AMMAN, Nov 17: Disgruntled PLO officials sent their leader Yasser Arafat demands for reform on Tuesday, reports

They said his leadership style and the organisation's weak peace talks performance risked losing all for Pales-

Haider Abdel Shafi, chief Palestinian negotiator in Middle East peace talks with Israel,

Angolan peace talks continue

LUSAKA, Nov 17: Security was tightened Wednesday around Angolan peace talks as they entered a third day in a mood of optimism that a cease-fire agreement is near, reports AP.

UN envoy Aliounce Blondin Beye was pressuring the Angolan government and the UNITA rebel movement to sign a bilateral cease-fire, Zambian officials said.

The talks adjourned in an atmosphere of optimism Tuesday with the two sides asked to study a set of unspecified proposals, said Zambian officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Continuing a news blackout, Beye ordered the meeting hall at Lusaka's Mulungushi conference center sealed off, and police allowed only official vehicles into the guarded com-

who lead an earlier call for collective leadership and more democracy in the PLO, was the most prominent signatory of the reform document, PLO officials

Others included PLO Executive Committee member Suleiman Najab who handed the document to Arafat on Tuesday, and Bashir Barqouthi, head of the Palestinian People's Party, Nabil Arman Arafat aide, Anis Qassem, an adviser to the peace delegation, Samih Abdul Fatah, the PLO envoy in Prague, and some of Arafat's close allies.

They all support the PLO-Israel accord but fear Arafat's autocratic style and a poor negotiating performance seriously risks losing Palestinians any

They said the Palestine Liberation Organisation should be more professional and appoint negotiators with Israel on merit instead of factional considerations.

"What brings those behind the document is our conviction that the present moment is a historic opportunity that should not be lost as a result of the weak Palestinian performance and reasons attributed to our own failing," said Tayseer Arouri, an adviser to the peace delegation and one of the drafters of the reform.

"We will continue to demand improving the leadership performance and ensuring a collective leadership," he added

50 killed as Afghan jets Offthe Record bomb town near Kabul

ISLAMABAD, Nov 17: About 50 persons were killed and 70 others injured Tuesday as Afghan government jets bombed Sarobi, a strategic town near Kabul, reports Xinhua.

There was a rain of bombs in Sarobi and the people fled for their life amidst total chaos and destruction, a report reaching here from Afghanistan said today.

YANGON, Nov 17: A United

Nations human rights investi-

gator said Tuesday he had seen

"encouraging changes" in Myan-

mar but restrictions still exist,

"particularly civil and political

reporters at Yangon airport be-

fore leaving that he had visited

two prominent political prison-

But be said the military gov-

ernment again had rejected his

request to see Myanmar's most

prominent dissident - Aung

Yangon's Insein jail, he said.

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 17:

The UN Security Council sus-

pended Tuesday a hunt for

Somali warlord Mohamed

Farah Aideed while an investi-

gation is conducted into the

killing of UN peacekeepers,

tion authorised an inquiry into

attacks on UN peacekeepers,

including the killing of 24

Pakistani UN troops on June 5.

The Security Council ordered

the arrest and trial of the cul-

prits, including Aided, after

The US-sponsored resolu-

reports AFP.

ers, Tinu and Aung Khin Sint.

Yozo Yokata of Japan told

rights", reports AFP.

The attack, launched by former Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masood, a close ally of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, was aimed at driving forces royal to Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar out of

The town, dominated by Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami, produces all of Kabul's hydro electric power. It is on the main highway to the Afghan

capital from the Pakistan bor-

Hekmatyar's troops report edly have cut power supplies Meanwhile, hundreds of

the past months.

