

Mahathir blasts Europe

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 2: Malaysia strongly criticised Europe on Friday for not defending the Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while denying them the weapons to defend themselves from Serb attacks, reports AFP.

"The crime of the Muslims is that they wish for a non-Muslim religiously heterogeneous state," Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told the UN General Assembly.

"They are viciously attacked by the Serbs who openly declared that they were and are doing this to ensure that Europe remains Christian," he added.

European countries and other "erstwhile champions of freedom and democracy" when it came to dismantling communism not only failed to stop this, "they actually prevented the victims from defending themselves," Mahathir said.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of Muslims have died and are dying, and two million have been forced to flee their homes, he added.

"Only the most glib will still believe that the vociferous champions of freedom and democracy will risk their necks for other people's freedom and democracy."

Mahathir also complained that the principle of democracy had so far failed to penetrate the organisation of the United Nations itself.

"The most undemocratic aspect of the UN is the veto power of the permanent five members of the security council," he said.

"We can accept some weightage for them, but for each of them, alone, to be more powerful than the whole membership of the UN is not acceptable."

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Bangladesh's Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (L) meets with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad Friday at the United Nations. — AFP photo

Delhi blames Pindi for terrorism

Pakistan urges UN Council to hold plebiscite on Kashmir

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 2: Indian Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh on Friday indirectly accused Pakistan of carrying out terrorism and acts of war against India in Kashmir and defended India's record of democracy and human rights, reports AP.

"Not enough emphasis is put on a major threat and impediment to human rights — terrorism, especially one that is aided and abetted by one state against another," Singh said in an address to the General Assembly.

Although he did not mention Pakistan by name, the reference was unmistakable. On Wednesday, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, fiercely denounced what he called

Indian occupation of Kashmir and reported widespread violations of human rights by Indian security forces there.

The Kashmir issue has been alternately simmering and flaring for more than four decades since the 1947 partition of the old British colonial India into predominantly Muslim Pakistan and the mostly Hindu India.

Jammu-Kashmir is the Indian part of the larger Kashmir that was divided between the two countries.

The Pakistani envoy called on the Security Council to implement its resolutions calling for a plebiscite in Kashmir and to send a fact-finding mission there to investigate human rights abuses.

The Indian minister was

more restrained and did not discuss the problem of Jammu-Kashmir, the Indian state where Islamic secessionists and Islamic fundamentalists are battling Indian administration. India says Kashmir is strictly an internal Indian problem.

But Singh was emphatic about terrorism — which India says Pakistani agents are committing in the strategic states of Kashmir and Punjab.

"As one of the principal victims of terrorism aided and abetted from across the border," he said, "we can only recall to the terrorists and their supporters who carry out acts of war against India the words of (Mahandas K.) Gandhi, 'the champion of nonviolence in the struggle for independence from

Britain.

"Why is it," Singh asked, "that a few so-called human rights advocates and UN member states choose to focus on the human rights of terrorists — those who indulge in senseless murder, destruction, pillage, disruption of civilized existence and undermining democratic institutions."

Singh emphasized the "profoundly humanistic traditions of Indian civilization, with emphasis on tolerance, harmony, non-violence and inviolability of the individual."

India's commitment to protecting human rights, he said, has been strengthened with establishment of a National Human Rights Commission of eminent jurists and personalities.

BRIEFLY

US soldier Drabik dead: Alex Drabik, who was credited with helping shorten World War II in Europe by leading fellow US soldiers in a dash under fire across a key German bridge, died en route to his Army unit reunion. He was 82, AP reports from Rochester.

The retired Toledo, Ohio, butcher was killed Tuesday in an auto accident. He was driving to Hunter, Kan, for the annual reunion for members of Company A 27th Armored Infantry battalion of the 9th Armored Division.

On March 7, 1945, then-Sgt Drabik led other soldiers in a dash the railroad bridge was an unexpected coup that allowed Allied forces to pierce Nazi Germany's biggest defensive barrier.

