

## US soldiers disarm Haiti's naval base

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 2: US soldiers disarmed Haiti's small naval base and seized private caches of arms in the area west of the capital Saturday, one day after pro-army militias fired on pro-democracy marchers, reports AP.

The weapons seized at the Admiral Killeck naval base in Bizoton included semi-automatic weapons and machine-guns.

## India's sex-killer Nagraj to die

BANGALORE (India), Oct 2: An Indian court has sentenced to death the country's most notorious sex-killer who raped, robbed and strangled 29 women in the last five years, newspapers reported on Sunday, reports AFP.

Civil and sessions judge Satymurthy Holla on Friday ordered the hanging of Nagraj, who was arrested in February following a manhunt, some three months after he escaped from police custody.

The man earned the nickname 'Bangalore strangler' as he used the dresses of his victims to strangle them in the parks of this southern Indian city, located 650 kilometres (406 miles) southeast of Bombay.

Reporters saw soldiers search seven private locations, but US military spokesman said they did not have any information on other seizures.

The US soldiers, in Sheridan tanks, met no resistance, said US Navy Lt. Mark McCaffrey.

"We're just trying to make a stable environment out there for the return of exiled President Jean Bertrand Aristide," McCaffrey told the Associated Press.

The operation, which began late Saturday afternoon was continued Saturday night, followed three days of violence that raised questions about the ability of the 20,000-plus American force to protect Haiti's people from its army and army allied civilian gunmen.

McCaffrey said American soldiers confiscated 119 M-1 rifles, 2 M-60 machine-guns, 2.50-caliber machine-guns and 57 hot action rifles at the base.

Local radio reported that sacks, possibly containing weapons, were seized by the soldiers from a hotel nearby.

At nightfall, soldiers also were taking dozens of weapons from a food warehouse belonging to a prominent army supporter. Earlier, private guards at the warehouse fired on hundreds of people gathering outside, wounding seven.

## Serbs agree to reopen routes for UN aid convoys

SARAJEVO, Oct 2: The United Nations and Bosnian Serbs have reached a breakthrough through accord to allow resumption today of road convoys under Serb blockade since a NATO air strike 10 days ago, reports Reuters.

Under Saturday's agreement allowing UN logistics and humanitarian aid convoys to resume, the Bosnian Serbs also accepted talks on restarting a vital UN airlift to Sarajevo grounded by Serb gunfire.

The anti-UN blockade had posed a potential humanitarian emergency for Serb-encircled government enclaves with winter nearing and NATO hesitating to take tougher action against Serbs. UN officers were plainly relieved at the convoy pact.

"It's a very good step forward from the position we were in," said Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose, commander of UN troops who guard government enclaves in Bosnia.

The separatist Serbs neutralised UN operations in the 70 per cent of Bosnia they hold in fury at NATO jets destruction of a Serb tank flouting Sarajevo's UN-mandated security zone and a stiffening of UN sanctions against them.

With the UN mission in possible jeopardy, Rose and civilian aides coaxed the Bosnian Serb political leadership into two rounds of negotiations that lasted more than a day and produced two agreements on Saturday.

The first was a UN-brokered deal between Serbs and the Muslim-led Bosnian government to swap hundreds of war prisoners which provided momentum for the second, more important pact.

"Approval has been given for the reopening of land routes for UN logistics convoys commencing October 2," a joint UN-Serb communique said in the first of four points.

Secondly, "approval has been given for the (simultaneous) resumption of activities by international humanitarian organisations for the distribution of humanitarian aid through land corridors."

The communique also said warring factions were prepared to guarantee utility supplies needed by civilians "on a reciprocal basis" in the Sarajevo region and other war zones of Bosnia.

Finally, it said, "mutual readiness has been expressed to renew communication links in order to attain an agreed

resolution of all possible incidents so as to avoid a deterioration of (Serb) relations with UNPROFOR."

No one could be sure in advance the convoy agreement would be honoured as it was not signed by the Bosnian Serb military whose units have disregarded some political deals in the past.

Shortly afterwards, the Serbs and the UN protection force said talks would begin on Sunday or Monday on reopening Sarajevo airport for UN humanitarian aid flights.

But Momcilo Krajsnik, president of the separatist Serbs' self-styled parliament and a negotiator in the talks with UNPROFOR, warned that these talks would be trickier.

"We told general Rose there are serious problems in the use of the airport," Krajsnik told the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA, accusing Muslims of using it to attack Serbs.

He did not explain. The airport is under UN control but bestrides volatile Muslim-Serb front lines outside Sarajevo.

The 27-month-old airlift to Sarajevo's 380,000 people, the longest recorded to a war-isolated region, was shelved after Serbs ringing the city threatened to shoot down planes.

