

Major promises fresh efforts to resume N Ireland peace talks

LONDON, Nov 2: Prime Minister John Major promised new proposals for Northern Ireland peace talks if Catholic and Protestant politicians would sit down to talk but ruled out including the IRA, saying that would "turn my stomach," reports Reuter.

Major, speaking on Monday after a particularly murderous week of violence in the British province's long conflict, said he would intensify efforts to restart the talks between the four main Northern Ireland parties that broke down a year ago.

"The government would be willing, if others would find it helpful, to bring forward proposals to provide a focus and direction for new talks once they begin," Major said.

The British Prime Minister

gave no details of the new proposals he might put forward to end more than two decades of political and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

Government sources said "concrete proposals" aimed at a substantive settlement in Northern Ireland, where more than 3,000 people have been killed since 1969, would only be revealed when all sides had agreed to resume negotiations.

Major again ruled out talking to the Irish Republican Army, which is fighting to end British rule in the province.

But he indicated that the cessation of violence by the Catholic and Protestant gangs who have killed 24 people in nine days could lead directly to settlement of the bloody conflict.

Forces of Hekmatyar, Rabbani locked in fierce fighting

KABUL, Nov 2: Fighting raged for a second day near the Afghan capital today as forces of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar advanced against troops led by a former defence minister and warlord loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani, reports Reuter.

Both sides reported casualties in one of the fiercest battles in 18 months of clashes between Hekmatyar's hardline Hezb-i-Islami forces and fighters of his arch-rival Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami Party but no details were available.

Hezb forces opened fire at dawn on Monday on positions of Jamiat-i-Islami fighters led by Ahmad Shah Masood, the former defence minister and a veteran military leader in the 14-year Afghan civil war, Jamiat spokesman Dr Abdullah said.

Hekmatyar's spokesman Qariburrahman Saeed, speaking in Pakistan's North West Frontier province capital, Peshawar, said air raids on Hezb bases by Jamiat fighter jets overnight had halted, but heavy fighting was raging on the ground.

"The fighting is still very severe," he said by telephone.

Hezb-i-Islami forces had advanced on the strategic town of Tagab, 12 miles (20km) north of Sarobi, where more than 100 people were killed in tribal-based battles between Hezb commanders and other parties last month.

Because Masood was no longer defence minister he was not directing the action but was closely following events, Abdullah said.

Masood stepped down last June as part of a compromise

deal under which Rabbani retained the post of president while Hekmatyar became prime minister. He is believed to remain the power behind the scenes and Rabbani's main source of support.

In the past few weeks, both Masood and Hekmatyar have moved large numbers of tanks as well as heavy artillery into the area amid signs the two rivals were preparing for a new showdown in their 18-month-old struggle for ultimate power in Kabul.

Officials and hospitals say more than 10,000 civilians have been killed in previous inconclusive rounds of fighting between the two parties in and around Kabul since the guerrillas took power from the former communist government in April 1992.

Off the Record

Priest to pay \$ 1.5 m for molesting woman

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas: A federal jury in Little Rock Monday ordered a Roman Catholic priest to pay dollars 1.5 million to a woman he allegedly molested more than a decade ago, reports Reuter.

The reverend Timothy Sugrue, 58, who is now the business manager of the Marist Order's Washington, DC, province and a member of the provincial council, was an air force chaplain during the 1970s at Eaker air force base in Blytheville, Arkansas.

The plaintiff, Kimberly Phillips, 23, was seven years old when the priest allegedly began fondling her. She said Sugrue had also enticed her to engage in sexual intercourse.

"I'm just glad the trial is over," said Phillips, whose sister, Ann-Marie Phillips, 24, testified that Sugrue also molested her. At the time of the alleged incidents, the Phillips sisters were military dependents at Eaker.

Man bites off ear lobes of wife, mother-in-law

JERUSALEM: Police arrested a Tel Aviv man Monday after he allegedly broke into the home of his estranged wife, argued with her and then bit off her ear lobe and an ear lobe of her 70-year-old mother, reports AP.

Both women were listed in moderate condition Monday at a local hospital.

Police Chief Dudu Mantzur told the Haaretz newspaper that there had been a lengthy dispute between the couple, but no prior reports of violence.

According to the newspaper, the 45-year-old suspect broke into his estranged wife's home in Petah Tikva, a suburb of Tel Aviv, after midnight Saturday. He was looking for his clothes, it said.

The man, who was not identified, began to fight with his wife, also 45. He bit her nose and then bit off one of her ear lobes. When he was through, he did the same to his 70-year-old mother-in-law, the newspaper reported, without identifying either woman.