Clinton shocked: President Clinton messaged India's prime minister Friday expressing sorrow over the loss of at least 20,000 lives in the worst earthquake to strike that country in a half century, AP reports from Washington.

"My heart goes out to the victims of the devastation and to those left homeless," Clinton said in the message to Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao.

"I am confident that the efforts of your government and the courage and resilience of the Indian people will succeed in mitigating the worst effects of the disaster," the president added.

Iranian team to visit Iraq: The foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq, in New York for the General Assembly, met on Friday and agreed an Iranian delegation headed by a deputy foreign minister would visit Baghdad in mid-October, an Iranian source said, Reuters reports from United Nations.

The meeting, between Foreign Ministers Ali Akbar Velayati of Iran and Mohammad Saeed Al-Sahaf of Iraq, was a follow-up to one they had in Karachi earlier this year when both were attending a session of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Cocaine seized in Hong Kong: Customs officers seized 17.6 pounds (8 kilograms) of cocaine, two pistols and three grenades in Hong Kong's biggest-ever cocaine bust, a senior customs officer said Saturday, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The cocaine, valued at 14.4 million Hong Kong dollars (US 1.8 million dollars), originated in South America and was seized late Friday in a raid on a Kowloon apartment, said Daniel Tam, acting superintendent of the Customs Drug Investigation Bureau.

Lightning hits French plane: Lightning struck an Air France plane just after take off Friday and forced an emergency landing, news reports said, AP reports from Rome.

None of the 131 passengers was injured.

The bolt damaged the front part of the plane and the radar, the AGI news agency said. The pilot radioed an emergency to the control tower and landed the plane on a runway that had been cleared of traffic.

North Korea offers talks with South

SEOUL, Oct 2: Communist North Korea, apparently bowing to international pressure, offered Saturday to reopen inter-Korean talks cut off earlier because of its nuclear programme, the government said, reports AP.

South Korea indicated inter-Korean talks could open next week.

"We hope your side will send a delegation to working-level talks October 5," North Korean Prime Minister Kang Song San was quoted as telling his South Korean counterpart, Hwang In-sung.

The North Korean offer was reported by South Korea's Dialogue Office, a government agency in charge of inter-Korean communication. It came amid mounting international pressure on Pyongyang to allow international inspections of its nuclear sites.

North Korea is still reluctant to meet other conditions such as cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, but South Korea said it would positively respond to the North's call.

Song Young-dae, South Korea's Vice Unification Minister, said Kang's message was a positive response to "our consistent demand for unconditional contact for the solution of the nuclear issue."

The North Korean offer followed a resolution, adopted early Saturday by the UN nuclear watchdog body in Vienna, urging North Korea to comply with its obligations to the agency.

US suggests Syria, Lebanon, Jordan to follow PLO for peace with Israel

NEW YORK, Oct 2: Secretary of State Christopher has urged Syria, Lebanon and Jordan to follow the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and negotiate peace agreements with Israel, reports AP.

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Christopher met September 29 in New York with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, a co-signer of that accord. They discussed the follow-up to the agreement, which includes an October 1 donors conference in Washington to support Middle East peace.

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IAEA calls on Iraq to release names of N-arms suppliers

VIENNA, Oct 2: The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) voted overwhelmingly Friday to demand Iraq release the names of foreign countries that supplied its nuclear weapons programme, reports AP.

Delegates approved the motion by 73 votes, none against and four abstentions — Algeria, Cuba, North Korea and Jordan.

The vote came after Iraq, whose voting rights were suspended for non-payment of contributions, had lost a bitter procedural battle to delay the ballot.

Baghdad has consistently frustrated UN attempts to discover which firms supplied its nuclear weapons programme,

which was dismantled by UN experts in the wake of Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War.

The motion called on Iraq to submit to a continuous monitoring of its water ways, as testing can reveal the existence of clandestine nuclear programmes.