Despite the negotiating breakthrough, UNPROFOR said Bosnian government troops had attacked Serb positions around Pakitnica south of Sarajevo earlier in the day and the Serbs fought back.

It was not immediately clear whether the fighting unfolded inside or outside a 20-km (12.4-mile) radius around Sarajevo from which heavy weapons have been banned by NATO-UN decree.

The prisoner swap, part of a package agreed by both sides with the UN, also provided for medical evacuations from mostly Muslim government enclaves surrounded by Serbs and permission for UN doctors to get to them.

Bosnian Serbs demanded the release of prisoners held by the Sarajevo government in return for better cooperation with the UN aid effort on which 2.7 million people in Bosnia depend.

"This agreement made provision for the first major release of POWs and detainees for over a year," said UNPROFOR civilian spokeswoman Claire Grimes.

The UN's aid mission, vital to civilians on both sides during the coming winter.

## Off the Record



Melanie Abdoun, a 20-year-old student from London, poses with Gary Edwards, a 25-year-old hotel porter from Ilford, East London, after being named Miss UK and the first ever Mr UK Saturday. — AFP photo

## March to celebrate gay rights

JOHANNESBURG: Hundreds of people, some dressed or cross-dressed in wild clothes and colours, marched through Johannesburg on Saturday to celebrate gay and lesbian rights in post-apartheid South Africa, reports AP.

A handful of religious protesters condemned the marchers, but the procession was mostly a festive affair that ended with a party in a city park.

Paul Stobbs, chairman of the Johannesburg gay and lesbian pride parade, said South Africa's new constitution was the only one in the world that prohibited discrimination against sexual orientation.

The constitution took effect with the nation's first all-race election in April that ended white rule and brought Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to power.

Similar marches have occurred in previous years despite South Africa's strong religious heritage that condemns homosexuality.

To a heavy disco drumbeat, the male and female marchers — some dressed in satin, lace or leather — snaked through downtown streets to the amusement of most onlookers and the dismay of others.

"Sodomites, turn or burn, Jesus saves lives," said a placard held by one protester. A marcher hit at a poster and organisers had to prevent other scuffles from breaking out.

Reacting to heckling from protesters, a group of women marchers chanted: "Two, four, six, eight, how do you know your wife is straight?"

## Termites eating away priceless paintings

NEW DELHI: Termites are eating away priceless paintings by Russian-born artist Svetoslav Roerich in a southern farm as the government dithers in probing the disappearance of hundreds of the artist's works, a news agency reported Sunday, says AP.

Dark patches also have developed over many paintings stored in a damp, closed warehouse at the Tataguni estate in Bangalore city, United News of India reported quoting unnamed officials.

Canvases that were damaged included a rare portrait of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the world-famous landscapes of the Himalayas and paintings of Hindu gods, UNI said.

Bureaucratic delays, legal wranglings and alleged pressure from a politician who wants to buy a part of the 450-acre estate have demoralised police investigating the case, UNI said.

The estate, along with thousands of paintings and antiques, and 34 million dollars in Swiss bank accounts, have been the focus of a controversy for nearly two years.

## Pakistan is an atomic power, says former army chief

ISLAMABAD, Oct 2: Pakistan is an atomic power and should announce the existence of its weapons as a deterrent to hostile countries, the former Pakistani army chief General Aslam Beg, said Saturday, reports AFP.

It is a fact that Pakistan is an atomic power and there is no reason why not to accept it, Beg said, quoted by the officials Associated Press of Pakistan, news agency.

The official position held by the government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, while admitting that Pakistan had nuclear capacity, was that the country did not have any atomic weapons.

## India to sign Rio convention

NEW DELHI, Oct 2: India has decided to sign the international convention to combat desertification which is open for signing at Paris from October 14, reports Xinhua.

Environment Ministers from various countries of the world and the French president will attend the opening ceremony. The convention is open for signing for one year, local newspapers said here today.

The decision to have such a convention was taken at the Rio Earth Summit two years ago.

The convention's main objective is to combat desertification and mitigate efforts of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and desertification through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements.



Fireworks display lit up Tiananmen Square as China celebrates the 45th founding anniversary of the People's Republic on Saturday. — AFP photo

## Arafat okays regulations for polls in Gaza, West Bank

JERUSALEM, Oct 2: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has endorsed internal regulations for the Palestinian general elections to be held in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Israel radio said today, reports Xinhua.

Under the declaration of principles signed between the PLO and Israel on September 13, 1993 in Washington, Israeli troops must withdraw from the Palestinian population centres throughout the West Bank before the elections.

The regulations deal with procedures on committees to be set up for running polling stations, election advertising and dividing up the Palestinian population into election districts, the radio said.

