

BRIEFLY

French troops arrive in Burundi:

Fifteen French soldiers arrived in the central African state of Burundi on Friday to help protect remnants of the government of President Melchior Ndadaye, murdered in a collapsed coup two weeks ago, Reuter reports from Bujumbura.

The arrival of the French forces is reassuring because it is an extra element in our protection, but it is also humiliating because we have to resort to foreigners to protect in our own country," said Communications Minister Jean Marie Ndeghayo.

Reporter Laurent Bisset was taken from his home Wednesday evening, when troops tried to break up guerilla strongholds in the Bacongo district of Brazzaville, the capital of this Central African nation.

His body was found the next morning, according to a statement issued by an association of state radio and television reporters, which demanded an investigation and threatened to go on strike.

The journalists, who did not say how Bisset died, blamed the opposition for the slaying.

Male frees 7 Lankans :

The Maldivian authorities has freed seven Shri Lankan Tamil coup plotters who were sentenced to death for trying to overthrow the government in 1988, Xinhua reports from Colombo.

According to a report reaching in Colombo yesterday from Male that the seven coup plotters were part of 68 members of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) detained on the Maldives for their role in the failed military coup.

The report said that they had been pardoned by the Maldivian authorities after representations by the Shri Lankan government.

Emergency in 2 Honduran towns :

Honduras declared a state of emergency Friday for the two northern towns hit by floods that have killed more than 170 people and left some 11,000 other homeless, Reuter reports from Tegucigalpa.

"We're declaring states of emergency in Tocoa and Bonito Orienta," President Rafael Callejas told reporters.

Officials said 130 of the more than 170 flood victims were in the towns of Tocoa and Bonito Orienta; located 110 miles (185 km) north of the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa.

Fire death toll now 47 in Vietnam :

At least 47 people were killed this week in a fire started by a petroleum pipeline leak in the northern province of Quang Ninh, provincial officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Hanoi.

Another 48 victims were hospitalised in serious condition, they said.

The fire erupted Tuesday night in a commune at Nam Khe, near the provincial capital of Uong Bi, some 100 kilometres east of Hanoi.

Jackson's condition improves:

Pop superstar Michael Jackson was recovering quietly in a Mexican hospital Friday after undergoing his second operation this week for a painful tooth infection, promoters said, Reuter reports from Mexico City.

"He can only take liquids but he's recuperating nicely and he'll probably be released in the afternoon," said Patricia Machorro, at the promotional agency Canto Nuevo handling the Mexican leg of Jackson's "Dangerous" world tour.

Jackson, who arrived in Mexico on October 24 after missing two concerts in Chile and Peru, has been forced to reschedule three of the four concerts he was scheduled to play in Mexico City because of tooth trouble.

US won't press Yeltsin to run for re-election

WASHINGTON, Nov 6: The United States will not press Russian President Yeltsin to run for re-election next June as he indicated he would during the recent political crisis in Moscow, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Friday, reports Reuter.

Christopher told the House Foreign Affairs Committee there are two important aspects to the timing of the presidential election in Russia.

"First, the constitution that has been proposed by President Yeltsin would provide that his term as president continues until 1996, which was his current present term," he said.

But the constitution also provides that the new parliament that is due to be elected December 12 is authorised and permitted to establish an earlier date for the presidential election if it decides it wants to, he added.

"It's my judgement that that's a healthy way to have it, that President Yeltsin has indicated his willingness to stand again next June if the parliament wants him to do so," he said.

Fierce fighting on in Afghanistan

BAGRAM, Afghanistan, Nov 6: The president's troops claimed Friday that they had dislodged guerrillas from this strategic region, but rockets crashed down on a government air base in a fifth straight day of fierce fighting, reports AP.

President Burhanuddin Rabbani's forces say they have taken control of the Tagab district, 60 kilometres (40 miles) to the northeast of Kabul, the capital.

But Rabbani's commanders at the air base in Bagram said the fighting was still too intense to allow them to take a journalist several kilometres (miles) forward to the front line.

