

BRIEFLY

China to build anti-AIDS centres: China will boost testing for AIDS by building its first two national anti-AIDS centres in a bid to control the disease which is spreading in the country, the health ministry announced yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

The two centres, situated in Guangdong and Yunnan provinces, will test for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the ministry told the China Daily newspaper.

Of the two million Chinese tested for AIDS so far, 1106 people were found seropositive. Most were from the south where drug taking and prostitution are on the increase.

Saudi aid for Bosnian Muslims: Saudi Arabia will send aid worth 13.3 million dollars to Muslims in the war torn former Yugoslavia republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Riyadh government decided on Monday. Tanjug reports from Belgrade.

Saudi news agency SPA said that the Saudi government has also offered to bring around 50 wounded Muslims to the country and provide hospital care for them.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia had presented 50 million riyals (13.3 million dollars) to Bosnian Muslims in July this year.

Quake hits Montreal: An earthquake measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale rocked the Montreal area before dawn Tuesday and was felt as far away as northern Vermont and upstate New York, officials said. No injuries were reported, AP says from Montreal.

The quake's epicenter was 15 miles (24 km) south-southeast of Montreal, awakening some Montreal residents and rattling glasses and other items on shelves, said Pat Jorgenson, spokeswoman for the US Geological Survey's National Earthquake Information Center.

The quake, which struck at 4:32 am (0932 GMT) occurred along an active seismic zone that registers about one tremor a year, she said.

Palestinian student killed: Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian student and wounded several others at a West Bank school today, Palestinian sources said, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

Students had first pelted troops with stones at the al Hashemiyeh High School in the town of El Bireh, the sources said.

Seventeen-year-old Rami Izzat al-Ghazawi died from a bullet in his side.

Maoists kill 6 Peruvian troops: Shining Path rebels killed six soldiers and two government employees in separate attacks around the country, police and the military said Monday, reports AP from Lima.

Rebels on Saturday shot dead the lieutenant governor and a state schoolteacher in the Andean town of Huayllapampa, 135 miles (220 kilometers) north of Lima, police said.

Bosnia to sue Britain for abetting 'genocide'

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 16: Bosnia and Herzegovina will sue Britain in the world court for violating the convention against genocide by opposing lifting of arms embargo against it, this preventing it from defending itself, the Bosnian ambassador to the United Nations has said, reports PTI.

Bosnia would also name and implicate other members of the council who have supported this 'illegal' arms embargo as aiders and abettors of genocide.

but it will not sue them for the moment, he said.

"The United Kingdom has aided and abetted the ongoing genocide against the people and state of Bosnia and Herzegovina by actively opposing all the efforts by other states to lift this illegal arms embargo," ambassador Muhamed Sacirbey charged at a news conference here yesterday.

He said Bosnia will also charge that Britain as a permanent member of the council has

'illegal' imposed and maintained embargo against his country in violation of article 51 of the United Nations charter which give the member states the right to self defence.

Meanwhile, an international tribunal set up to prosecute war crimes in the former Yugoslavia will be inaugurated here Wednesday but even before holding its first meeting the panel appears headed to a shaky start.

Diplomatic sources said the

tribunal's 32 million dollar budget has yet to be officially approved by the UN and its 350 investigators are nowhere to be seen.

The 12 magistrates appointed to the tribunal by the UN General Assembly also have not been allocated any space to carry out their duties.

The sources added that the tribunal's investigations may also be transferred temporarily to staff employees at the UN headquarters in New York. Dutch Foreign Minister Pieter Koopmans told reporters recently that it would take up to six months before the tribunal, the first of its kind to be convened since the end of World War II, is fully operational.

But administrative obstacles aside, the tribunal's biggest challenge will be in fulfilling its task of bringing war criminals in the former Yugoslavia to trial, a virtually unachievable goal, according to legal experts.