Afghan national highway link-

A large United Nations'

travellers and an Afghan UN

sists of 16 truckloads of win

ter-relief supplies dispatched

by the world food programme

(WFP) to Kabul from Pakistan.

faction is said to have cut the

road as a result of the heavy

bombing on civilian as well as

military targets in Sarobi

Tuesday afternoon, and again

US urges parties

in Lebanon to

show restraint

State Department urged all

parties Tuesday to exercise

restraint after guerilla violence

in southern Lebanon prompted

reprisal air raids by Israel, re-

in a written reply to a re-

porter's question, the Depart-

ment blamed the flare-up on

pro-Iranian guerillas of the

fundamentalist Hezbollah

(party of god) who attacked Is-

raeli and Israeli-affiliated out-

table," the department said.

"It reflects the need to make

rapid progress in the Middle

East peace process. It is yet

another indication of Hezbollah

the region to exercise re-

Abdel-Rahman

denies involvement

in WTC bombing

Omar Abdel-Rahman denied

Tuesday that he was involved

in a series of bombings that in-

cluded the World Trade Centre

blast, and lashed out at the

government informer who

gathered evidence against him,

against America while the

'American people were very

generous to us and they ac-

cepted us here," said Abdel-

Rahman in a rare prison inter-

blind Muslim cleric accused of

leading a 15-man group plan-

ning a series of murders, kid-

nappings and bombings that

included the February 26

World Trade Centre blast that

killed six people and injured

Other bombings were al-

legedly planned at the United

Nations, a Manhattan bridge

The Sheikh said the US

government created the con-

spiracy case, with the help of

Emad Salem, formerly a top

aide to the blind cleric who

would guide him by the arm as

Abdel Rahman was given a

US visa in Sudan and entered

and regional FBI offices.

more than 1,000.

they walked.

Abdel Rahman, 55, is a

"How can we conspire

NEW YORK, Nov 17: Sheikh

"We call on all parties in

"This violence is regret-

posts at dawn Tuesday.

opposition to peace."

straint," it added.

reports AFP.

ports Reuter.

WASHINGTON, Nov 17: The

Wednesday morning.

Hekmatyar's Hezb-l-Islami

The stranded convoy con-

Hekmatyar.

heavily armed Hezb-I-Wahdat troops, an ally of Hekmatyar, entered the centre of Kabul Tuesday for the first time since the Mujahideen took over power in Kabul in April



A group of supporters of the Communist Party protest inside the Lenin Museum Tuesday in Moscow. The Russian government signed a decree closing this Museum, which opened in 1936, and the building will be used for the City Council after the December 12 elections.

UN human rights investigator says

Restrictions on civil, political

rights still exist in Myanmar

"I didn't see any signs of

physical torture at all and they

also said the treatment was

generally good," Yokata said,

adding it was the first time in

three visits he had been allowed

opposition National League for

Democracy (NLD), also was ar-

rested in 1989 and sentenced to

three years in jail on unspeci-

fied charges. His sentence later

is serving a 20-year jail term for

NLD member Aung Khin Sint

was extended to 10 years.

gard to human rights.

Tin U, a co-founder of the

- AFP photo

He noted more than 2,000

political prisoners had been

freed under an amnesty that

began in April 1992, and there

has since been a "general relax-

ation of the atmosphere" in

Yangon that had made people

The military authorities here

also have become more open,

timism" that this will further

"I see clear signs of develop-

ment, improvement in the city

life (and) infrastructure-," he

added. "I see changes in a good

ting that some restrictions still

exist, particularly in regard to

But he said without elabora-

way over the last one year."

civil and political rights.

and there is "some room for op-

more wiling to talk to him.

improve, Yokata said.



Building sand-castle on the beach at the Lost City Tuesday are (L to R) Miss Colombia Silvia Isabel Duran Angarita, Miss Holland Hillda Van der Meulen and Miss Mauritius Viveka Babajee before the finals due to be held in South Africa Nov 27

Mile-long bridge of bras

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Arizona Nov 17: An artist wants to bridge the Grand Canyon with his own lingerie line of brassieres, but he's getting the cold shoulder from park officials, reports AP.