The Palestinians will elect a 100-member self-rule council. However, the Palestinians and Israel are still wide apart on when to hold the elections.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has demanded the elections be held before November 1, but Israel has

proposed postponing them until next year.

The PNA accused Israel of trying to delay the elections so as to put off the army withdrawal from the Palestinian population centres.

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Israel and the Palestinians will resume their talks in Cairo Monday on the Palestinian elections, the redeployment of Israeli forces in the West Bank.

Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agreed to hold the Cairo meeting

when they met on September 25 at Erez checkpoint between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

AP adds: The Palestinian self-rule government Saturday approved a draft agreement with Israel on procedures at border crossings into the autonomous areas.

The agreement was expected to be signed by both sides on Monday, when talks on phase two of autonomy begin in Cairo, said Nabil Shaath, the chief Palestinian negotiator.

In the second stage, Israeli troops are to pull out of Palestinian population centres in preparation for Palestinian general elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## I was the man in Diana's life for 3 yrs, says ex-cavalry officer



Former British cavalry officer Major James Hewitt, 36 — AFP photo

LONDON, Oct 2: Princess Diana's former riding instructor says he was her lover and that she had contemplated leaving Prince Charles for him, a tabloid newspaper reported Sunday, says AP.

Maj James Hewitt, who last March sold a fairly innocuous story about his friendship with the princess, this time said they actually had been deeply in love, according to the News of the World.

Hewitt also declared his sympathy for Prince Charles, who he says has been unfairly portrayed, the newspaper said in its five-page spread.

It quoted from conversations held with Hewitt when, it said, he was negotiating to sell the story, but before he changed his mind.

It also speculated that he has collaborated on a book about the alleged affair and that it might be a "mystery" book that is expected to appear in bookstores on Monday.

Diana formally separated from the Prince of Wales, the heir to the British throne, in December 1992. In a television interview broadcast in June, Charles acknowledged that he had been unfaithful to his wife after the marriage "became irretrievably broken down". He denied rumours that he had been unfaithful from the start of the marriage, in 1981.

Hewitt gave the princess and her sons riding lessons in 1989. They became best friends, then lovers, he was

quoted as saying.

"For three years I was the man in her life... We were deeply in love. In fact Diana was so in love with me that she even contemplated leaving Prince Charles for me," he was quoted as telling a News of the World reporter.

The princess, he added, "would often come secretly to stay with me at my home in Devon and I would see her at Kensington palace while Charles was away."

The News of the World said the former officer described the princess as "trapped in a loveless marriage," from which she turned to him "for comfort."

The paper said "Hewitt claimed she dumped him after their passionate romance" became "too hot."

At another meeting he was asked if he had ever made love to Diana, and he nodded and said, "Yes," the News of the World reported.

Hewitt was widely criticised when he sold a story about the princess to the Daily Express in March, not long before he left a 17-year army career. But the News of the World said on Sunday that Hewitt told them he had sold that story with Diana's permission.

They had heard a journalist was going to write a book saying they were having an affair. "So we decided to pre-empt it," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

## Israel, Tunisia agree on moves toward ties

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 2: Israel and Tunisia have agreed to exchange economic liaison officers as a first step towards full diplomatic relations, the Israeli UN mission said, reports AP.

As part of the agreement worked out by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his Tunisian counterpart, Habib ben Yehya, representatives will be sent to Tunis and Tel Aviv, according to a statement released Saturday by the Israeli mission.

The representatives will work out of the Belgian embassies, and Belgium has been asked to represent Israeli and Tunisian interests in the absence of permanent diplomatic missions, the statement said. Economic liaison officers will be permanently posted to the Belgian embassies.

Tunisia, which hosted the Palestine Liberation Organization for years, will also set up economic liaison offices in Gaza and Jericho, which the Israelis turned over to a Palestinian self-rule government in May.

"Tunisia and Israel are encouraged by the progress accomplished so far in the Middle East peace process. Based on that, the two countries have decided to begin a process aimed at normalizing their relations," the statement said.

"The two foreign ministers expect that these initiatives will lead to long term missions and eventually permanent representation."

Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres called the decision "a start."

"At this point we have some kind of a relationship with three North African countries: Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. And from this standpoint I definitely see this as a first-rate achievement," Peres said on Israel radio Sunday.

No officials were available at Tunisia's UN mission to comment on the agreement.

Many Arab states have been increasing political and economic contacts since Israel and the PLO signed a peace agreement last year.

## Saleh reelected Yemeni president

SANAA, Oct 2: Yemen's parliament Saturday re-elected President Ali Abdullah Saleh as head of state with a five-year mandate, the official news agency Saba said, reports AFP.