The tribunal cannot try a case without the person charged being present and few doubt that potential defendants such as Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic or Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic would ever be dragged into the courtroom.

Koopmans last week told reporters that even if defendants don't appear before the court "it is extremely important that those responsible for war crimes be charged as such and extradition requests be filed."

Wednesday's inaugural gathering will be held in the same building that houses the UN's International Court of Justice and the permanent court of arbitration.



Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (C) prays late Sunday at a graveyard in Breza, 50 km northwest of Sarajevo and 5 kms south of Vares, recently seized from Bosnian-Croat forces. — AFP photo

NATO, ex-Warsaw Pact states destroy 17000 heavy weapons

VIENNA, Nov 16: More 17,000 heavy weapons have been destroyed by NATO and ex-Warsaw Pact countries since the treaty on the reduction of Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) came into effect 16 months ago, western officials said here Monday, reports AFP.

At the end of the first phase of reduction, at midnight Tuesday, each of the 32 signatory states should have reduced its conventional weapons armory — tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery, fighter aircraft and helicopter gunships — by 25 per cent, in relation to the maximum levels defined by the treaty.

Reduction can be through destruction or conversion to non-military use.

The results have been positive so far, with nearly all nations meeting or exceeding these levels, western diplomatic sources said.

During the same 16-month period, more than 1,000 inspections were carried out: 700 by the western group and 312 by the eastern group.

More than 5,700 conventional weapons were destroyed in the west and more than 11,500 in the east, including 6,700 for the ex-Soviet nations. Russia eliminated 5,000 weapons and Ukraine 1,400.

Although Russia exceeded its obligations in several categories, including armoured vehicles, there is some doubt as to whether it has been able to destroy or convert the nearly 900 tanks required during the first phase.

Russia was still about 200 tanks short of that goal a few weeks ago, but has made a commitment to fulfil its obligations, a western diplomat said.

In Bonn, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said Monday that Germany has so far scrapped 4,100 of its heavy weapons in line with the CFE treaty.

He said Germany was well ahead of its obligations under the treaty, as it has already gotten rid of 40 per cent of the 10,300 arms it was required to destroy by 1995, well above the 25 per cent first-phase target.

In absolute terms Germany, having taken over the arsenal of former East Germany, has to eliminate more weapons than any of the other signatories of the treaty except Russia. It must scrap 2,800 tanks, 5,500 armoured vehicles, some 1,900 heavy guns and 118 combat aircraft.

US offers F-15E jets to Israel

WASHINGTON, Nov 16: The United States has offered 20 modified F-15E attack jets to Israel for about 1.8 billion dollars but Israel has not said whether it will buy the warplanes, US defence officials said Monday, reports Reuters.

The officials, who asked not to be identified, said Israel was apparently still deciding whether to buy a new version of the sophisticated F-15E ground attack jet made by McDonnell Douglas Corp, additional F-16 jets made by Lockheed Corp or the F/A-18, also made by McDonnell Douglas.

If Israel buys the F-15E, considered the world's most advanced ground attack jet, it would be the first foreign country allowed to do so by the United States.

US urges UN to suspend actions against Aideed

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 16: The United States urged the UN Security Council Monday to "suspend all actions" against Somali militia leader Mohamed Farah Aideed, diplomatic sources said, reports AFP.

But Washington also urged the creation of a commission to investigate fatal attacks on UN personnel in Somalia.

Twenty-four Pakistanis were killed in a June 5 attack on UN peacekeepers, and 18 US troops died in a clash October 3.

Members of the investigative commission would be chosen by

Japan to donate medical equipment to Belarus

TOKYO, Nov 16: Japan will donate medical equipment worth about one million US dollars to Belarus to help treat victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, reports Reuters.

The former Soviet republic requested the advanced diagnostic equipment including endoscopes and scanners, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said today.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in consultation with the UN Security Council, according to a draft resolution obtained by AFP.

The resolution may be adopted this week after debate, a western diplomat said.