"The situation is still unsettled. We will send you when it's calm," said Bismillah Khan, the commander of the air base. Khan said that Prime



Princess Diana presents ten-year-old Lucy Dalmedo with a Care in Crisis Award Friday in London. The Princess, Patron of the Red Cross Youth, was at a lunch to present the six outstanding Care in Crisis national nominees. —AFP photo

7 lakh Burundis flee ethnic violence

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 6: The number of refugees fleeing ethnic violence in Burundi has now reached 709,000, but as yet there has been no response to the recent appeal for aid to help them, made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), reports AP.

UNHCR spokesperson Sylvia Foa recalled November 5 that the UNHCR seeks \$ 17 million to cover the emergency needs of the refugees, who are crowded in makeshift camps in three neighbouring countries. Sanitation is a severe problem at the camps and some deaths from dysentery have been reported.

The UNHCR has nearly exhausted its own emergency fund in providing \$ 4.5 million for the refugees since the crisis began late last month.

More than 375,000 refugees have streamed into southern Rwanda, 295,000 into northwestern Tanzania, and 39,000 into Zaire since fighting broke out between Burundi's rival Hutu and Tutsi tribes after last month's failed coup. President Melchior Ndadaye, the country's first Hutu president, was murdered during the coup attempt, which was staged by the largely Tutsi army.

Bosnian govt disbands Croat militia unit in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Nov 6: The Muslim led Bosnian government ordered the dissolution of Sarajevo's independent Croat militia force today, and security forces moved in to seal off its headquarters, reports Reuter.

Sarajevo state radio said the decision to disband the Croat defence council (HVO) unit, which was helping defend the city against besieging Sarajevo, was made because separatist Croat forces were fighting the Bosnian army elsewhere in Bosnia.

The small HVO unit of Sarajevo Croats remained part of the city's joint defence throughout Bosnia's 19-month-old war. But tensions with Muslims rose in recent months when the government army tried to subordinate the

HVO under its command. The decision has been made to disband the HVO headquarters and to create a new Bosnian army first corps brigade from it. Restrictions on movement have been imposed in part of the city," Sarajevo radio's morning newscast said.

It described the Croat unit's dissolution as part of an army and military police crackdown on organised black market crime in the capital, which has resulted in shootouts and the roundup of more than 140 renegade soldiers in the past 10 days. But Bosnian Croat military officers deny the charges, saying the army no longer can tolerate a separate Croat unit.

The radio said major reasons for scrapping the HVO unit were that Croat forces were fighting Muslims elsewhere in Bosnia, Sarajevo's HVO force had often refused orders from the Bosnian first corps, some HVO soldiers were suspected gangsters, and parts of the HVO unit had "cooperated with the aggressor (Serbs)" around Sarajevo.

AFP adds: United Nations investigators have discovered 98 graveyards in former Yugoslavia, a senior UN envoy disclosed here Thursday.

William Ferrick, a member of the UN commission investigating war crimes in ex-Yugoslavia, told a news briefing the figure was probably not definitive.

Colonel Dominic McAlea of Canada, head of a special team established by the commission, meanwhile said there was evidence that war crimes had been committed by the federal Yugoslav army during the siege of the Croatian city of Dubrovnik between October 1991 and December 1992.

He cited what he said had been the deliberate destruction of buildings and historical and cultural monuments, actions that are classified as war crimes by the United Nations.

Local police are investigating 200 former members of the Yugoslav army who are suspected of having taken part in the destruction of historical sites, he added.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Friday that any US deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina would be unlikely without a vote of Congress.

Moscow fears riots on Bolshevik Day

MOSCOW, Nov 6: Russia's interior minister warned that Communists and other hard-liners might stage violent protests to mark Sunday's Revolution Day, and Moscow police held a special exercise to prepare for possible riots, reports AP.

"We have information about possible attempts to destabilise the situation in Moscow and other cities," Viktor Yerin told the ITAR-Tass news agency on Saturday.

Yerin said without elaboration that police will use "adequate measures" to contain any illegal demonstrations and protests threatening public

safety. The Moscow City government has banned requests by several Communist groups to celebrate Sunday's 76th anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution with rallies and mass gatherings.

The Russian Communist Party later said it would not violate the ban. But some hard-line leaders said they would hold rallies regardless of the ban, or that they could not be held responsible for their followers if these decide to demonstrate.

The Russian Communist Party was banned by President Boris Yeltsin along with several other hard-line groups after the president used tanks on October 4 to crush his armed political opponents. The ban on the party was lifted soon after. More than 180 died in the conflicts, which centred on the White House, Russia's parliament building.

