yeltsin Saturday spoke of the need for the Red Army to retain a single, centralised command, but he did not reject the possibility of setting up his own army if other Soviet republics first did so, reports AFP.

Speaking at Red Army headquarters in Germany here, Yeltsin said 'the army must continue to have a central, single command'. 'If other republics create their own army, Russia will be the last to do so,' he added. Yeltsin, who Saturday ended a three-day visit to Germany, told Soviet troops stationed here that Russia would do its utmost to ensure their repatriation under the best conditions possible.

Russia is to build some 48,000 flats, over half of which with German money, to house returning servicemen. A total of 240,000 remaining Soviet troops are to be withdrawn from eastern Germany by late 1994.

Yeltsin was welcomed here by the commander in chief of the western group, General Matvey Burlakov, and several thousand officers and their families, at headquarters he decked only with the German and Russian flags.

US forces to stay, in Europe

BRUSSELS, Nov 24: NATO's top commander said on Saturday that American forces had to stay in Europe to maintain US influence and curb intense national rivalries, reports Reuters.

The remarks by US General John Galvin, NATO supreme allied commander Europe, were apparently aimed at isolationists in Washington and at any Europeans who think US troops are no longer needed in post-cold war Europe.

'Will the US be around some time from now?' Galvin asked a conference in Brussels on the future of transatlantic ties.

'The US really doesn't have much choice. The United States strategy is forward (troop) commitment to NATO in order to gain a seat at the table and a certain amount of influence,' he said. 'The only other alternative the United States has is fortress America, and that's been rejected time after time.'

BRIEFLY

Russian communists to form new party

Russian communists met for a two-day congress at Yekaterinburg, formerly Sverdlovsk, Saturday to found a new party, Tass news agency said, reports AFP Sunday from Moscow. The Communist Party, which was banned by a presidential decree on November 6, aims to register with authorities after delegates rename it. Tass said, adding that the new party will group all communist organizations.

Thousands of mourners march in Baku

Thousands of people marched in Azerbaijan on Saturday to mourn victims of a helicopter crash that officials warned could escalate bloodshed between the republic and neighbouring Armenia, reports AP Sunday from Moscow.

'Most wanted' Assam rebel held

Indian troops have arrested a 'most wanted' militant from the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), was held in the Jorhat district of the oil-rich state Friday, the news agency said.

Truck, cart collide: 19 killed in Cuba

Nineteen people were killed and 13 were injured, five of them seriously, when a truck collided with a cart in Cuba's western province of Pinar Del Rio on Saturday, the Cuban domestic news agency AIN said, reports Reuters Sunday from Havana.

Killer of PLO official executed

The alleged killer of top PLO official Abu Iyad has been executed in international waters, a Palestinian source said in a report published Saturday, reports AFP Sunday from Manama.

Italian farmers protest EC policies

Hundreds of thousands of Italian farmers demonstrated in protest against European Community (EC) agricultural policies which have forced them to reduce output, reports AFP Sunday from Rome.

Thatcher arrives in Kuwait

Trade Union representatives said Italian farmers' earnings fell last year by an average 10 per cent, while prices for consumers remained unchanged. Some 400,000 people, some with their tractors, attended the rally, according to organisers.

UN to form anti-crime commission

VERSAILLES, France, Nov 24: Ministers from 108 countries on Saturday approved the creation of a new United Nations commission to fight crime, reports Reuters. 'Crime prevention and penal justice has become one of the UN's priorities,' French Urban Affairs Minister Michel Delebarre told a news conference at the end of a three-day ministerial meeting in Versailles, just outside Paris. The UN has decided (of the UN) to have the commission to tackle this question directly by creating a 32-member commission at the next meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in February,' Delebarre added.

Rebels shell Sudanese capital: 17 killed

KHARTOUM, Nov 24: Rebels fighting for autonomy in southern Sudan have shelled the regional capital Juba, killing at least 17 people, travellers from the town said on Saturday. They told Reuters the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, hitting the airport area, the administrative district, the hospital and two refugee camps. Juba, 1,200 km (750 miles) south of Khartoum has long been surrounded by rebels and for the last two years food has had to be brought in by air.

Off the Record

Kennedy's assassin considered as 'lousy shot'

MOSCOW: Lee Harvey Oswald, the presumed assassin of US President John Kennedy, was considered as 'lousy shot' at the hunting club he belonged to while in the Soviet Union, according to his KGB file, reports AFP.

Code-named by the KGB 'Eel' or 'Dodger,' Oswald loved to hunt and bought a Tox hunting rifle during his stay in Russia between October 1959 and May of 1962, but often missed his target according to a report in Saturday's Ivestia newspaper quoting Viacheslav Nikonov, an assistant to KGB Chief Vadim Bakantint.