But while awaiting the creation of such a commission, and its investigation into the attacks, the UN Security Council is expected to ask UN military commanders to "suspend all actions against those individuals implicated" in the attacks.

If passed, the resolution will not apply to Somalis already detained by UN peacekeepers. A total of 740 have been arrested and 698 released, Boutros-Ghali said in report to the Security Council.

A decision is expected soon on the remaining 42.

An earlier resolution provided for the arrest and trial of those responsible for the attack on the Pakistanis, giving UN troops the green light to go hunting for Aideed.

But after the October 3 clash, the United States decided it would withdraw all its troops by March 31.

Hezbollah guerillas attack SLA position, capture 12

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon, Nov 16: Shi'ite Muslim guerillas Tuesday launched their heaviest assault on Israel's "security zone" since the signing of the Israel-PLO peace accord, security sources said, reports AP.

The guerillas of Hezbollah, or Party of God, attacked and briefly held a hilltop position of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army militia, wounding two militiamen and capturing 12, said the sources. One Hezbollah attacker was killed.

They also fired Katyusha rockets that landed metres (yards) short of the Israeli border, wounding two Israeli soldiers, said the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Hezbollah, backed by Iran and trying to wreck the September 13 peace accord, took responsibility for the attack.

Israeli and SLA artillery gunners retaliated with an artillery barrage on 10 Shi'ite villages facing the security zone in south Lebanon. Helicopter gunships also strafed suspected

guerilla trails in nearby olive groves.

The violence came a day after the announcement that US Secretary of State Warren Christopher will visit the Middle East next month to try to revive Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Israel accused Syria, its most implacable Arab foe, of ordering the escalation in South Lebanon, the only active Arab-Israeli war front.

"There is no doubt that the Syrians are behind this," Israel's deputy defense minister, Mordechai Gur, told Radio. "The proportions of the operation and its timing are not leaving any doubt in my heart that they are behind this."

Nonetheless, Gur indicated Israel's retaliation would be limited, saying the response would have been different had rockets fallen inside Israel.

"The Syrians know more or less what are Israel's military parameters, and they are making every effort not to cross the line in order not to engage in a direct confrontation," he said.

None of Syria's 40,000 troops in Lebanon are deployed in the area of South Lebanon where Tuesday's violence occurred.

Although Hezbollah attacked first, Lebanese Defense Minister Mohsen Dalloul accused Israel of escalating hostilities in South Lebanon to obstruct the Middle East peace process.

"Whenever Israel feels there is a potential breakthrough or there are positive moves toward a just peace, it seeks to heighten tensions of the South Lebanon front so that those moves are put on a hot burner," Dalloul said in a radio statement.

After the Katyusha attack, alarm sirens wailed across northern Israel, sending thousands of residents rushing to bomb shelters, the sources added.

It was the first Katyusha salvo to come so close to Israel's frontier since its seven-day air, artillery and naval blitz against Hezbollah and radical Palestinian guerillas last July.

Russia expels DPRK diplomat

MOSCOW, Nov 16: A North Korean diplomat was expelled from Russia after he "nearly" succeeded in taking a group of Russian scientists to Pyongyang to work on weapons programme, a Security Ministry official said Tuesday, reports AP.

Maj Gen Nam Gae Wok, a North Korean diplomat who organised the operation, had been declared persona non grata and expelled from Russia, Alexei Kandaurov said. He gave no dates.

"This is the first case when a foreign diplomat has been asked to leave the country for an attempted recruitment of Russian scientists," he said.

North Korea, Iraq and several other countries have reportedly sought to hire Russian nuclear scientists to help develop weapons, but there has been no confirmation if any scientists have been employed. North Korea is suspected of making a major drive to build a nuclear weapon.

A spokesman for the North Korean embassy in Moscow confirmed the official left Russia "long ago" but denied he was engaged in unlawful activities.