Meanwhile Saturday, hundreds of Moscow police officers, Interior Ministry troops and riot police squads known as OMON practiced riot dispersal near the city's Luzhniki Stadium.

The officers were swinging their batons, attempting to cut an imaginary crowd into small groups. Others were firing

from tear gas grenade launchers. The exercise also involved several armoured personnel carriers and the new Russian-made water cannons called Lavina-M, witnesses said.

All vacations were cancelled at the Defence Ministry academy, the Interior Ministry academy and Moscow police schools, and the students there were put on alert, the newspaper Moskowsky Kom-somolets reported.

It said, however, that the students and their teachers did not believe that "anything serious" might happen in Moscow after the October 3-4 violence.

Britain considers dumping N-waste in Atlantic

LONDON, Nov 6: Britain is considering dumping the reactors from its old nuclear submarines in the Atlantic, a British television programme said on Friday, reports Reuter.

A 10-year international moratorium on dumping low-level radioactive nuclear waste at sea has just expired and signatory nations will meet in London next week to consider making the ban permanent.

Channel 4 television said: "The government is considering dumping the reactors from seven nuclear submarines in the Atlantic Ocean ... the government has offered the navy no alternative ways of disposing of its redundant submarines."

A Defence Ministry spokesman, questioned about the report, said the government was reviewing its policy on the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines.

The situation is that our policy is under consideration. There is no firm decision but we are reviewing the policy," he told Reuter. He said the radioactive fuel rods were now removed from disused nuclear submarines and taken to the Sellafield Nuclear Reprocessing Plant in northwest England, while the remaining hull was kept a float and carefully monitored.

A marine biologist for the environmentalist organisation Greenpeace, Dr Paul Johnston, told the television programme that dumping radioactive waste at sea was extremely risky and could easily contaminate marine life.

"It would be a triumph of hope over experience if radioactivity did not work its way back into the food chain," he said. "There is very definitely a risk. How great that risk is we simply can't evaluate."

The United States called earlier this week for a global ban on the deliberate dumping at sea of low-level radioactive waste.

An international dispute over nuclear waste erupted two weeks ago when Russian tankers dumped radioactive waste in the sea of Japan, violating the London dumping convention which took effect in 1972.

Off the Record

Suha says Arafat still a bachelor

JERUSALEM: PLO leader Yasser Arafat's wife said in an interview broadcast on Israel Television on Friday night that she hopes to live in Jerusalem, reports Reuter.

Asked by Channel 2 television whether she and her husband would move to Jericho during Palestinian self-rule, Suha Arafat said: "for the first step, I'm obliged... but may be later, I hope we will be living in Jerusalem or in Ramallah."

The 29-year-old researcher was born in the occupied West Bank town of Ramallah and lived in Jerusalem until she was 18.

Suha Arafat, speaking from a Paris hotel suite, said she and her 64-year-old husband had very different personalities.

"He is still a bachelor. He has his own habits. He has his own room. He is very meticulous, she said. "We have two different personalities. He is Leo, I am Cancer."

She again denied rumours she was expecting Arafat's baby. "I hope that will have a baby but till now it's not true."

Singer's obscene stunt

VANCOUVER (British Columbia): The lead singer of the rock group Blind Melon, Shannon Hoon, publicly apologised Friday for stripping and urinating during a concert here last week, reports Reuter.

Hoon was arrested and charged with indecent behaviour after the incident, which provoked complaints from concert goers.

"I got caught up in the celebration. By no means was it my intention to offend the city of Vancouver or anyone at the show," Hoon said in a statement released by Blind Melon's record label.

The band, which has a bestselling album and appears nude on the cover of the current issue of Rolling Stone magazine, agreed to play another concert in Vancouver in December and donate part of their fee to charity.

Hoon, who was performing Sunday in Vancouver, took his clothes off, urinated off the stage and then shouted obscenities at police when they tried to arrest him, a police spokesman said.

Blind Melon's hit song "No Rain" has gained a cult following in the United States for its video, which features a young girl tap-dancing in a bumblebee costume.