It was the last time the parliament met as an electoral college to elect the president. At the end of Saleh term, the head of state will be directly chosen by the electorate.

More than 200 deputies (out of 301) elected president Saleh, the agency added, without giving in exact breakdown of the vote or whether there had been any other candidates.

Yemen's new constitution was adopted Wednesday and scrapped the five member presidential council, the country's highest ruling body, which was headed by Saleh.

## BRIEFLY

### UN arms body chief to visit Iraq:

The chairman of a UN commission probing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction will travel to Baghdad next week to inspect the control center for a long-term monitoring system, his aide said Saturday, AP reports from Manama, Bahrain.

Roald Opsahl, the Bahrain-based representative of the UN Special Commission, did not say if the commission's chairman, Rolf Ekeus, will start up the monitoring system during his four-day visit.

### Iran blasts US exercises in Gulf:

Iran has condemned "illegal military exercises" by the US Navy in the Gulf region and claimed they interfered with maritime patrols by Iranian helicopters, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported Saturday, AP reports from Nicosia.

The agency, monitored in Nicosia, said the Iranian Foreign Ministry made the protest Friday. A protest note was delivered to the Pakistani embassy in Washington for relay to the US State Department.

### 2 Russian border guards killed:

Two Russian border guards were killed and three wounded in an artillery attack by opposition forces on the Tajik Afghan border, the Interfax news agency said Saturday, AP reports from Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

A total of 250 rockets were fired at the Moskovsky border guards post on the border, the news agency said. The border guards returned fire with a multiple rocket launcher, self-propelled howitzers, and mortars.

### 7 executed in Saudi Arabia:

Four Filipinos and three Pakistanis were executed in Saudi Arabia on Friday, Gulf news agencies said, Reuters reports from Dubai.

It was the highest number of executions announced in one day in Saudi Arabia in more than a year. The agencies, quoting a Saudi Arabian Interior Ministry statement, said the four Filipinos were convicted of killing two security guards who interrupted a burglary they were carrying out.

### Syria resents GCC decision:

Syria on Friday described as "inopportune" a decision by the Gulf Cooperation Council to ease its boycott of Israel, AFP reports from Nicosia.

Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara, in an interview with Saudi television monitored here, said the move "does not help Arab negotiators" trying to secure a regional peace accord with Israel.

### Coal mine blast kills 20 in Chile:

A coal mine explosion has killed 20 miners in southern Chile, police sources said on Saturday, AFP reports from Coronel, Chile.

Authorities had earlier reported three dead and 20 miners trapped by the blast and subsequent rockslides in the Schwager mine.

### Rafsanjani opens Tehran Fair:

President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani opened on Saturday the 20th International Tehran fair amid law-key participation by western countries, AFP reports from Tehran.

Rafsanjani said in an inauguration speech that Iran attached great importance to such events because they were "appropriate venues for cultural and technological exchanges between countries and peoples."

### Pope still hopes to visit Lebanon:

Pope John Paul II on Saturday told a Lebanese diplomat he still hopes to go to Lebanon, after an attack on a church forced the scrapping of plans for a trip last spring, AP reports from Castel Gandolfo, Italy.

"I keep the hope of being able to make this trip as soon as possible," the pope told the Lebanese ambassador who presented his credentials to the Holy See in a ceremony at Castel Gandolfo, the papal retreat in the hills southeast of Rome.

### Turkish troops kill 27 Kurds:

Turkish troops killed a total of 27 Kurdish guerrillas in a series of clashes in eastern and southeastern Turkey on Saturday, the Anatolia news agency reported, AP says from Diyarbakir, Turkey.

Eight soldiers were killed, it said. The guerrillas belong to the illegal Kurdistan Workers Party, which has been waging a violent campaign for autonomy in Kurdish regions. More than 13,000 people have died in the violence since 1984.

### Cuban refugees on hunger strike:

Dozens of Cuban boat people held by the United States in "safe haven" camps in Panama joined a hunger strike Saturday to protest President Clinton's Cuban refugee policy, Reuters reports from Panama City.

About 80 refugees stopped eating to join a hunger strike begun late Friday by a dozen men as increasing numbers of refugees demanded the United States grant them asylum and not return them to Cuba as the Clinton administration plans to do.

### Sit-in outside Rabin's house:

Israeli protesters held sit-in outside the home of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin Saturday to call for the immediate release of nuclear technician Mordochai Vanunu, who is serving an 18-year prison sentence, reports AFP from Tel Aviv.

Some 30 demonstrators, who described themselves as the Vanunu Defence Committee, accused Israeli authorities of "hounding" him. They also called for nuclear, chemical and biological disarmament in the Middle East.