

Chechnya alleges Russian air raid on military post

MOSCOW, Oct 3: Officials in the breakaway Russian region of Chechnya said military helicopters bearing Russian markings launched a new raid today, hitting a military post outside the capital Grozny, reports Reuters.

Chechen military Commander Musa Merzhuyev was quoted by a local journalist as saying the aircraft fired several guided missiles at the post about 10 km (six miles) to the northwest of the town.

Tar-Tass news agency, reporting from Grozny, said no casualties or damage were reported from the raids. The Chechen forces scrambled an aircraft after the attack but it was unable to catch the helicopters, Tass said.

The report could not be independently confirmed.

On Sunday, Russian news agencies reported five helicopters attacked Kalinovskiy village in the north of Chechnya, killing one person and wounding several other people.

Interfax quoted aides of Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev as alleging the helicopters involved in that attack belonged to the Russian army in the north Caucasus. A Defence Ministry spokesman in Moscow denied Russian forces were involved in the conflict, Interfax said.

Moscow makes no secret of its desire to see Dudayev's downfall and a swift end to the tiny north Caucasus Republic's fragile independence declared by the Chechen leader after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Perry seeks UN backing for tougher air strikes on Serbs

GARMISCH, Germany, Oct 3: Carrying a NATO mandate for tougher air strikes against Bosnian Serbs, Defence Secretary William Perry was looking to United Nations forces in the former Yugoslavia to support the new hard line, reports AP.

Officials with the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia announced Sunday that Perry would meet Monday with Yasushi Akashi, the UN special representative in the region, for talks at the Croatian port city of Split. Official word of the meeting was kept secret until the last minute for security reasons. Also set to attend was Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose, the UN commander in Bosnia.

The NATO defence ministers who endorsed Perry's proposal last week may prove an easier audience than the UN officials, who have consistently resisted attempts to escalate military force against the Bosnian Serbs.

Rose, the official most responsible for the safety of the peacekeepers, has reacted coolly to the NATO proposal, saying an intensified air campaign could force the withdrawal of the peacekeepers.

"They've got to get Rose on board — he is absolutely crucial," a senior US defence official said during a stopover Friday in the Bavarian city of Garmisch.

In addition to explaining

the new NATO position, Perry also wants to mend fences between NATO and the UN peacekeepers and emphasize that they share the same goal of bringing peace to Bosnia.

In pressing his case to Rose and Akashi, Perry planned to emphasize that "very time we show some spine, they give a little, said the defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity. Serner responses to Bosnian Serb provocations will help rather than hurt peacekeepers, according to Perry's argument.

Perry declared a victory last week when he emerged from a meeting of NATO defence ministers in Saville, Spain, with an agreement to support sterner

measures. But the agreement means nothing unless the United Nations goes along. The United Nations with its peacekeeping force on the ground in Bosnia, is worried that escalated NATO attacks on the Bosnian Serbs would only make things worse for the peacekeepers.

In Bosnia, NATO is essentially a subcontractor to the United Nations, awaiting orders on when to strike. Perry wants the United Nations to endorse NATO's position on how to strike.

In a speech last week, Perry suggested that frustration over the war in Bosnia has obscured NATO successes in the region.

Off the Record



Di's 'lover' denounced

LONDON: The former British army officer who on Sunday shocked the nation with a claim that he had been Princess Diana's lover has become one of the most vilified men in the United Kingdom, reports AFP.

Conservative MPs and press comment denounced former squadron leader James Hewitt, who told the news of the world that for three years he had been "the man" in the life of the wife of Prince Charles, heir to the British throne.

His disclosures could now be amplified in a book he is reported to have co-authored that is due to be published on Monday by Bloomsbury.

The publishers have refused to disclose the title and the author.

But the Sun newspaper said the work would be called Princess In Love, for which it said Hewitt had received three million pounds (4.5 million dollars).

The paper said the former officer negotiated the deal "so he [could] live the rest of his life abroad in style."