"The horrible scene is one I won't forget for a while," Haaretz quoted a doctor at Hasharon hospital as saying. "I've been haunted by the sight of two women bleeding profusely for hours."

Tabacco heiress leaves \$ 1b to charity

TRENTON: Doris Duke, once the "richest girl in the world," left behind a 1.2 billion dollar estate, about 1 billion dollar of which her will says will go to a new charitable foundation named for her, reports AP.

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and Duke University are to receive 10 million dollars each, according to the will, which was filed in court Monday. The New York Zoological Park in the Bronx was to receive 1 million dollars.

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation will be given more than 1 billion dollars and is expected to provide funding for a variety of causes and foundations including those dealing with the environment and prevention of cruelty to children and animals.

The tobacco heiress died Thursday of progressive pulmonary edema, a buildup of fluid in the lungs that caused cardiac arrest. She was 80.

Duke was 12 when her father died in 1925 and left the bulk of his estate to his only child, which prompted the media to dub her the richest girl in the world.

Most of the Duke fortune came from the American Tobacco Co., the Duke Power Co and real estate investments.

Duke hoped her new foundation would rival the Ford, Rockefeller and MacArthur foundations for philanthropy, said William N Doyle Jr, an attorney for the estate.

ROK students attack US Cultural Centre: 30 held

SEOUL, Nov 2: Hundreds of radical students hurling rocks and firebombs attacked a US Cultural Centre in a provincial capital Tuesday, burning two vehicles and damaging at least five others, reports said, reports AP.

It was the most serious anti-American protest in recent months.

The attack, the second in a week at the cultural centre in Kwangju, 262 kilometres (163 miles) south of Seoul, marked the first anniversary of an American soldier's murder of a Korean prostitute.

US officials said about 500 students yelling "Yankee go home" stormed past riot police barricades and drove off police guards.

When protesters could not get inside the locked compound, they smashed the intercom on an outside gate, removed the sign for the centre and burned and destroyed a police bus and a police jeep, officials said.

KBS Television said 30 students were injured in fighting with police, but there were no reports of arrests. It said five other police vehicles were damaged.

There was no damage at the cultural centre, which houses a library and meeting rooms, and there were no Americans at the centre during the attack, US officials said.

Pvt. Kenneth L Markle, III, was sentenced to life in prison earlier this year for the murder of Yun Kum-I, a Korean prostitute, last Oct. 28. The 21-year-old Markle's second hearing for an appeal on the verdict was delayed last week until Nov. 25.

The murder and Markle's trial triggered anti-American protests among activists demanding an end to abuse of women and students who demand the withdrawal of 36,000 US troops stationed in Korea.

Last week radical students launched an anti-US week to commemorate Yun's death.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (R) welcomes CNN's President Ted Turner (L) and his wife actress Jane Fonda, to the Kremlin Monday. Ted Turner, who was in St Petersburg last week to make arrangements for next year's Good Will Games, was congratulated by the President for CNN's coverage of the siege of the Russian White House parliament. — AFP photo

Pope denounces 'excesses' of capitalism

PARIS, Nov 2: Pope John Paul II has denounced the "excesses" of capitalism and praised aspects of the communist system, press reports said today, reports AFP.

In an interview published in several western newspapers, the pontiff said that the serious social problems currently afflicting the world were partly caused by "degenerate forms of capitalism."

"There is no shortage of (capitalist) excesses," he added in the interview, which was granted to Polish-born Italian Euro-deputy Jas Gawronski last month.

Questioned on the war in former Yugoslavia, he said the Vatican's main concern had always been to prevent a fratricidal conflict and accused the European Community of being too indifferent and too ineffectual to resolve the (Balkan) problem.

BRIEFLY

Typhoon hits Philippines, 3 die

Typhoon Ira swept across the Philippines Tuesday, lashing the main island Luzon with strong winds and unleashing avalanches of volcanic debris from Mount Pinatubo, AP reports from Manila.

Two people were reported killed and six missing. Winds whipped up by the storm, the 26th to strike the island nation this year, weakened from a peak of 210 kilometers (130 miles) per hour as Ira roared into the South China Sea. Ira was moving west-northwest at 19 kph (11.4 mph), weather officials said.

Bus crash claims 8 in Australia

Eight people were killed when their bus crashed head-on into a lorry in the Australian state of Victoria yesterday, ambulance officers said, Reuter reports from Sydney.

"We have eight dead and more seriously injured," said the officer.