The artist, who calls himself Nicolino, hasn't actually asked permission to collect 10,000 bras and string them across the Canyon, but the answer is no, park spokesman Jim Tuck said.

"The park was established for its scenic beauty," Tuck said. "A string of American flags - well, anything stretching across the Canyon would be inappropriate.

Nicolino, 53, of California, told the Rocky Mountain News in Denver that he has already received 1,500 bras. He said he hoped to string the line of lingerie across the Canyon in 1995.

"It's about the puritanical obsession with the breast," Nicolino said. "It's about breast implants and victimising the health of women. It's about connecting a woman's self-identity to the size of her breasts.

"I'm trying to keep it on the humorous side." Nicolino wasn't specific about where in the Canyon his art

would be placed, but said the bridge of bras would be a mile-

The Canyon is 10 miles (16 kilometers) across at its most visited spot, Grand Canyon village on the South Rim.

Polar bears punch lights out

KAKTOVIK, Alaska: The polar bears on Barter Island will punch your lights out, reports AP.

The animals have knocked out as many as 26 runway lights in a single night at an airstrip on the island, about 200 miles (320 km) above the Arctic Circle. The 4,800-foot (1,600-metre) strip is illuminated with coloured lights on 3-foot (90-centimeter) plastic stems.

"The polar bears seem to be fascinated with these lights as if they were toys," said Peggy Kelly, Air Force radar station chief on the island." They've been seen punching the lights like a punching bag until they break."

Tracks in the snow show the bears are single-minded in their quest. They move in a straight line from one light to another, Kelly said recently.

The bears normally are out on the ice hunting seals this time of year, but villagers landed two whales, so the animals have

stayed on the island scrounging for the remains, Kelly said. The island is dark virtually round-the-clock this time of year.

Poor self-image haunts Diana

GORSLAS, Wales: Britain's Princess Diana, in an apparent reflection on her own experience, said on Tuesday that one of life's greatest challenges was learning to like yourself and com ing to terms with personal

The 32-year-old princess. widely reported to have suffered from an eating disorder associated with a poor selfimage, was speaking during a visit to a centre for young drug addicts.

problems, reports Reuter.

"Everyone has to come to terms with their own problems. Learning to like yourself is the hardest thing," she told 27-year-old Brian Roades at 'the centre in Dyfed, Wales.

The estranged wife of Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, is reported to have struggled for several years with the eating disorder bulimia, a syndrome of vomiting.

The condition has been linked in some cases to unhappiness

and low self-esteem. In a speech taken as a tacit admission of her fight with bulimia, Diana said in April that cating disorders sprang from a "spiral of secret despair" caused by the trauma of growing up

BRIFFLY

Clinton to visit Belarus in Jan: US President Bill Clinton will visit Belarus in January along with a trip to Moscow for summit talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Itar-Tass said Wednesday, AFP reports from Moscow.

Belarus is one of four former Soviet republics which possesses strategic nuclear missiles.

Police break up anti-Ramos rally: At least three demonstrators were injured in a scuffle with police Wednesday as they tried to march toward the US Embassy to protest President Fidel Ramos' US visit, AP reports from Manila.

Police Capt Nelson Yabut said about 100 leftist youths tried to rally in front of the seaside US compound, but were stopped

by police officers from a nearby station. They (the demonstrators) tried to cross over towards the embassy compound," Yabut said. "They were unruly, they were blocking traffic. The police were forced to push them back."

Police said several officers suffered slight bruises during the brief incident.

China's first law against crime: A southern Chinese province has enacted the country's first law against organised crime, reports in Hong Kong said Wednesday, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The law adopted Tuesday by the Guangdong Provincial People's Congress outlaws criminal gangs and threatens "strict punishment" for mob bosses, the China-funded Ta Kung Pao newspaper said. It gave no specifics.