But according to the Daily Telegraph, "the self-imposed exile he may now have to seek could cost rather more."

The Daily Express headlined its front page story "betrayal of a princess," while today called Hewitt "a Judas who found lure of money too great."

Eco-friendly cemetery

AUCKLAND: A local city council is considering the creation of an environmentally friendly cemetery without coffins and where headstones would be replaced by trees, the New Zealand Herald reported on Monday reports AFP.

The Waitakere city council here is considering a system where a reusable box would transport bodies to cemeteries for burial in a shallow grave and quicklime used to speed decomposition.

A tree would be planted on the grave with a plaque. Elizabeth Francke of the local council said the process solved the dilemma facing environmentalists who did not want to pollute the air with smoke from cremations or waste precious space with traditional plots.

"I think it would be nice for people in a thousand years to look at a Kauri tree and say 'that used to be our mayor,' Bob Harvey.

"People have either said 'oh, how beautiful' or 'yuck, that's awful.' It is an idea people either love or hate," she said.

President's widow ready to remarry

BUENOS AIRES: The widow of former Argentine President Juan Domingo Peron, Maria Estela Martinez, said she is ready to remarry and would not rule out a post in President Carlos Menem's neo-Peronist government, reports AFP.

The 64-year-old widow governed the country between 1974-76 after the death of her husband who ruled between 1946-55 and 1973-74. She was overthrown in 1976 by a military coup and spent the past few years in Spain.

Asked whether she had any suitors in mind to marry, she told the Buenos Aires magazine Noticias that "if I have not remarried, it has not been for a lack of candidates but perhaps because of selfishness."

"It is difficult after so many years of solitude to share my life with a man," she said, declining to reveal who her suitors might be.

Asked about accepting a post in the Menem administration, she said that as the widow of Juan Peron, "I can not say definitely no, only God knows."

Japan's opposition to continue boycott of parliament

TOKYO, Oct 3: Japan's newly unified opposition bloc refused today to end its parliamentary boycott, setting conditions which the ruling coalition promptly rejected as outrageous, reports Reuters.

A main demand was that Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama deliver a key policy speech which the opposition boycotted at last Friday's opening day of parliament in a row over the lower house vice speaker's post.

"We demand that the prime minister delivers the policy speech again," the opposition bloc's parliamentary business manager said in a statement.

The boycott marked the first time in nearly 30 years that the opposition had refused to hear a key note address by a Japanese prime minister.

But parliamentary negotiators from Murayama's Socialist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) coalition said they would not give in to the opposition demands.

"Gandhi Peace Prize"

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: India has established a "Gandhi Peace Prize," named after the hero of the struggle for independence from Britain and modelled after the Nobel Peace Prize, reports AFP.

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao announced the creation of the Gandhi Peace Prize at a function held here Sunday to mark the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence.

Details of the prize would be announced later, he said. It would be India's highest award.

Arab League blasts GCC for easing boycott of Israel

CAIRO, Oct 3: The Arab League on Sunday criticised six Gulf states for easing their economic boycott of Israel and said only it had the authority to lift the ban, reports Reuters.

"The Arab boycott of Israel was imposed by a decision taken by the Arab League council and it is up to the Arab League council to call it off," a statement by the Cairo-based Arab League said.

"The league council holds the full authority in this matter and based on that the Arab boycott (of Israel) is continuing as long as the council does not decide on taking the necessary procedures to end boycott," it added.

The statement said ending the boycott was linked with achieving peace in the Middle East based on UN Security Council resolutions which call for a complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab occupied territories.

vice president until the uprising in which at least 140 died, said on television on Sunday he wanted a full investigation into the events and would take his time to build a new movement to lead the country.

Only about 7,000 communist and nationalist sympathisers marched through chilly Moscow streets to support Rutskoi and denounce Yeltsin as a murderer for crushing the revolt by Russia's conservative former parliament.