Earlier delegates voted heavily in favour of a motion expressing the IAEA's (grave concern) at North Korea's failure to allow inspections of its nuclear sites.

However, the body dropped original plans to take the hard-line communist state to the UN Security Council for the possible imposition of economic sanctions, leaving the path open for further talks.

IAEA delegates also approved a resolution on inspections in the Middle East, and noted the progress made in bilateral peace negotiations in the region, particularly last month's autonomy accord signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation for the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

a vote for a nuclear-free zone in Africa was also heavily approved, the motion calling on South Africa to continue its policy of openness on the nuclear issues.

The 114-nation watchdog, ending a week-long conference, also called for a boost to nuclear safety checks.

UK to support India on Kashmir issue

LONDON, Oct 2: Britain has assured "active support" to India on the Kashmir issue at all international fora, including the United Nations where Pakistan is lobbying support in its desperate bid to internationalise it, reports PTI.

The British government's unequivocal stand that Kashmir issue is a dispute to be resolved peacefully through bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan was reiterated at a meeting between the Indian high commissioner L M Singhvi and the British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Mark Lennox-Boyd here yesterday, Indian sources said.

Move to keep '72 N-arms treaty in force

GENEVA, Oct 2: The United States and former Soviet republics on Friday reaffirmed a 1972 nuclear arms control treaty, the countries said in a joint statement, reports AP.

Russia was joined by Belarus and Ukraine at a review of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the United States in Geneva this week. Such reviews are required under the accord every five years, and this was the first since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

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The sources, who requested anonymity, said an Israeli army engineering unit push the barbed wire north along 2.5 miles (4 kilometres) of the inter-

national boundary.

They said the move was made south of the village of Yaroun in the western sector of a self-styled "security zone" Israel occupies in south Lebanon.

Yaroun is 1.2 miles (2 kilometres) north of the Israeli border. The area has been the target of infiltration attacks by Shiite Muslim guerrilla of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah, or Party of God.

Israel insists that guerrilla activity be stopped by the Lebanese army before a pullout from the security zone can be negotiated.

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Aliyev is widely viewed as a shoe-in for the presidency as the two other candidates running in the election — a businessman and professor — are little known players in the political arena.

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Azeri go to polls today

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Off the Record

Anomaly in deaths too!

WASHINGTON: Forty per cent of women who die on the job are murdered, the government says. Its figure for men is only 15 per cent, reports AP.

According to a Labour Department study released Friday, officials suggested the difference was due to the large number of women exposed to crime by working late at night.

The survey showed that although men represent 55 per cent of the workforce, they had 93 per cent of all job-related deaths.

The disproportion of deaths among men and women workers resulted from the differences in the industries and occupations in which men and women are typically employed.

Another anomaly: The self-employed and those working in family businesses accounted for 20 per cent of the workplace fatalities — double their share of the nation's workers.

Highway vehicle accidents — including tractor-trailers, delivery vans and cars driven by salesmen — caused the most job-related fatalities, said the survey. They accounted for 18 per cent, or 1,121, of the 6,083 fatal job injuries in 1992.

"Voice of Peace" useless

TEL AVIV: The Voice of Peace, a shipboard radio station that broadcast a message of peace to the Middle East for 20 years, shut down Friday with an extended version of the spiritual "We Shall Overcome," reports AP.

Peace activist Abie Nathan, the station's owner, said it had outlived its usefulness after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chief Yasser Arafat shook hands last month on a peace deal.

The ship has broadcast from off the Israeli coast and sailed to the Suez Canal during the 1973 war and to Beirut during Israel's 1978 invasion of Lebanon. Nathan was jailed in 1989 and 1991 for violating Israeli law by meeting with Arafat.

Nathan, who considered sinking the ship as a sign of its completed mission, said it instead will be docked in Tel Aviv and become a museum of the Middle East peace process.

Hillary smarter than Bill!