Pigs cause traffic jam for four hours

ZARAGOZA (Spain): Some 50 pigs brought traffic to a standstill for four hours in the centre of the northern Spanish city of Zaragoza yesterday, reports Reuter.

The pigs were released in one of the city's main avenues by pig farmers protesting at "The persistent neglect by national and regional authorities of this production sector."

Man to die for serial murders

SAN DIEGO: A man was sentenced to death for the 1990 murders of six women, most of them stabbed with their own kitchen knives, reports AP.

Cleophus Prince Jr, 26, was sentenced Friday by Judge Charles R Hayes, who followed a jury's recommendation. Prince was convicted this year of six counts of first-degree murder and other charges including rape, burglary and attempted burglary.

He was arrested in early 1991 in his hometown of Birmingham, Ala, where he had gone to visit his family after his discharge from the Navy.

At sentencing, Prince angrily proclaimed his innocence to the judge and families of the victims, who had all lived in San Diego. "I'd like to say to all the families, I did not kill any (of your) daughters," Prince said. He said he was convicted because he is black. The victims were white.

Arafat in Yemen to discuss peace deal

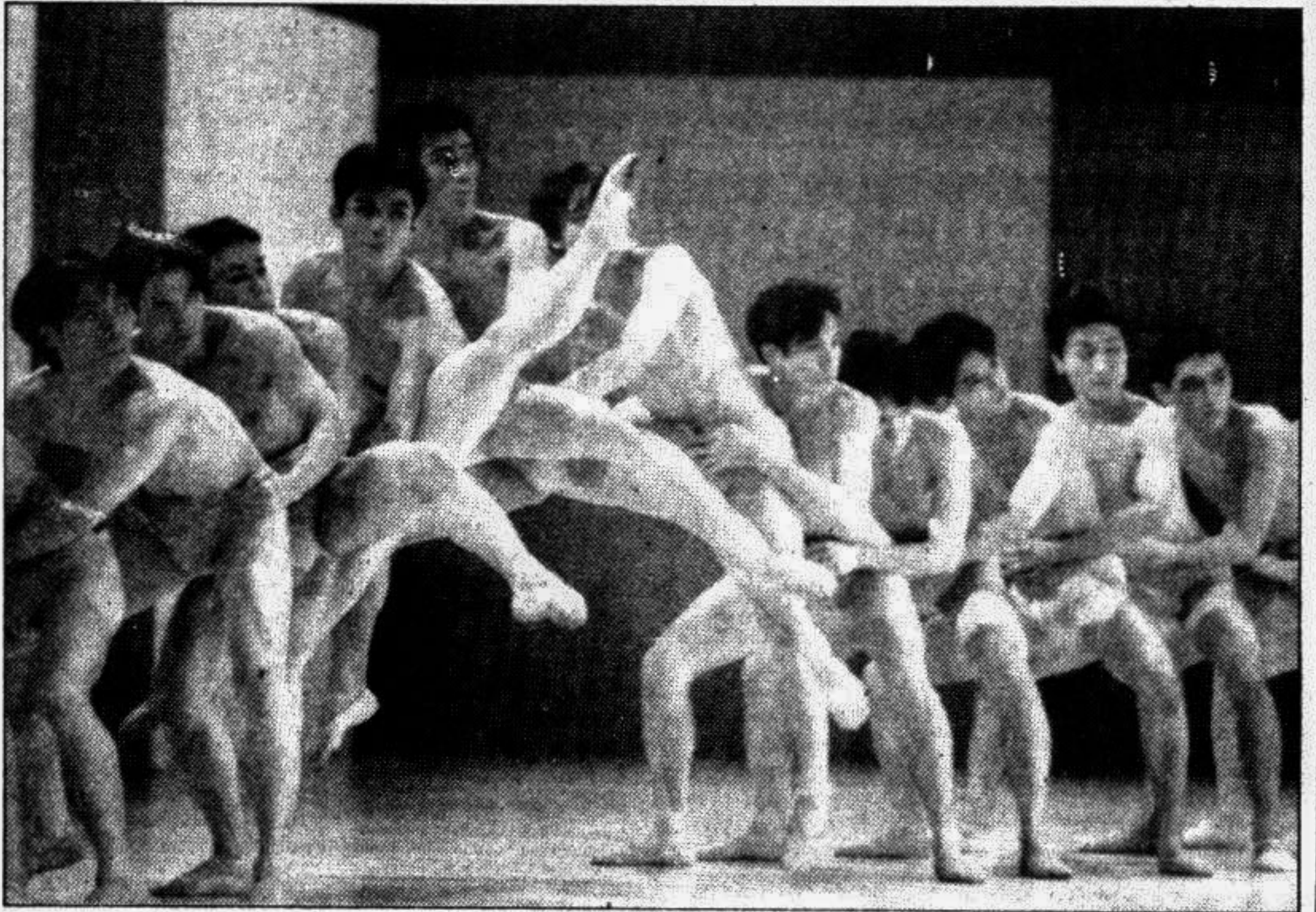
SANAA, Nov 6: PLO leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Yemen on Friday night for talks on the Middle East peace process and deadlocked PLO-Israeli negotiations, reports Reuter.