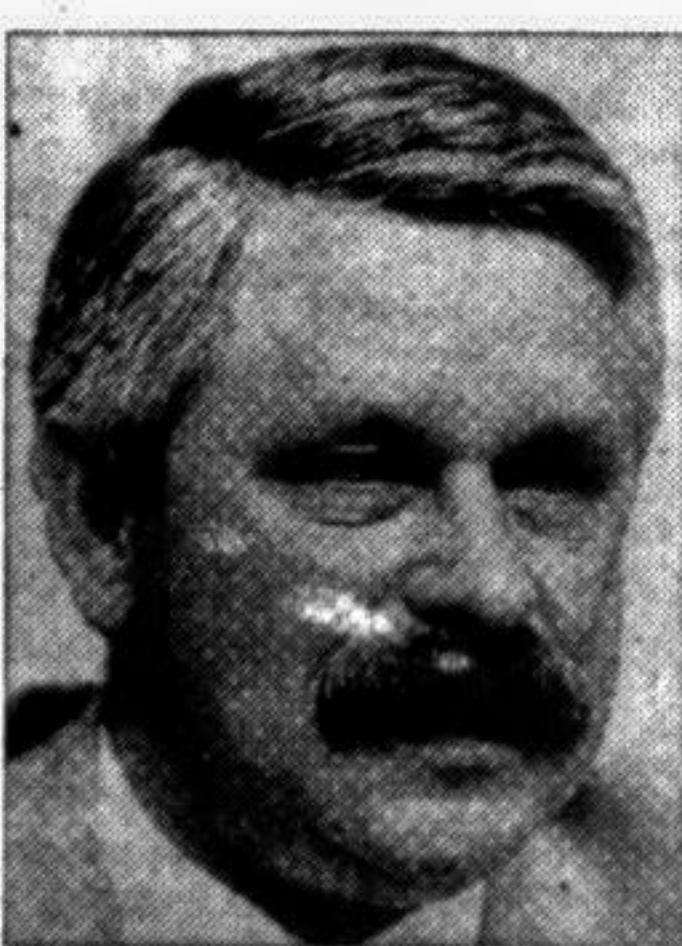
"We need an objective, independent investigation and not merely to punish someone," Rutskoi said.

"We need to repent what has happened to find out the truth. Each side is guilty in its own way."

But nowhere I am saying that there should be early elections. There won't be any, let us take our time in setting up a considered movement with reasonable people capable of leading the country.

Rutskoi in no hurry to make new bid for power

MOSCOW, Oct 3: The man who led a bloody 1993 revolt to oust President Boris Yeltsin



Alexander Rutskoi

said on the eve of the anniversary of his defeat by Kremlin tankfire that he was in no hurry to make a new bid for power through the ballot box, reports Reuters.

Alexander Rutskoi, Yeltsin's

US troops detain key militia leaders, seize arms in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Oct 3: US soldiers detained several leaders of Haiti's pro-army militias Sunday, seizing the key people if not their weapons in an attempt to disarm armed opposition to American efforts to restore elected rule, reports AP.

Combined with patrols that resulted in seizures of more than 1,000 weapons over the weekend, the stepped up activity indicated a more aggressive role for the US military in Haiti.

The sweeps followed criticism that the Americans — with nearly 21,000 troops in place were not defending the Haitian people from armed paramilitary thugs, who broke up pro democracy demonstrations on three successive days last week with gunfire. At least 13 people were killed and 110 wounded in the shootings.

Among those seized Sunday were the leader of Haitian army chief Raoul Cedras' private security force, called the "Ninjas," and the son of a

leading financial backer of the Haitian military.

In another sign of change in Haiti, the voice of exiled president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was heard on state radio for the first time in years. State media, which had banned his voice, was under the control of Haiti's coup leaders until American troops seized the installations Friday.

Under an agreement last month with the United States, Haiti's coup leaders have until Oct. 15 to step down.

Mahathir urges UN to lift ban on Baghdad

AMMAN, Oct 3: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad called here Sunday for the United Nations to lift its four-year old embargo on Baghdad, a key pre-Gulf crisis trading partner of Kuala Lumpur, reports AFP.