WASHINGTON, Oct 2: Hillary Rodham Clinton is believed to be smarter than her husband, President Bill Clinton, a new national poll published on Friday says, reports Reuters.

A USA Today/CNN Gallup Poll, taken during Mrs Clinton's promotional campaign for national health care in Congress this week, found 40 per cent of those polled thought she was smarter than her husband while only 22 per cent felt he was smarter.

Seventeen per cent said they were equally intelligent, six per cent said neither was smarter and 15 per cent did not know.

Overall, 61 per cent gave her a favourable rating which was about the same rank as before her testimony on behalf of the national medical plan, which drew Congressional raves.

Only 27 per cent viewed her unfavourably while 12 per cent had no opinion.

But as far as being the ideal First Lady, Mrs Clinton ranked behind Barbara Bush with 39 per cent believing George Bush's wife came closest to the ideal president's wife. Mrs Clinton followed with 36%, Nancy Reagan with 11 per cent and Rosalynn Carter with seven per cent.

On whether Mrs Clinton was too influential as an activist First Lady, 48 per cent said she exerted the right amount of influence, 41 per cent felt she was too influential, four per cent said her influence was too little and seven per cent had no opinion.



Teenage brutality

BATTLE CREEK: Jurors convicted a teenage boy for helping force two toddlers to perform sex acts on each other while he and friends videotaped it, reports AP.

Steven Dilling, 16, was found guilty Thursday on two counts of first-degree criminal sexual abuse. He faces sentencing October 7.

The judge must still decide if Dilling will be sentenced as a juvenile or an adult. If sentenced as an adult, he faces up to life in prison.

Some jurors wept as they watched the 18-minute tape, which shows a 3-year-old girl performing oral sex on a 1-year-old boy cousin in October 1992. The mother of the girl found the tape and handed it over to authorities.

Three other Battle Creek teens also were charged in the case. David Nelson, also 16, was convicted earlier this month. He faces sentencing in November. Two others await trial.

The father of one of the toddlers is charged with knowing the incident occurred.

UK to hold polls in HK if talks fail

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 2: Britain will go ahead and hold elections in Hong Kong in 1995 on its terms if it cannot reach agreement on the issue with China, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said here Friday, reports AP.

"There is a considerable gap" between the position of the two sides, and "I can't say that we have narrowed it today," Hurd said after meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

London has already made major efforts to respond to China's concerns, but there are limits to the concessions it is prepared to make, Hurd said.

"We don't have infinite time and we don't have infinite flexibility," Hurd said.

"We have made moves, major moves, to meet China's concerns there are points beyond which we cannot go if elections are to be fair and open and acceptable," Hurd said.

"If we can reach agreement that will be much the best outcome.

"If we can't reach agreement then we will have to take our responsibilities, responsibilities which we hold under the joint declaration, for the administration of Hong Kong," he added.

"The governor will have to put draft legislation to the Legislative Council to pass the necessary laws" for elections in 1995 that would be "fair and open and acceptable to be people of Hong Kong," Hurd said.

Britain wanted to reach agreement with China on the "objective criteria" to be set for members elected in the 1995 elections for them to be able to continue to serve after 1997, when the British colony reverts to Chinese rule, Hurd said.

"It is not pace of democracy that is in dispute here, the argument is whether elections should be fair and open," Hurd said.

Since the two men last met in July there had been some progress in a dispute over a new airport for Hong Kong, a little process, on the joint liaison group covering matters linked to the 1997 handover, but only tiny movement in the constitutional talks which include the election issue, Hurd said.