Arafat told reporters in Sanaa the PLO suspended the talks with Israel "to review the situation in general because we want a precise and accurate implementation" of the PLO-Israeli peace accord signed in Washington in September.

Arafat had earlier held talks with Egyptian presidential adviser Osama Baz at Cairo airport.

Official sources said Baz briefed Arafat on the outcome of Egypt's talks with Israel on relaunching the talks suspended this week over the number of troops Israel insisted on maintaining in the Gaza strip.

Arafat and PLO officials refused to say if they had agreed to resume the talk. Baz said Arafat would return to Cairo in two days to meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.



Dancers of the Tokyo Ballet interpret 'M', dedicated to Yukio Mishima, an arrangement by Maurice Bejart with a score by Japanese composer Toshiro Mayuzumi, on Friday at Opera Garnier in Paris. —AFP photo

Asian arms producers seeking foothold in ME market

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Nov 6: China and other Asian arms producers are seeking a foothold in the lucrative Middle East market, long dominated by the United States and its western allies, regional experts said, reports AP.

China, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore will display aircraft and related technology alongside the world's arms giants in an air show opening Sunday in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"It is not a matter of whether they can compete with the United States and other major producers. These countries are exhibiting something different," a Gulf-based military expert said.

Pakistan, a new arms exporter eyeing the growing regional market, is displaying its latest version of the Mushshak jet trainer, which has been tested by the UAE air force, according to organisers of the November 7-11 show in Dubai.

Pakistan's Aeronautical Complex produces the Shahbaz primary trainer which is an updated version of the Mushshak, originally designed by Sweden.

More than 250 Mushshaks have been built in Pakistan, according to the London-based Fairs and Exhibitions Organisation.

"Pakistan boasts that the new Shahbaz aircraft could meet desert conditions with its updated Turbo engine, improved instruments and air conditioning," Fairs and Exhibitions said in a statement Friday.

Some 450 companies from the United States, France, Britain, Russia, Italy, and South Africa as well as 30 other countries are participating in the show, the third largest in the world.

Some 80 types of military and civilian aircraft will be exhibited and nearly 20,000 delegates are expected to attend. China is displaying its Karakoram K-8 jet trainer, a joint venture with Pakistan. The first 14 K-8s are in production and will enter into service in China and Pakistan this year.

Malaysia and Singapore will exhibit advanced air-related technology while the former will also display its cn-235, a multi purpose patrol plane produced jointly with Spain's firm Casa. Fair organisers said over 135 orders have been placed for the aircraft, including seven from the UAE.

Organisers had said they expected major deals to be announced at the show, but it was not clear whether they would involve products from Asian countries. Officials however said the fair, the third to be held in Dubai, would showcase the latest in the arms industry.

The advanced technology which will go on exhibit could enable the Gulf states and other countries to make contacts with the participating companies, said Khaled Ibn Sulayem, chairman of the Dubai Tourism and Trade Board.

Defence ministers from 15 countries are expected at the show. The United States will

Russian Defence Minister to visit China

BEIJING, Nov 6: The first Russian Defence Minister to visit China since the fall of the Soviet Union will arrive in Beijing on Monday for official talks, Russian diplomats said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Pavel Grachev's visit would probably culminate in the signing of a cooperation agreement, they said.

"Both sides will discuss a lot of problems and may be they expect to sign an agreement of cooperation between the two ministries of defence, one said