"We do not think the world should punish Iraqi people simply because it does not agree with their leadership," said Mahathir at the end of a four day visit to Jordan.

The Malaysian premier, at a joint press conference with his Jordanian counterpart Abdel Salam Majali, said Kuala Lumpur was "eager" to restore trade with Baghdad, especially palm oil exports, once the embargo was lifted.

Referring to the Middle East peace process, Mahathir said his predominantly Muslim country was not ready to recognise Israel.

"I pointed out in Amman that Malaysia will not recognise Israel until it has fulfilled all its obligations."

BRIEFLY

Akihito, Michiko in Frankfurt:

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan arrived in Frankfurt on Sunday for a brief visit at the start of a European tour that will take them on to France and Spain, airport sources reported, AFP says from Bonn.

Before leaving on Monday for Paris, the emperor will meet the leader of Hessen state, Hans Heichel, as well as members of Frankfurt's 3,800-strong Japanese community.

Gunmen injure 3 cops in Egypt:

Unidentified gunmen attacked a police car in southern Egypt on Sunday, injuring three policemen including a senior officer, an interior ministry official said, Reuters reports from Cairo.

The official said the gunmen, hiding in a sugar-cane field beside a road, fired on the car close to the town of Mallawi, a Muslim militant stronghold 300 km (190 miles) south of Cairo.

Floods leave 94 dead in Vietnam:

Floods in Vietnam's Mekong delta have killed 94 people and damaged crops and property worth 580 billion dong (53 million dollars), the Communist Party newspaper Nhan Dan said yesterday, Reuters reports from Hanoi.

The worst floods in Vietnam's main Rice Bowl area since 1991 swept away hundreds of homes, destroyed construction projects and flooded hundreds of thousands of hectares of crops, the report said.

50 protesters held in Germany:

German police arrested more than 50 people on Sunday evening during a violent protest on the eve of official celebrations in this northern city of the fourth anniversary of German unification, AFP reports from Bremen, Germany.

Demonstrators threw stones at police officials said, and threatened to bomb a local department store in the afternoon.

On Saturday night dozens of luxury cars were ransacked. Police on Sunday night raided a club used by radicals and anarchists.

Two killed in Rio shootout:

A police officer and a suspected car thief were killed in a shootout at Rio's famed Ipanema beach on an afternoon also marked by fighting between teenage gangs on the beach, Brazilian television reported on Sunday, Reuters reports from Rio de Janeiro.

A camera crew from Brazil's Globo television network filmed the presumed robbery of a car by two armed men who shortly afterwards crashed into a police patrol car on the road that runs along Ipanema beach.

Storms claim 60 in Algeria:

At least 60 people have died and dozens of others disappeared in 10 days of storms that have battered this North African nation, for years in the grip of a dry spell, according to a new count issued on Sunday, AP reports from Algiers.

Fragile earth and straw homes have given way under torrential rains, killing occupants, while overflowing rivers have caught other inhabitants by surprise.

Zhirinovskiy in N Korea:

Russian ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy arrived in Stalinist North Korea yesterday on a visit unthinkable just three years ago, Reuters reports from Tokyo.

Zhirinovskiy, heading a delegation of his Liberal Democratic party, was met at Pyongyang airport by Hwang Jan Yop, secretary of the central committee of the ruling Korean Workers' Party, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

10 DFLP activists held in Gaza:

Palestinian police carried out dawn arrests of more than 10 members of the opposition Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), an official of the organisation said on Sunday, AFP reports from Gaza City.

Nehad Abu Ghosh, a member of the central committee of the DFLP, said police "broke into houses and arrested scores — we have 52 names, among them cadres and leaders of the DFLP." He told AFP the arrests took place after midnight and before dawn.

French Nobel Prize winner dies:

French professor Andre Lwoff, who won the 1965 medicine Nobel Prize, has died at the age of 92, the Weizmann Institute announced yesterday, AFP reports from Paris.