Ambulance officers said six people were seriously injured and helicopters were preparing to take them to hospital. "The rest, about 30, are the walking wounded," said ambulance officer Les Lambert.

Sudan lifts curfew

A curfew imposed 4 1/2 years ago when Sudanese leader Lt Sen Omar Hassan el-Bashir came to power was lifted Monday, AP reports from Khartoum.

Sudan television broadcast a statement Sunday by Khartoum's military command saying the midnight-to-dawn curfew would be lifted. The statement urged citizens to carry identification cards with them.

El-Bashir had said a month ago that the curfew would be ended. He made the statement shortly after his ruling party disbanded and he was named president.

Martin Cheses UN envoy to Djibouti

President Clinton has chosen Martin Cheses, a veteran foreign service officer, to be US ambassador to Djibouti, the White House announced Monday, Reuter reports from Washington.

Cheses who has been in the foreign service for nearly 30 years, has spent much of that time in Africa.

Spanish Nobel laureate Ochoa dead

Nobel prize-winning molecular biologist Severo Ochoa de Albornoz, a trailblazer in Spanish scientific research, has died of pneumonia, hospital officials said Tuesday. He was 88, AP reports from Madrid.

Ochoa shared the 1959 Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine with US biochemist Arthur Kornberg for his work with RNA acids, the basis of modern molecular biological research.

Ochoa had been hospitalized in Madrid after suffering a stroke six months ago. He died Monday night and will be buried in Lueca, on Spain's northern coast, where he was born September 24, 1905.

300 foreigners languishing in Malaysian jails

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 2: About 300 foreigners who have completed jail sentences were reported today to be languishing in Malaysian prisons because their countries refused to pay for their repatriation, reports Reuter.

Deputy Home (Interior) Minister Megat Ayub said some embassies had refused to comply with a Malaysian law requiring that a prisoner's home country pay for his expenses home, the new Straits Times reported.

"This leaves us with no choice but to keep them in the prisons until their missions agree to bear the expenses of sending them home," he said.

Move to bring peace to Somalia UN envoy starts meeting feuding clan leaders

MOGADISHU, Nov 2: US envoy Robert Oakley, on what one diplomat described as a virtual "mission impossible," began meeting feuding clan leaders today in an attempt to bring peace to Somalia, reports Reuter.

"Ambassador Oakley will be meeting with all sides in order to move the focus of the UN mission from the military back to the humanitarian and the political side," UN military spokesman in Somalia Major David Stockwell told Reuters.

UN sources said the US special envoy, who arrived in the bombed-out capital Mogadishu on Monday, would meet self-styled President Ali Mahdi Mohamed and leaders of some of Somalia's 15 major factions.

He also planned talks with officials of renegade warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed, Aideed's forces have mounted attacks on the UN peacekeeping force in Somalia and are blamed for the June 5 killing of 24 Pakistani peacekeepers.

In separate talks on Monday, Oakley met the UN special envoy to Somalia, retired US admiral Jonathan Howe.

Oakley has so far avoided the media and officials in Mogadishu are saying little about his mission which one diplomat described as "almost impossible."

Pravda reappears with defiant tone

MOSCOW, Nov 2: Pravda, the voice of the Soviet Union for decades, resumed publication Tuesday after a month-long ban with the headline "We're back" and a ringing declaration that it would never abandon socialism, reports AP.

But Pravda officials promised a "more civilized tone" in opposing President Boris Yeltsin's government, which banned the newspaper during a violent confrontation with hard-line lawmakers in early October.

"Let it be clear to everyone: We are not changing our convictions. We remain committed to the best traditions of Pravda, we remain a tribune of left-wing forces and advocates of socialist values."

Rebels get arms from Abkhazia, South Ossetia: Shevardnadze

TBILISI, Nov 2: Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze on Tuesday accused rebel forces of forging an alliance with "fanatics" in breakaway provinces of Georgia and southern Russia, reports AP.

In a TV interview, Shevardnadze said rebel forces loyal to ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and their allies were determined to destroy Georgia.

Government troops have been unable to put down the insurrection by Gamsakhurdia's forces and the threat the conflict could widen has increased as Russian troops have been drawn into the fighting as well.

Georgian government troops recaptured the key town of Senaki on Monday, forcing back rebel forces who had seized it earlier in the seaway battle for the railroad junction. More skirmishes were reported overnight.