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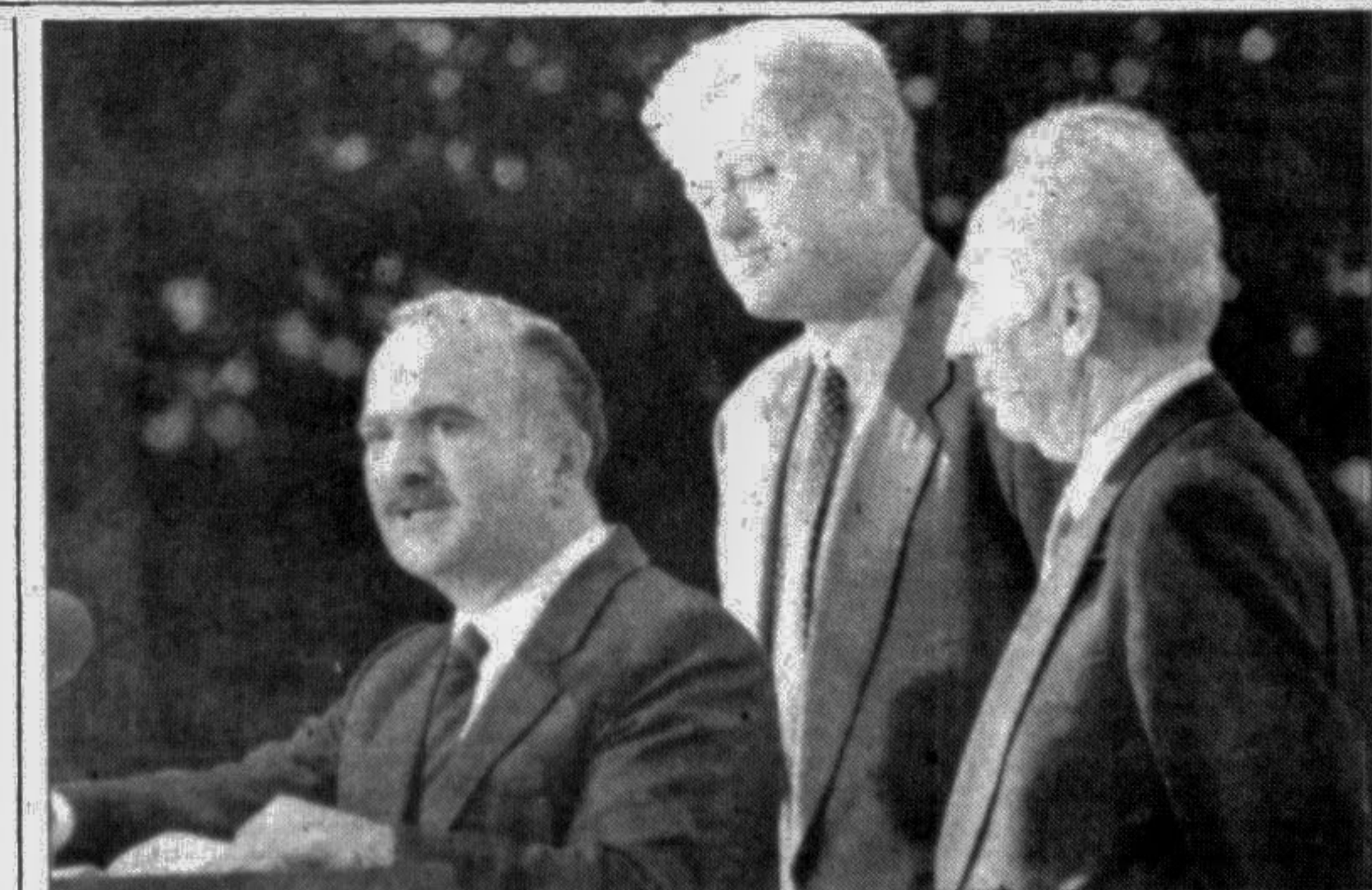
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Jordanian Crown Prince Hassan (L) speaks at the press as President Bill Clinton (C) and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres (R) look on during a press conference in the Rose Garden at the White House Friday. Israel and Jordan agreed to establish a joint economic committee, a harbinger of the peace agreement they are negotiating. — AFP photo