Lwoff, who was founding president of a council linking the Pasteur and Weizmann Institutes, had been awarded the Nobel Prize jointly with two other French scientists, Francois Jacob and Jacques Monod, for his work on cell biology.

Clashes leave 2 dead in S Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (Lebanon), Oct 3: At least two people were killed and one wounded in a series of clashes on Sunday between guerrillas and Israeli forces in Southern Lebanon, security and army official said, reports AFP.

A military spokesman in Jerusalem said an Israeli army unit shot dead a guerrilla in the Jabel Safi Sector of Israel's self-declared "security zone" in a pre-dawn clash.

A civilian was also killed in a roadside blast near Sidoun, an area controlled by the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA), a spokesman for the militia said.

The Iranian backed Hezbollah said its fighters carried out the attack and that the target was a SLA patrol.

Hezbollah fighters also fired rockets at an Israeli Patrol near Seffata, in the central sector of the security zone, hitting a troop carrier, and at an Israeli post in the ruins of nearby Beaufort castle, the group said.

Algerian Berbers demand release of singer-activist

ALGIERS, Oct 3: Berbers demanding official recognition of their language and the release of an activist singer kidnapped a week ago protested by the tens of thousands Sunday, while a radical Islamic group reportedly vowed to renew its holy war, reports AP.

More than 100,000 people took part in the peaceful demonstration in the Berber capital of Tizi Ouzou, east of Algiers, marked by calls and threats for the safe return of Lounes Matoub.

Authorities say Islamic guerrillas kidnapped the noted Berber singer who spoke out against the 2 1/2-year-old Islamic insurgency that has left more than 10,000 people dead.

The most radical armed faction, the Armed Islamic Group, said in a clandestine bulletin that Matoub was seized by Mujahideen fighters but did not directly take responsibility

for the Sept 25 kidnapping.

In a communique received by the French news agency, Agence France-Presse, the Armed Islamic Group said its consultative council decided to continue its "dijihad," or holy war, against "unbelievers... to install the law of God."

The communique also announced the appointment of a noted figure in the fundamentalist movement, Mohamed Said, as its new chief, replacing Cherif Gousmi, killed by security forces a week ago.

The authenticity of the communique could not be immediately confirmed. Islamic sources contacted here doubted it was authentic. They noted a communique issued by the group in August announcing the formation of a caliphate government that proved incorrect.

Said, an imam and educator who has been in hiding for

more than two years, was a leading member of the Islamic Salvation Front, the banned movement whose thwarted victory in January 1992 legislative elections triggered the Islamic insurgency rocking the country ever since.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Salvation Army, the Salvation Front's armed wing, chastised France for allegedly supporting the military-backed government in its repression of fundamentalists. It called for a boycott of French products and a "political and cultural rupture" with France.

In a communique received by the Associated Press, the armed group cited hostile declarations, financial pressure and the presence of gen-darmes and "military experts" in Algeria as signs of a French role in the "unprecedented repression."



People demonstrate in the northern Algerian town of Tizi-Ouzou Sunday demanding the release of kidnapped Berber singer Lounes Matoub. Matoub, who regularly mocked Islamic fundamentalists in his songs, was kidnapped a week ago by what the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) called Mujahideen fighters.

Egypt won't use force against Sudan

CAIRO, Oct 3: Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak pledged on Sunday never to resort to force against neighbouring Sudan despite the tension between the two countries, reports AFP.

His comments came after a journalist close to the Egyptian government called for military intervention in Sudan to end the suffering of the Sudanese people.

"Egypt will never attack Sudanese targets or occupy Sudanese territory," Mubarak said quoted by the official news agency MENA.

He said it was up to the Sudanese people to judge their leaders as Egypt will not interfere in the internal affairs of others.

Mubarak was speaking at a ceremony in Ismailiya on the Suez Canal to mark the anniversary of the October 1973 Middle East war.