All details in the five-volume Oswald file will be made public Nikonov said. While Oswald was in the Soviet Union he requested Soviet citizenship and political asylum. He lived for a time in Minsk, Belorus, where he worked in an electronics factory and married a Soviet woman.

Rock star acknowledges himself as AIDS victim

LONDON: Rock star Freddie Mercury acknowledged Saturday that he has AIDS, and urged everyone to join him in the fight against 'this terrible disease,' reports AP.

In a statement, the flamboyant singer from the group Queen said: 'Following the enormous conjecture in the press over the last two weeks, I wish to confirm that I have been tested HIV positive and have AIDS.'

'I felt it correct to keep this information private to date in order to protect the privacy of those around me. However, the time has now come for my friends and fans around the world to know the truth and I hope that everyone will join with me, my doctors and all those worldwide in the fight against this terrible disease.'

His spokeswoman, Roxy Meade, said Mercury, 45 was in Britain and was not hospitalized. She refused to discuss the singer's health.

'He just wanted to let people know that he has the disease, and that's as far as it goes,' Meade said. In his statement, Mercury said, 'My privacy has always been very special to me and I am famous for my lack of interviews. Please understand this policy will continue.'

The group is the cornerstone of Hollywood Records, which was just bought by Disney Co. for \$55 million.

Fluidless sex

NEW DELHI: An Indian cult leader is proposing using esoteric energy techniques to achieve fluidless sex — or 'flex' — as a way to avoid AIDS, reports Reuters.

Swami Cattanya Keerti, said on Saturday: 'since sex is fast becoming more dangerous than Russian roulette now that semen, saliva and tears are medically acknowledged as possible routes of (AIDS) transmission. There are going to be new ways of making love.'

Keerti, who edits the pun-based Rajneesh commune's Osho Times International, said: 'thousands of mediators around the world are experimenting with new ways of making love with fluidless sex, or 'flex.'

Hair-removing toothpaste

ALGIERS: Algerians who have bought a new brand of local toothpaste have been warned not to use it — the brightly-coloured blue tubes contain hair-removing cream, reports Reuters. An urgent warning has gone out to chemists and consumers to return the tubes of Florence 'toothpaste', the Algerian news agency AFS said.



SUKKUR: The bodies of six bandits lie in a police station in this central city after they were killed in a confrontation with law enforcement agencies in Sindh province. — AFP/UNB photo

Coalition govt to be formed: Sihanouk

PHNOM PENH, Nov 24: A new coalition government will be formed with a guerrilla group joining the Vietnamese-installed Phnom Penh administration it once fought. Prince Norodom Sihanouk has announced, reports AP. Guerrillas loyal to Prince Norodom Ranariddh will join the government of Prime Minister Hun Sen in a major cabinet reshuffle within a week, Sihanouk said. 'My son, Ranariddh, and Hun Sen have decided to form a bipartite government,' Sihanouk said Saturday during a meeting with French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, who was visiting Phnom Penh. Some Western diplomats expressed concern the development could jeopardize the fragile peace agreement signed October 23 to try to end nearly 13 years of civil war. Under the UN-brokered peace plan, Ranariddh's group and two guerrilla allies — the Khmer Rouge and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front — all are supposed to work together with the Hun Sen government in a Supreme National Council. The 12-member national reconciliation council is to help guide the nation until elections in early 1993. The idea was to encourage harmony and reconciliation among all factions, especially the Hun Sen and Khmer Rouge

Nuclear reactor shut down in Colombia

COLOMBIA (South Carolina), Nov 24: A nuclear reactor was shut down Saturday after radioactive water leaked inside the reactor containment building, officials said, reports AFP.

A spokesman for the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) said inspectors had shut down the leaking unit 3 reactor at the Oconee Nuclear Plant near the town of Seneca after an alert was declared.

The spokesman, Ken Clark, said there was no evidence any radioactive material had spread outside the plant. 'It is being contained in the reactor building,' Clark said.

Coalition govt to be formed: Sihanouk

PHNOM PENH last week from more than a decade of exile, was supposed to be the neutral leader of the Supreme National Council and the main unifying figure. But this week he allowed the Phnom Penh administration to name him president and head of state — although his actual powers are unclear. The administration also entered formally into a political alliance with his son's group. Sihanouk said Saturday that candidates from the government and Ranariddh groups will share a single ballot in the 1993 elections. Dumas responded publicly to Sihanouk's announcement of the coalition government.