Hong Kong's Beijing-funded dailies have reported that organised crime is growing in Guangdong, whose wealth has made it a model of senior leader Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. Among the crimes covered by the new law are extortion, drug

trafficking, kidnapping and forcing people into criminal gangs, Ta Kung Pao said.

37 to die in Algeria: A court in Algeria has sentenced to death 37 people, 30 in their absence, for involvement in 21 murders, officials announced Tuesday, AFP reports from Algiers.

Eight others were acquitted by the court in Medea, 90 kilometres (55 miles) south of Algiers, and the others among the 110 people accused were sentenced to prison terms varying from life to three years, the officials said.

The group were accused of killing five policemen in the Laghout region, and the murders of 13 others including 12 security officials. They were also charged with a sabotage attempt on an Algerian-Italian gas pipeline.

Gunman kills 2 in Philippines: An unidentified gunman killed two people, including a policeman, and wounded another officer early Wednesday at a wharf in this southern Philippine city, police said, AP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

Police Capt Inocente Carpio, quoting witnesses, said the gunman, aboard a ferry, sprayed M-16 gunfire at the police without provocation as the boat docked.

The gunman then jumped into the sea and disappeared, Carpio said. He said the man's weapon could not be found on the vessel, leading them to suspect the assailant had accomplices on board.

13 killed in Cambodia: Thirteen people have been killed in an attack on a commune in the northwest Cambodian province of Ciem Reap, a government spokesman said yesterday, Reuter reports from Phnom Penh.

Spokesman Sieng Larpresse could not identify the attackers, give the nationalities of the victims for say precisely where Tuesday's attack took place.

Khmer Rouge guerillas massacred around 40 ethnic Vietnamese in the province in March.

Russian marines

start leaving Georgian port MOSCOW, Nov 17: The Russian marines stationed in the Georgian port of Poti since

Tuesday, according to Black Sea fleet officials cited by Russian news agencies, reports A total of 750 Russian marines were to leave Poti Tuesday for their base in Sebas-

topol, and only two ships will remain in the port, according to fleet officials in Sebastopol quoted by Itar-Tass.

About 100 marines will stay behind, with the two ship, to assure the security of the city. the port and the territorial waters, fleet commander Admiral Eduard Baltin said, according to Interfax.

allegedly trying to disrupt the San Suu Kyi - has been under on-going constitution convenhouse arrest in Yangon since Both Tinu and Aung Khin During his week-long visit. Sint looked well and spoke Yokata said he had seen many "encouraging changes" in renormally when he saw them in

suspends hunt for Aideed

to see Tin U.

that attack. The United States abandened efforts to capture Aideed after losing 18 men in a battle on October 3.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was to name a panel of judicial and military experts to comprise the commission as quickly as possible, said British UN ambassador Sir David Hannay. -

"Our primary goal in Somalia is to foster a political dialogue which can lead to national reconciliation, said Madeleine Albright, the US Ambassador to the United Na-

While the inquiry is made, the Security Council has decided to "suspend arrest actions against those individuals who might be implicated but are not currently detained", the resolution said.

Boutros-Ghali is also asked to *make appropriate provision to deal with the situation of those already detained."



Actor-comedian George Burns signs a contract Tuesday in which he agrees to play an engagement at Caesars Palace Hotel in Las Vegas on November 20, his 100th birthday. -AFP photo

'I don't believe in dying'

LOS ANGELES, Nov 17: George Burns says there's no money in dying, so he'll be playing Caesars Palace on his 100th birthday, reports AP.

"I don't believe in dying - I died in Altoona, I died in Schenectady - I'm not going to die again," the 97-year-old comedian joked at a news conference Tuesday in Century City.

Burns said he made a January 20, 1996, date for the Las Vegas resort and "I hope Caesars is still there".

playing the London Palladium on his 100th birthday.

Burns had once talked about

the United States in 1990. Jewish settlements emerging as daunting barrier to peace

lante raids, there is also a consensus that the government has

an obligation to protect them.