Tigers shell Pooneryn camp

COLOMBO, Nov 16: Tamil Tiger guerillas Tuesday shelled a military camp re-captured by security forces after a battle that left over 1,000 people dead, security sources said, reports AFP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) used a 120-mm artillery gun on the Pooneryn army camp from where they captured the heavy weapon during a three-day battle last week, the sources said.

"Several soldiers manning bunkers at Pooneryn were injured. But the shells did not cause much damage because of the sandy terrain," the source said.

Meanwhile, the air force kept bombing suspected LTTE targets in the rebel-held northern Jaffna peninsula and the northern part of mainland Sri Lanka where Tigers are known to have bases.

Off the Record

'Charles' adultery damages royal family's reputation

LONDON: British tabloid readers generally think Prince Charles is unfit to be their king because of his broken marriage and alleged adultery, according to a newspaper poll published on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

The survey of 20,000 people who responded to a questionnaire published in the Sun newspaper revealed a strong body of anti-Charles opinion and firm support for his estranged wife, Princess Diana.

Three in five people, or around 65 per cent, thought the 45-year-old heir apparent should renounce the throne and let his son William succeed Queen Elizabeth, according to the survey results published in Tuesday's Sun.

Around 69 per cent said his alleged affairs with Brigadier's wife Camilla Parker Bowles made him unfit to be king and 71 per cent said he had damaged the royal family's reputation.

Seventy-six per cent held Charles solely to blame for the formal separation from Princess Diana last December.

Diana who gets more positive coverage in the Sun than her high-brown husband, won wide support. Sixty-one per cent wanted her to be queen consort despite her broken marriage.

"We were absolutely flabbergasted by the response. A clear picture emerges of what people think of Prince Charles," said the Sun's deputy editor Stuart Higgins.

Accidental expenses are high!

BANGKOK: A teacher who used a real pistol to start a primary school running race accidentally shot a 6-year-old boy to death Tuesday, The Nation news radio reported, says AP.

The 38-caliber pistol went off as the teacher waved it to motion the students to come back after a false start, the broadcast said.

The same bullet also injured another student, a girl, it added.

The broadcast said police were hunting the teacher, who filed the scene.

The pistols ordinarily used to signal the start of a race do not shoot bullets.

Punishment for having sex with a minor

MINEOLA: A 37-year-old auto mechanic, whose torrid affair with a 16-year-old girl nearly killed his wife, was sentenced to six months in jail for having sex with a minor, reports AP.

Joey Buttafuoco at first denied and then finally admitted having an affair with the underage Amy Fisher. Despite Monday's sentence, he could be out of jail in four months. Fisher is serving five-to-15 years for shooting Mrs. Buttafuoco.

Last week, Mrs. Buttafuoco publicly pleaded that her husband be spared prison.

The case burst into the headlines in May 1992, when Fisher, bent on clearing the way for her life with Buttafuoco, rang the Buttafuoco's front door bell and shot Mrs. Buttafuoco.

Russian cargo plane with 17 crew crashes

NICOSIA, Nov 16: A Russian cargo plane with 17 crew on board crashed in the suburbs of the southern Iranian city of Kerman, the Iranian news agency said today, reports Reuters.

There was no immediate word of the fate of the people aboard the Antonov-124 which crashed at 7:04 PM (1534 GMT) on Monday, IRNA said.

IRNA quoted the head of Kerman Airport, B Khorbak as saying the giant plane apparently was in trouble before the crash. He said it had gone down "despite receiving a positive answer for emergency landing

Separate deals with Israel won't bring peace: Syria

DAMASCUS, Nov 16: Syria renewed its rejection of secret talks with Israel today, saying unilateral deals with the Jewish state could not bring peace to the Middle East, reports Reuters.

Abdullah Al-Ahmar, a top official of President Hafez Al-Assad's Baath Party, wrote in the party newspaper that Israel was trying to block the peace process by making separate agreements with Arab countries.