Shevardnadze said the rebels were getting men and guns from Abkhazia and South Ossetia,



Eduard Shevardnadze are helping the rebels. The Confederation of Caucasian Peoples, which bands together small regions of the

Yeltsin moves to new Kremlin office

MOSCOW, Nov 2: President Boris Yeltsin moved out of his office Monday and set up shop in an adjacent Kremlin building to allow repairs that could take up to four years, a news agency reported, says AP.

Yeltsin had worked in his previous office since December 1991 when he evicted former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev from the suite as the Soviet Union was collapsing.

The building once housed the Senate in czarist times and was occupied by Soviet leaders after the October 1917 revolution.

The ITAR-Tass news agency said the buildings communications facilities hadn't been updated for 50 years. Restoration will take three to four years, it said.

Yeltsin's new office will be in the building that had housed the former Soviet Supreme Soviet, or parliament, which dissolved itself after the failed August 1991 coup.



A model presents a Chinese-style dress by Bryon Lars during the Spring/Summer '94 collection show by the designer in New York Monday. — AFP photo

15 killed in Russian cross-border attacks, claims Kabul

KABUL, Nov 2: Russian force in Tajikistan launched cross-border air strikes and fired artillery rounds into northeastern Afghanistan, killing 15 and wounding 30 in recent days, government radio claimed, reports AP.

The victims included women and children in several villages in Badakhshan and Kunduz provinces, on the Afghan side of the border with Tajikistan, radio Afghanistan reported Monday night.

No additional details were available and the report could not be verified independently.

Russian forces are based in Tajikistan, where they support the pro-communist government.

Iraqi dissident says atmosphere conducive to oust Saddam

LONDON, Nov 2: Military opposition to Saddam Hussein has intensified following an abortive coup in July and the atmosphere in Baghdad is now "much more conducive" to his overthrow, an Iraqi dissident said Monday, reports AP.

Saad Saleh Jabr, president of the Free Iraqi Council, said Saddam probably executed between 500 and 600 officers after the plot was betrayed, possibly by the United States which refused to participate.

"The officers have gone completely into high gear in opposition to Saddam because these officers that were executed have many brothers and cousins and relatives in top positions in the armed forces, and

it's like a vendetta now," Jabr said.

"I strongly believe... that the atmosphere inside Baghdad is much more conducive now for the overthrow of Saddam," Jabr said.

Since July, Saddam has forbidden all officers from leaving the country and put many under surveillance, he said.

"The measures he has taken recently are the harshest he has ever taken, which indicates he's got his back to the wall," he said.

Jabr confirmed a Sunday Times report that he arranged a meeting last November between US officials and Iraqi dissidents representing military officers who wanted American planes to

bomb two military camps to create chaos at the start of their coup.

Senior officers at the camps would then seize power, he said.

"The request came from the officers themselves," he said. "They did consider the Americans as a good ally and a good friend. We'd like to think that they still are."

Most of the officers in the plot were Sunni Muslims from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit or from Mosul, the northern city whose men are most prominent in the Iraqi officer corps, said Jabr, a US-educated Shiite Muslim.

Three days of secret talks in London were attended by

Jassem Moukhas, an influential lawyer from Tikrit, an Iraqi dissident living in Jordan, and US government officials, he said. "We assume they were CIA."

As a sign of good faith, the Iraqis named between 10 and 15 officers involved in the plot, Jabr said. The Americans said they wanted to check how well placed they were.

After months of silence, and a change of government in Washington, the Clinton administration finally responded in March saying it would not supply planes for the bombing mission, he said.

"We later found out through other sources that they were concerned any change in Iraq would affect adversely the

progress being made between the Arab states and Israel," Jabr said.

Jabr said he passed the message to the plotters and assumed they would scrap their plans. But they decided to go ahead with an assassination attempt in Baghdad on July 17. When Saddam attended a parade marking the anniversary of his Ba'ath Party's 1968 seizure of power.

On July 15, Col Saifan Al-Ghureiri, commander of a tank battalion of the elite Republican Guard, was summoned to "review plans" for the parade, and was arrested, Jabr said.

Over the next few days, about 1,200 officers and retired officers were arrested and inter-

Ex-dissidents in Russian Human Rights Commission

MOSCOW, Nov 2: President Boris Yeltsin has appointed several former dissidents and current officials to a new presidential human rights commission to uphold civil liberties in Russia, ITAR-Tass news agency said today, reports AP.

The 14-member commission includes Yelena Bonner, wife of the late Soviet dissident scientist Andrei Sakharov. Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and the Editor of the government daily Izvestia, Igor Golembiovski.

The commission will be chaired by Sergei Kovalyev, a former dissident writer who was imprisoned for 10 years.

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