Each victim wins the settlers fresh sympathy. Ahronoth, last week after Gaza

settler Ephraim Ayubi was gunned down in his car. Underneath was a photo of Mrs. Ayubi gently kissing the flagdraped body. In an attempt to quiet the si-

for Rabin.

Although settlements were started under Rabin in the

1970s, the big push in construction took place from 1990 to 1992 under the right-wing government of Yitzhak Shamir, which wanted to block any op-

and coping with life.

Today, Rabin sees the settlements in part as a trump card to bolster Israeli claims to parts of the West Bank when talks on the territories' final sta-

The settlers themselves are nog unified in their own strategy over whether talking to the government or fighting it will win them the best deal.

Rabin won't talk about his visions for peace, pledging only to leave settlements standing during the five-year period of

Iran censures Amnesty report

NICOSIA, Nov 17: Tehran on Wednesday rebuffed an Amnesty International report on suspected Iranian death squads, suggesting the organisation has "a vendetta against Islamic tran," reports AP.

Iran's denouncement came hours after the London-based human rights agency released a report which noted other reports of Iranian execution teams murdering dissidents

abroad The Amnesty report listed cases in Germany, Turkey and France in which individuals with links to the Iranian government or secret service were

The group also condemned Tehran's practices at home of torture and unfair trial, exces-

JERUSALEM, Nov 17: For ments in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip are a bit

early November, at Georgia's like Frankenstein's monster request, began to withdraw rising to haunt his creator, reports AP. Built to tighten Israel's grip on land won in war, the settlements are emerging as the biggest barrier to Rabin's plan to make peace with the

cally important.

Palestinians. Ironically, it was Rabin who as chief of staff conquered the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Middle East war. As prime minister for 1974 to 1977 and defence minister in the 1980s, he was responsible for establishing many settlements in ar-

eas that he felt were strategi-

Settler leaders say the pres-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's ence of the 144 settlements dot-Gaza's coast will prevent any permanent land-for-peace deal.

"We are the real and only buffer to a Palestinian state because we are spread out all over," said Israel Harel, head of the council that represents the settlements in the occupied

Many of the 125,000 settlers vehemently oppose the Israeli-PLO accord on Palestinian autonomy. Settlers repeatedly block roads with burning tires and rampaged through Pales-

tlers as targets apparently be-

tinian towns in the past three weeks to protest the killings of two settlers and the wounding of another by Muslim-militants. The gunmen picked the set-

sharp reaction that they hope the settlers. At the same time, the settlers carefully orchestrated protests were a signal to the government that they have the ability to spoil any peace agreement. Settlers have also threatened

to shoot any Palestinian policeman on sight, claiming they would be acting in self-defence because he might be a disguised gunman. The police force is to be deployed in April under the autonomy agreement. "If this is not just talk, if this

is the real thing, Rabin will have to disarm the settlers, and this might be a test case," said Ehud Sprinkza, a lecturer at Hebrew University and author of a book on Israel's radical right.

So far, the government has

cause they anticipated the backed away from confronting government, the Jewish settle- ting West Bank hilltops and will eventually derail the talks. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said more troops were

being sent into the occupied lands to meet settlers' demands for more security. But the army said the soldiers had new orders to deal firmly with any rampages. The settlers have put Rabin

in a political bind. They are making trouble just as he is trying to wrap up the autonomy agreement so he can press forward with negotiations

with Jordan, Lebanon and

Syria. But he can't crack down because TV images of soldiers clubbing rioting settlers will only erode support. Pollsters say that while

many Israelis feel the settlers have gone too far with their vigi-

"The pain," proclaimed a black-boxed banner headline in Israel's largest daily, Yedioth

tuation, Rabin met with settler leaders for the first time in a year and hinted he might restore some financial perks, such as cuts in income taxes, said Gad Ben-Ari, a spokesman

tion for giving back land.

tus begin two years from now.

implicated.

sive use of the death penalty.