He also launched the harshest Syrian criticism to date of Israel's separate peace with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, saying it served Israel's interests while the Palestinians gained nothing.

"Syria does not work in darkness and its greatest leader Hafez Al-Assad has said publicly that none of us abandons an inch of the Arab land or any of the Arabs' rights," Al-Ahmar, the party's assistant secretary general, wrote on the 23rd anniversary of the coup which brought Assad to power.

"Despite all the confusion engulfing the peace process due to the Gaza - Jericho plan, Syria is still committed to its position supporting a just and comprehensive peace," he wrote, referring to the PLO-Israel deal which provides for limited Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said in a US television interview on Monday that Syria had turned down an Israeli offer to conduct secret negotiations.

Syria's official press said recently that Damascus had turned down several "offers and temptations" to hold secret talks with Israel. Damascus has insisted on holding talks within the framework of the US brokered Middle East peace process which opened in Madrid in 1991.

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Miss France, Veronique de la Cruz (L), Miss Greece, Maria Katsiki (C) and Miss India, Karminder Kaur-Virk (R), pose for a photographer on National Costume Day during the Miss World Contest in South Africa Sunday. The finals are set for November 27. — AFP photo

Christopher to mediate differences over PLO-Israeli accord

WASHINGTON, Nov 16: Secretary of State Warren Christopher will go to the Middle East next month to try to mediate differences over a fragile agreement to launch Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho, reports AP.

The celebrated accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation is in peril of unraveling over Palestinian attacks on Jewish residents of the West Bank and over implementation problems.

Christopher also will try to finalise a separate accord between Israel and Jordan and to break an impasse between Israel and Syria over the Golan Heights.

A senior US official said that President Clinton sent a message Monday to Syrian leader Hafez Assad saying that the United States is interested in seeing a settlement of Mideast issues on all fronts. The message was delivered by Ambassador Christopher Ross to Syria's foreign minister, Farouk Shara, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Christopher's complex mission could determine the course of Middle East peacemaking and test the Clinton administration's skill on a foreign policy front on which it claims success.

Meanwhile, Defence Secretary Les Aspin and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin discussed a potential 1.8 billion dollar sale of about 20 F-15 long-range fighters to Israel, Pentagon officials said Monday.

The two men indicated that the question of long-term payments remained unresolved, but that agreement could be reached by the end of the week.

The State Department spokesman, Michael McCurry, announced Christopher's plan to go to the Middle East. Officials said the trip probably would be scheduled for early December, just before the December 13 deadline for Israel and the PLO to complete arrangements for Palestinian self-

rule in Gaza and Jericho. Christopher is to fly to Rome November 29 for a meeting with foreign ministers of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and to go from there to a North Atlantic Council meeting in Brussels, Belgium.

The key issue on the two stops is the conflict in Bosnia and the devastating impact it is having on civilians as winter approaches.

The Israel-PLO agreement is designed to turn over administrative control of Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho to Palestinians as an experiment in coexistence with the Jewish state.

It was worked out in secret, with the assistance of Norway, and then seized on by President Clinton and Christopher as an accomplishment they would like to extend to other fronts in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

However, peace talks have not been resumed in Washington, and Israeli and PLO negotiators are squabbling over the boundaries of Jericho, whether the Palestinians should control a highway between the West Bank city and Gaza and over the size and scope of the Israeli security force that will protect some 3,000 Jewish residents of Gaza.

On top of that, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah

faction has been implicated in the slaying of a Jewish settler.

Arafat had renounced terrorism against the Jewish state and the slaying initially was attributed to Hamas, a rival fundamentalist group. Arafat condemned the killing Saturday but Israeli cabinet ministers said the statement was insufficient.

Polls show that for the first time a majority of Israelis oppose the deal with the PLO, which included Israeli recognition of Arafat's organisation and support for worldwide assistance that has mounted to pledges of nearly 2 billion dollars.